

Residency including Migrant Workers

Transcript



Andrew Lodge

Hello everybody, and thanks for joining me today. This presentation is going to be discussing residency and migrant workers. So firstly, I'll introduce myself. I don't know if you've seen me, I've been sort of milling around, so I'm Andrew Lodge, Operational Specialist at SLC and I've worked at SLC for nearly 10 years so quite a long period of time. So my job role as an Operational Specialist and it sort of links in, was anybody in the plenary earlier? And we were talking about improvements that SLC are hoping to make.

So my job role is one of them people that will go around and try and look for improvements and try and speed up how we can get customers through their journey in the best way. So I've been doing that job a couple of months now, but before that I was an Operations Manager within the Operational Delivery Team. So I looked after things like this every day and this is what I manage. So hopefully we'll be able to get a few good things out of today. Please feel free to ask questions at the end, I'm more than happy to answer.

If people want to utilise the app that they've been using throughout the day, ping over a question, Steph at the back's got an iPad and she'll queue questions for me at the end. And as well, if you just want to raise your hands, once the presentations finished, we'll get round with the mic and everybody will be able to ask me what they want. So the first thing I want to touch on today is going through the agenda and what we're going to look at. So I wanted to look at today UK nationals and what their residency criteria looks like post-Brexit.

EEA and EU nationals and what their residency journey looks like post-Brexit. And I want to give a bit of an overview of the migrant worker process in SLC and try and give some pointers on best practise and some tips to again give the best customer journey because I appreciate that's quite a difficult journey for customers sometimes. Have a look at some of the rest of the world eligibility categories that we look at, at SLC. What they mean and how we determine eligibility through them.

Then move on to some of the newer residency categories for academic year 22/23. There is a couple of them, but they are linked, so I don't think we'll take up too much time. And then finally, I want to look at something called events, which is what SLC might look for as academic years progress and customer circumstances change and student circumstances change. Okay, so before I start on UK residency, I just want to cover off a little point on eligibility and how we determine eligibility.

No matter if a customer is a UK national an EU national, a migrant worker, a rest of the world national, there is always three pillars of eligibility. The three pillars we look for at SLC to determine eligibility is ID validation, residency and status. So as we go through the slides today, what I'll try and to do is, I'll try and cover off how we meet them three pillars of eligibility criteria, in line with each category that we go through. And I do hope you find the presentation useful and we do share some best practise out of it.

But like I say, come and grab me at the end if I've not been able to answer anything, if there's something you want me to add further information on, or there's any specific queries. Again, ask, feel free, that's what we're all here for. So firstly, I want to touch on UK nationals post-Brexit. Now, I won't go fully through the slide because it's a lot of information to get through. There's a lot of policy, there's a lot of legislation.

But effectively what I want to call out is that UK nationals post-Brexit can utilise their right of residence so they can travel anywhere within the EU, EEA. And as long as a UK national is back within their home domicile, whether that be England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland on the first day of the academic year, that's a phrase we'll hear a lot today, they will be eligible for full SF support, so that's maintenance grants and maintenance loans as well.

So touching on that three pillar of eligibility, how we determine a UK national's eligible utilising them is for ID and status. The UK passport or UK birth certificate already determines a UK national status and their ID and the residents information we're looking for is as long as they're in the UK prior to their course start and as long as they've been in the EU or EEA for utilising their right of residence.

So that's effectively UK nationals in a nutshell and I'm sure that's the journey that we've all seen and have become accustomed to over the years. I then want to touch on EU and EEA residency categories. Again, there's a couple of different scenarios that I just want to cover off. So first one I want to look at is post-Brexit. Is everybody aware of the EU settlement scheme and what that means post-Brexit? Super.

So if an EU national has been within the UK for a five-year period continuously, they are entitled to get it a status called settled status. If an EU customer holds settled status, they are entitled again to full undergraduate support. That's including maintenance grants and maintenance loans. If a customer and I'll touch on this later. If a customer has pre-settled status, they are more than welcome to apply for settled status once that five-year period comes around.

And then if that happens, they can potentially change from tuition fee loan only up to their full support. So moving on to pre-settled, which I've just touched on there, so EU assess pre-settled scheme. So these are customers that have been living or residing within the UK but haven't done so continuously for five years. So if you hold a pre-settled status, you are only entitled to a tuition fee loan only.

Now what this means is you'll get your tuition fees paid, but you won't get any maintenance loans or grants. But as I mentioned, if you are in study and that five-year time period elapses and you apply for settled status, you may be uplifted to receive the full undergraduate support.

Now that share code acts as ID validation and status, so in the same way that a UK passport deemed status and ID for a UK national, that share code for an EU national settled or pre-settled also gives them their status and ID verification. If a customer is not in receipt of a share code, i.e. they've only applied for one, the Home Office haven't got back to them.

They can provide SLC with what's called a certificate of application, which is effectively an email off the Home Office saying, we know you've applied, we're not quite round to getting that share code. And if they've got a certificate of application, they'll have to provide us with our original ID evidence as well. So again, touching on the three pillars of eligibility for EU nationals. We are going to utilise their share code, or original ID passport, or original ID, whether that be National Insurance card, a passport for their ID verification.

We've got their share code to determine their status as well in the UK, whether that be pre-settled or settled and their residency criteria as deemed on the form. So we effectively just ask the customer where they've been living. They don't need to provide any evidence of that. We take that from the declaration that they've provided on their app at that point. So moving on to migrant workers, as I've mentioned, migrant workers is fast becoming or has been a really difficult journey for customers in the past.

And I hope with the work that I'm doing in the migrant worker space at the minute and what SLC are doing as a whole to create a more online solution, makes this process a little bit easier. So I'm going to go through what migrant worker means, how customers can become eligible for migrant worker support and what we're doing to make that a little bit easier for them to get that customer journey a little bit easier. Because we're aware it hasn't always been right, but we do want to get it better.

So looking specifically at post-Brexit migrant workers. So effectively there's two types of migrant worker, there's an EU or EEA national. Now this is a customer that holds pre-settled status only. So if a customer holds that pre-settled status, they are only entitled at that point to tuition fee funds. But if they hold a pre-settled status and can validate that they are a migrant worker, they may be eligible for full support.

We then have a family member of an EEA national migrant worker and again, I won't go through the full list, but this is things like spouses, children of migrant workers. And probably the key point to validate around the migrant worker process, is that students who are deemed eligible as migrant workers, will be able to get full undergraduate support, so that's tuition fee, grants, loans, but they must be in continuous work throughout the year.

Now, SLC do checks normally at the start of semesters, but it changes depending on what the audit timeframe is, but it's normally at the start of the semester. So as long as the student or the customer has maintained that work and has maintained that migrant worker status, they'll be entitled to full funding throughout the course. So as I mentioned there, the student will need to have that pre-settled status or their family member will need to have that pre-settled status.

In terms of anything else on this slide, to be honest I've covered it all. You know, the customers must reside in the EU or EEA three years prior at the start of the course, but that's just a normal residency rule. And as I mentioned, if that customer loses migrant worker status and what I mean by loses migrant worker status, stops working at any period throughout their course, they will no longer be eligible for full SLC support and that will be scaled back to tuition fee only.

Lovely. So again, ID status and evidence requirements. So new students who are applying as a migrant worker in their own right, so an EU national with pre-settled status, they still need to provide us with their share code and that share code again covers their status and ID. We will touch on what we need for evidence of employment later in the slides, just so we cover everything off.

Those students who are applying as a family member of a migrant worker need to hold, or the family member needs to hold a pre-settled status and we also need to ensure there's a link between the customer applying and their family member. So we may ask for things like marriage certificates or birth certificates, so SLC can ensure we have got that link between the migrant worker and the family member of the migrant worker. So looking at migrant worker evidence.

So a migrant worker must be working at least 10 hours per week, to be given the status of migrant worker. If the worker is employed, so is working for a limited company per say, we need three months worth of payslips showing regular hours and a contract of employment. So on that contract of employment, we look for a start date. What the customers contracted hours per week are. The hourly rate of pay. What the contract type is and a correspondence signed by the employer.

Normally on headed paper, it does make a little bit easier, if not, a signed document is normally sufficient. Then we've got the self-employed worker and I know before the presentation I was sat with the chaps on that table who were having a good talk through. So in terms of self-employed workers, we need evidence that the worker is registered with the HMRC. Therefore we do need things like P60s, tax returns, that sort of stuff.

If that's not viable, there might be exceptions cases, where we might accept things like invoices, bank statements and things like that, but probably the easiest thing and to make the customer journey a little bit faster, is tax returns and P60s. Moving on to the migrant worker employment check. So once a migrant worker has been made eligible for funding and SLC is comfortable with the status of migrant worker and eligibility has been established, the application will move through to approved and full funding will be put in place for those customers.

As I mentioned throughout the study period, whether that's two, three or four years, however long that is, SLC will conduct some audits where we check that students are still in employment throughout their course and this is called the employment check. So effectively, what we do is we send a customer or we send a migrant worker customer an email and state that they've got four weeks to send us the evidence that we would like. And that's the evidence we touched on in the last slide there, just to make sure that they're still in employment.

If they've not responded to us after that four-week period, we then send them a chaser correspondence and give them an extra two weeks and say, if you've not responded to us in the two-week period, unfortunately, you aren't going to be deemed as a migrant worker anymore and funding will be scaled back to tuition fee only. Obviously, we want our migrant worker customers to get the information to us as soon as possible, so we can determine their eligibility and carry on funding them. But if that doesn't happen, we've obviously got to reduce that fees based on the legislation and policy that we're dictated by.

So as I've mentioned, the non-response process, if we've still not had any evidence supplied by the customer within that four-week, then extra two-week period. So a six-week period in whole we'll remove the support for the customer. What I will say is on the back of that if, say 10-12 weeks down the line, the customer does get back to us and give us that evidence that we've needed when we asked for it. All funding will be put back in place. It's just a longer waiting time for the customer.

And for those who were at the plenary earlier, we know that we do sometimes have some quite large turnaround times, so the earlier the better. Once a check has been complete and we're comfortable. That effectively just means the timeline restarts and it just means in another couple of months, the next semester we'll re-ask for this evidence items for our migrant workers. Super.

So moving on to the rest of the world eligibility again, there's a lot of residency categories, that rest of the world nationals can apply under. And I'm hoping through this presentation, I can show how it's linked together and a little bit easier to get through the customer journey. So as I've mentioned throughout, I've talked about it, the three pillars of eligibility, so rest of the world students still need to give us the three pillars of eligibility. That's their ID evidence, their status and their residency.

There's just different ways in which rest of the world nationals can do this for us. So what I'll do is I'll go through some of the slides, some of the categories that we see most and what the best customer journey is. So we can get them customers through. In terms of student ID, what we like to see is original documents. It has to be original for most SLC products, there is some niche scenarios which we can discuss afterwards, that I don't want to confuse people with, but for the most part, original is best.

Original passports, original Home Office biometric cards. Original national insurance cards if the customer's an EU national. Original travel documents and original certificate of naturalisation.

So the first category I want to touch on really is indefinite leave to enter and indefinite leave to remain, so in terms of eligibility for SLC funding these two residency statuses are the same in terms of eligibility.

So if a customer applying utilizing one of these statuses, they must be ordinarily resident in England on the first day of their academic year of their course. First day of the term. They must be resident in their home domicile on the first day of the academic year of their course. They must hold their status prior to the first day of the academic year of the course, so they must hold either their indefinite leave to enter or indefinite leave to remain, prior to the course starting. They must have been ordinarily resident in the UK for three years prior to the first day of the academic course.

And we also require three years residency history. So previously we used to ask for things like evidence items, utility bills, council tax bills, that sort of stuff, it's no longer needed anymore. We take that as written residency and we take that declaration as source of truth, which hopefully makes that customer journey a little bit easier. We then look at our asylum and refugee status. Now there's a couple of categories that are quite similar, so I'll go through them.

So any customer who has refugee status does not need three years residency in the UK, but the student or the student's family member must have stayed in the UK since the acquisition of that status. So once they've been granted that status, they cannot leave the UK for a prolonged period of time. If the student is claiming as a spouse of a refugee, the student must have been married before the application for asylum status was made.

And if the customer is applying as a child of a refugee, they must have been under the age of 18, when the application for asylum status was made as well. So moving on to humanitarian protection and stateless persons. Now, humanitarian protection, this status is a ...can be granted to customers.

To be eligible for SLC funding, they must be ordinarily a resident in the UK and Ireland for three years prior at the first day of their course. They have to have been, sorry, I'll move on from that one, I'll come back to that. So again, stateless persons, so student who've been granted stateless leave in their own right, must be ordinarily a resident in their home domicile on the first day of their course.

And quite similar to the Salman refugee status, they must have been ordinarily a resident since they were granted that status. Section 67 leave to remain and Calais leave to remain, so these are two residency categories that only came in a few years ago, so the policy has changed quite a lot within those few years. So for both of these statuses and to be eligible for funding, the customer must be ordinarily resident in England on the first day of their first academic year of the course.

An easy way of saying that is just course start date or term start date. They must be ordinarily resident in the UK and Ireland throughout that period and whilst they were granted Section 67 leave to remain, or Calais leave to remain. And the student is only required to have been ordinarily resident in the UK and Ireland since they were granted their most recent status. One of the final or the final rest of the world residency category, I want to touch on, is long residency.

Now again, this is a really difficult journey and has been a really difficult customer journey. So some rest of the world nationals do not hold any of the statuses that I've just talked about and hold a status called limited leave to remain. So if a customer holds a status called limited leave to remain, we may ask them to give us long residency evidence. Now, utilising the long residency eligibility category is quite demanding on customers, because we are asking for quite a lot of information.

So what SLC does have now, is we have a direct link with our Home Office colleagues and we do try and link in with the Home Office before we ask customers to provide us with long residency evidence. Just because the journey and we understand it's not brilliant, but again, we are governed by legislation and policy, so this is what we have to do. But like I say, we will make all enquiries to the Home Office first before we do this. So for a customer to provide us long residency information, they will hold a status called limited leave to remain.

So student support will be given as long as the customer can determine their long residency category and there's a couple of niche scenarios here. So if the customer is under the age of 18 years when they've made their application, they must have lived in the UK for at least seven years and provide us evidence of that seven-year period. If the customer is over the age of 18, they must provide us with residency information for half of their life and that goes on until the age of 40.

So over the age of 40, we ask for 20 years worth of residency information. There's a clear reason why we prefer to go to the Home Office, rather than ask for this level of information from customers, because it does become quite difficult for that level of information to be given back to us. But from an SLC point of view, what we're trying to do is build a picture that we're satisfied that that customer has been here for that length of time and if that is the case, they'll become eligible from that point.

And again, as I've mentioned throughout, the customer needs to be ordinarily resident in the UK on the first academic year of the course and they have been ordinarily and lawfully a resident in the UK and Ireland throughout the three-year period, preceding the first day of their course. So I'm going to touch on a couple of the new residency categories for academic year 22/23 and these two policies are linked and you'll see as we go through why that is.

So the Afghan Relocation and Assistance policy. So the UK government brought in a policy to support those individuals who were working in Afghanistan, either for the UK government or supporting the UK government over there and allowing them to relocate to the UK. When customers who are granted status or any persons that are granted status of the Afghan Relocation and Assistance process, they'll be given indefinite leave to enter.

So they'll hold a rest of the world status themselves. And the eligibility criteria for the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy will mirror that of the refugee and humanitarian protections status, so we're just looking at the same eligibility criteria. And a similar policy, the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme.

And this is for people who were residing in Afghanistan at the time the Taliban took control of the country, who would have come to serious harm that the UK government supported and helped to relocate to the UK from that standpoint. Again, the eligibility criteria is that the same of refugee status and humanitarian protection.

Lovely. And I just want to touch a little bit on events and what SLC classes as events. So events can happen at any time through students course, where they may become eligible for further support or their support may change based on something that's happened. So some of the main ones that we see and again, this list is not exhaustive. I won't touch upon all of them, but if anybody has any questions about any of these events, please let us know.

But if a customer becomes recognised as a refugee or is granted humanitarian protection or stateless persons, that could be after an application to the Home Office. If a student becomes the family member of an EU national so at that point may marry into or may marry an EU national. If the student is granted indefinite leave to remain as a victim of domestic violence, which is colloquially known as DVILA. Or if the student is granted indefinite leave to remain as a bereaved partner.

If the student is awarded EU settled status. So I touched upon that earlier, that a longer period of residency may allow the customer to transfer from having a pre-settled status to a settled status, therefore allowing them further funding. And one which I've only seen once in my time working at SLC, the student state accedes to the EU, i.e. the country that the individual is living in or is from becomes part of the EU and the only time I think that's happened is with Croatia quite recently, but it may happen.

And from an operational point of view, a couple of things I just wanted to touch on a couple of issues that SLC operations see and again, this is not saying that this is a customer problem. This is more likely to be an SLC problem that we haven't communicated properly with the customer and this is what we're trying to work on to make that customer journey a little bit better and a little bit more efficient.

So when physical evidence is required, it really is key we get original evidence items. Sometimes students don't provide their three years residency rules and that really is key to get that application through because if we don't get that, we can't approve the application and there's often a back and forth.

And like I say, in our peak periods there can be a six to eight week waiting time sometimes.

During peak times, customers send us ID evidence when they know they're travelling and then ring us up a couple of days later and say, I've sent you my passport, but I'm actually going on holiday and you send it back to me. So when that happens, it's a big task we have to get an evidence retrieval sent through and we've got a lot of people looking in a lot of boxes to locate and retrieve ID documents to send back to the customer. Printing cover letters with CRNs on makes it a little bit easier to identify the customer.

And again, if they're accessing their My Account or utilising salesforce, that CRN should be available to them on there. And a couple of points on migrant worker, which I think I covered in the migrant worker slides, but customers not getting back to us when we ask them for that confirmation that they're still in work at the start of the semesters. It could lead to customers losing funding, which puts them in financial hardship, which we don't want to do.

It also means that it's a longer task and it's a potential longer while we process the evidence items if they're sending in after that six to eight-week break. So that's everything that I wanted to cover off. Obviously, I mentioned at the top of the meeting we'll have some time for some questions and Steph's kindly offered to help with the app. So I'll happily answer any questions on the application. If there's anything I can't answer, I will come back to it.

I think there's a quick question in the room already, we'll deal with that first if you want and I'll come back to the app if that's okay. I think there's a mic coming over now, it's just for our delegates online so they can hear.

Audience Member 1

I'm not standing up. Hiya, so I just want to ask a couple of questions.

Andrew Lodge

Of course.

Audience Member 1

So one of the biggest problems with us when we're trying to sort out accounts is, you know when you touched on when a student is providing evidence of being a migrant worker and gets it taken off them because they're finished working. And I think normally the number that they get, the SSN is like an SFDU and then it changes to ERUS embarrassed. Around that, we've had a number of defects where all of a sudden student finance won't pay us, but they'll say it's not the students' fault it's our technical issues we've got where they've changed funding.

Andrew Lodge

So the SSN's changed and it's limited what they're entitled to at that point?

Audience Member 1

Yeah, and we've had it where they've changed to and from during the year. So I just wondered if there was any, like we've had a faster payment coming from student finance for about 100 accounts, where they have defects because of that issue. And obviously, we don't want that ongoing.

Andrew Lodge

Absolutely not.

Audience Member 1

So I know this isn't something you might... is there something to take away? Whether that's like something that might be discussed as a...

Andrew Lodge

Absolutely and what I can say about that is we do often get customers that change from EU over to SFE, vice versa and that's a prime example of that. So what we have is a transfer of ownership team, that specifically look at those cases and will, at that point, transfer their SSNs back over to the relevant SSN. With what you're saying about the defect clearly, that's a poor service and I will take that away and I'll have a look at what's happened with that defect.

All I can say is we do have a transfer of ownership team that are set up to deal with that when it does happen, but clearly that hasn't happened in these cases so I will take that away and that's a very good point. And has anybody else had that sort of..? It seems like I've got a lot to take away then. Super. Has that helped? I know its not help them customers. But I hope I can take away and get a resolution or at least look into a resolution on the back of that for you.

Audience Member 1

Yeah, sorry I've just got one other question.

Andrew Lodge

Of course.

Audience Member 1

So we have a few students about 10-15 a year where SFE have granted them funding, because they've submitted a passport that might be, it's acceptable and then the student asks us to confirm their attendance. We look and they're an overseas status with the university because they've not fulfilled our fee checks. We try and explain to the student that we can't confirm it because they're not, you know, one part of it isn't right, they're international with us and they've been granted a loan.

We know that's not right if we confirm it and that could come back on the uni. Also, a lot of students have got this idea that they can pay an overseas fee and then use the loan to subsidise it. I've tried to write to the policy team and they can't really come back with an ironclad...

Andrew Lodge

Definitive answer.

Audience Member 1

Policy that says you must be on a course that the university designates. They've kind of said it is our understanding, you know, we've used that line. But unfortunately, if a student complains and it goes further than that, we have to have something a bit more ironclad in a policy. I just wondered if there's anything? I've scoured it, I'm not sure if I can find it, but

Andrew Lodge

Leave that one with me because I don't know the answer right now. The information in the passport is that like a vignette that's normally in there?

Audience Member 1

I'm not sure, all we know is that it's kind of been approved and they've obviously met the requirements for SFE, but not with the university.

Andrew Lodge

Absolutely, so when we were talking about status earlier, one of the ways in which from exception cases it can be granted is something called a vignette which is in like a rest of the world, oversea national passport and it's effectively just a stamp from the Home Office. And it doesn't necessarily give us the information that we fully need, but we might do a check with the Home Office on the back of that vignette, to say what status has actually been granted on the entry of that customer, so that might be one of the ones that's coming through.

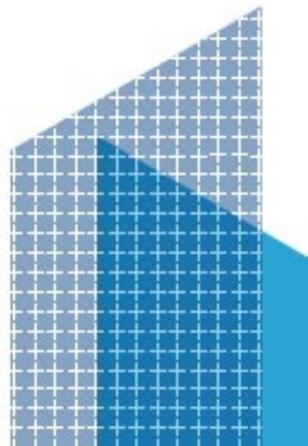
In terms of the policy leave that with me. Do you mind if I jot that down after this so we can catch off? I'll write straight to the regulation team on the back of that.

Audience Member 1

Definitely yeah because just having that, you know refer to 1A, it would cover us in a lot of ways.

Andrew Lodge

Absolutely.



Audience Member 1

They go back to SFE and SFE will say contact your university, they've got to confirm attendance and it goes round and round.

Andrew Lodge

It's not a good journey.

Audience Member 1

We just need to stop it.

Andrew Lodge

Of course,

Audience Member 1

With some policy, but.

Andrew Lodge

Absolutely yeah, that's a really poor journey and I think from what it sounds like, because it sounds like our policy, our legislation needs to be a bit stronger to support our HEPs in making that decision and ensuring that customer understands where they stand from that onwards. I don't have the answer unfortunately, but I definitely will take it away. And again, really good point.

Audience Member 1

I just got one other question.

Andrew Lodge

Of course.

Audience Member 1

Sorry. You mentioned about chaser reminders. We were talking to another university today about the reminders that SFE send. So you mentioned this too and then I suppose it stops because you can't keep doing it. So the responsibility then we then get the attendance code, then changes to NA. Unfortunately, we don't pick them up. We have a debt report, and we notice that SFE have either ticked claw back 9250 or they've not paid it.

So when we can't contact SFE, they'll say, even though it looks like it's approved, we're waiting on evidence.

Andrew Lodge

So we've stopped funding at that point.

Audience Member 1

Yeah, so I suppose it's two pronged, I mean, obviously, it'd be great if we could have some kind of, like the institutes could have almost like a report that's generated where they say, please find attached to your report. These are students who are awaiting evidence, sent reminders, they're not responding. Because we're not picking it up until maybe a month or two later when we're doing our debt report and find that they're not paid or they've clawed it back. And unfortunately, we might miss it to the point of where they can graduate and we've not chased them.

Audience Member 1

And when I queried the NA and said it doesn't come in the attendance work list. So our teams don't know until we see it on the ledger. They just sort of say, well, that's as it is at the moment.

Andrew Lodge

So that NA notification is that held in SIS? Is that where that shows up?

Audience Member 1

Yes, and once it's been changed, it changes from A so they've been paid and they'll claw back and just put NA, but it doesn't... There's no prompt. It's like it's just hanging there and then our teams aren't spotting it in a worklist, so we have to kind of.

Andrew Lodge

So I think the fundamental issue there, which you've covered off rightly so is we aren't giving the HEPs enough information as to what's happening with that customers funding once we've either stopped it or made ineligible at that point. I think that's what I'm hearing here. Righty-ho that's a little bit of work for me to be getting on with then.

Audience Member 1

Sorry.

Andrew Lodge

No, it's absolutely fine. That's as I say, I'm relatively new to the role I've been in it a few months so these are the things that I desperately need be hearing to try and sort out and have quite a good relationship with the SIS Product Manager. So this is really good and really useful. I can certainly take that away, so don't be sorry at all this is exactly what I want to hear.

Audience Member 1

I've got another... no I haven't really.

Andrew Lodge

I was just going to say I'm starting to sweat now I've not got the answers. Is there anybody else in the room before we go to the app.? No?

Audience Member 2

I've got two.

Andrew Lodge

Yeah, of course.

Audience Member 2

Hi cheers, yeah, as I say two very short, quick questions based on your presentation. One was the ten hours minimum per work for migrant workers. Are you still accepting or looking at zero-hour contracts for them?

Andrew Lodge

I don't know. I'll get my laptop out after this meeting and I'll double check because I've got one of my colleagues that I'm going to give a call after, in case there's any questions like that, so I absolutely will do that.

Audience Member 2

Fantastic and the other quick question was, you mentioned about physical evidence.

Andrew Lodge

Yeah.

Audience Member 2

Are you still accepting certified copies of physical evidence stamped or signed by authority persons as in solicitor?

Andrew Lodge

That was one of the niche scenarios. So yes, we do still accept certified copies for customers wanting to apply for tuition fee loans only. So yes, we still do accept cert copies for that scenario. I just didn't want to cover it off because for the main part it is original but there used to be a process where EU nationals applied on a different form, an EUN form and we were able to accept cert ID copies on the back of that.

Andrew Lodge

We still do that for customers applying for tuition fee loans only based on their pre-settled status. So yes, we do do that.

Audience Member 2

Brilliant.

Andrew Lodge

No worries.

Audience Member 2

Oh, just quickly as well, because I was in the SAAS session earlier, you mentioned for 22/23 SAAS students transitioning from FE to HE can now more easily qualify for the long residency rule. Do you know anything more about it because I didn't pick up any more information, but I suppose I could find out from them later?

Andrew Lodge

So I don't specifically know about that transitional period, but I know there's a project ongoing about process simplification where we're trying to sort of merge eligibility statuses. So people moving on from different products who've already established eligibility for one product rolling that over into another one. So we're not asking for new eligibility. It's not something that's in play yet, but it is something we're looking at. So I imagine it will be something similar to that, that SAAS we're talking about.

Of course, I think there's one over here. Oh there's two. I'll come back over in a second.

Audience Member 3

Just a very quick question so pre-settled student lost job and then what's going to happen to his maintenance loan. And is there any circumstances or cases that he still can be eligible for full funding?

Andrew Lodge

Unfortunately, not so if a customer loses their migrant worker status at that point, whether it's a lost job or redundancy, at that point, they wouldn't be allowed the full support. They would still be entitled to tuition fee, but not full support, unfortunately.

Audience Member 3

Well, what if the spouse is working with the pre-settled status? The students still can be eligible?

Andrew Lodge

Yes, that student could be eligible if the spouse was a migrant worker and we had that maintained link. If it was a migrant worker in their own right and they ceased to be working, they wouldn't be eligible for full support. If it was a spouse of a migrant worker and the spouse continued to work that would be fine and they would be eligible for full support at that point.

Audience Member 3

Okay, thank you.

Audience Member 4

Sorry but my question was the same.

Andrew Lodge

Oh was it the same question? Okay. Lovely. Okay I'll, sorry.

Audience Member 5

It's okay, ladies first.

Anneka

Oh okay, thank you. Hi, my name is Anneka. In the events slide you mentioned migrant worker status granted? What does that mean?

Andrew Lodge

It may mean that a customer has applied for tuition fee loan only under their pre-settled status and maybe halfway through the year, they might have picked up a part-time job and they've been able to transition to migrant worker, so would be at that point without full support. So that's what that means. Yeah, it's that their circumstances have changed yeah. Thank you.

Audience Member 5

Just a quick question. Are we still taking an average of earnings over the academic year for students who lose their jobs?

Andrew Lodge

Not that I'm aware of, but it's not something I've heard, so again leave that with me, I'll get an answer straight away for you.

If you come and grab me afterwards. I'll give somebody a call afterwards, after this presentation, I'll find out for you. Super. No more in the room. Okay, I'll have a look, see what is on the app. So the first question on the app is a student currently has pre-settled status and the status has changed to settled, as the five-year residency will be complete in July 2022.

What's the best time for the student to apply for maintenance loan as well as tuition? That's a really good question. The student can apply for their funding with their pre-settled status and the event would allow them to go on and get full funding. My advice to any customers in this category would be apply as early as possible and on that stated change provide us with the updated evidence. The reason for that is that's right back in peak periods.

So at least you're going to have some form of funding in place for the start of the academic year and our assessors will be able to get through that as soon as possible, so as early as possible. You can still apply with a pre-settled like the events state, you can provide us evidence later down the line to say that status has changed from pre-settled to settled. Therefore, changing the funding that you can get.

Andrew Lodge

Let me have a little look. There's a couple about migrant workers losing their jobs, which I think I've already answered. There's a really good question here from Scarlett and I don't know the answer, but I do actually want to read it out because it's a really good and poignant question. So if a person is the spouse of a migrant worker and they have to suspend working due to illness, are there provisions for such things, such as compelling personal reasons?

That's a really good question. Again Scarlett, I'll take away and I'll double check that for you. It's not a scenario that I've come across in my role as of yet, but it's certainly one that, realistically can happen and I'll get an answer for you straight away. Super. So I think that's me. Before I wrap up, is there anything else that we want to ask or cover off? Lovely, of course.

If we just wait for the mic for our online delegates, thank you.

Audience Member 6

Just want to ask if they're looking into Ukrainians coming over to UK and about getting funding for courses if they want to study here in the UK?

Andrew Lodge

Of course and again, a very good question and poignant at this moment in time. The answer to the first question is yes, that is being looked into. Unfortunately, the next answer I'm going to give is I can't give any more details until it's been signed off by our ministers. Whilst I do have an idea of what that's going to look like, I can't give the details of that, so unfortunately, it's not something I can really talk about until that gets signed off by our ministers in DFE.

I wish I could have had something in place for this seminar, but unfortunately I don't and I wouldn't want to speculate.

Audience Member 6

Okay thank you.

Andrew Lodge

Super. So over to you guys. If you've got any questions you want to ask, any cases you want to talk through, please feel free and we've got Steph at the back with a microphone. And if there's any questions online as well, I'll take them through the iPad later on so, any questions in the room? No super. I was expecting a lot, I did get... oh yeah, of course.

Audience Member 7

We've had a couple of cases where I work, where students have been living in the UK legally, but their visa has run out and they've applied for an extension or they've applied for a new one that's been rejected. And they've gone through the appeals process with the solicitor and everything and they're granted the ability to stay in the UK throughout that time. But then they get their new visa, but there's that gap in the middle.

When they come to apply for student finance funding, that gap shows them as not being legally lawfully resident in the UK during that time. Is there a way around that?

Andrew Lodge

Yes, so there should be a way around that. So in terms of that application process, we utilise something called a certificate of application. So if the customer can provide us with the evidence that they've applied in time for that status, that should go through and we should take that as them still being a lawful resident while that application is happening. So that should make it a little bit easier. Has there been any occasions where that's not happened, or it's been a difficult journey?

Audience Member 7

I think quite a few, yeah.

Andrew Lodge

I'd love to catch up with you about that if that's okay? I'd love to have a look at that, that would be super.

Audience Member 7

Cool.

Andrew Lodge

Super. Steph sorry, there was just a.

Audience Member 8

So I deal with quite a lot of long residency students. Generally, they're an absolute nightmare with student loans company and take months and months and months. But I was interested in what you were saying about you sort of take a picture, because I had one student in particular who she had to provide something like 20 years of residency evidence and she was only missing two years in 2006/2007. At that point, she was a child living with her parents.

And she provided a tenancy agreement. In her parent's name, which listed her there and that wasn't accepted by student finance, which I thought was really sort of harsh. And I mean, she did eventually manage to provide bank statements, but I just couldn't understand why they weren't accepting it, because I can't see that there are specific residency requirements.

Andrew Lodge

Yeah, absolutely.

Audience Member 8

And yeah, we have this quite often with long residency students, where they come back and say that evidence isn't acceptable, but I can't see a list of what is, you know, they provide an email to students saying this residency is not acceptable. But where is that in the regulations?

Andrew Lodge

As in terms of like an exhaustive list for evidence examples and what we can and can't accept? So for me again, like I say, it's quite difficult, building that picture over a 20-year period as I touched upon. And it's not a great customer journey, as you've alluded to. But for me and again, I'd love to catch up about this offline, that tenancy agreement should have been accepted, so I want to understand why.

There might be another reason for it, but standing here and having that information, as long as there was a link between the customer and the parents living in that house, there's no reason why that shouldn't have been accepted.

Audience Member 8

I'm not sure that there was at that particular, but if she'd been asked to provide a birth certificate, she could provide a birth certificate to provide that link to show that the parents...

Andrew Lodge

That probably would have been...

Audience Member 8

But I mean, it did list her. On the tenancy agreement it listed her two parents names and her own name.

Andrew Lodge

There's no reason why that should have been rejected, from what I can see. I'd have to have a look at the notes of the account to understand why it was rejected. From my point of view stood here now that's absolutely a fine piece of evidence. You know, we've indicated that the residency's here in the UK, the students named on the agreement, which we often don't get, especially looking back from trying to get seven years worth of residency for an 18-year-old. I mean, who has that sort? Who's getting utility bills when they're that age because I certainly wasn't. So that absolutely should have been given.

Again, I'd love to catch up about that and have a look at this account's notes and see what's going on with it.

Audience Member 8

And I've got another student who she only needed to provide the seven years of residency evidence, but she'd arrived in something like the June and the residency evidence was needed from sort of the end of June. And she could provide it from September when she started at school but she couldn't provide anything between the end of June and the September, other than I think she got her visa that confirmed that she'd entered. And so she was rejected based on that two and a half months.

Andrew Lodge

So there was a gap before we were first able to establish that that customer was here.

Audience Member 8

Yeah, because she was about eight at the time and they hadn't applied for benefits or anything like that because they literally arrived in the country and then she was rejected.

Andrew Lodge

Again without looking at the account, but that may have been one where we should have linked in with the Home Office just to have a look at date of entry because that is... We don't have a direct link with Home Office and we are working on something, but we do have really stringent data share agreements with them. So we can ask for that sort of evidence from the Home Office just to say do you mind letting us know or have you got anything on your files for this individual? That would have been an option, I think we should have explored.

So again, it seems to me like it's more of a human error rather than the customer doing it. And I know it doesn't help that customer and I'm actually a little bit frustrated that that's happened, because we have things in place to try and support that. It may have been that the Home Office had nothing and it might have been rejected on the back of that, but we should have been exploring the Home Office route for sure.

Audience Member 8

Thank you.

Andrew Lodge

Yeah, okay. Thank you. Lovely, anything else in the room? No, thank you. Steph was anything online. A couple, yeah do you want to pass the iPad up? Thank you. Thank you very much.

So what improvements are in the pipeline for migrant workers and long residency students? As I mentioned earlier, we are doing our best to make the route more digital and we are utilising some of the contacts that we've got, including Home Office Data share Agreements and utilising a system that I know called Connexus. In terms of improvements there is a massive project going on and unfortunately, I can't share too much because it's quite in the infancy of what's going on. But effectively it means the sharing agreement that SLC and the Home Office have is looking to improve, as we do with HMP, or HMRC.

We don't quite have that same agreement with the Home Office, so we are trying to get that in place. In terms of what's happening so far, that's where my job role comes in. So it's about impacting processes, about impact and guidance and about, again probably making our assessors and advisors more knowledgeable as to the point that was made before about what's acceptable and what isn't acceptable and understanding that this is difficult and making the journey as easy as we can for the customers.

So I hope the answers that Emma and I hope, as I mentioned about the Connexus and the queues that we're trying to make digitally and online help that journey as well. On the events list, there is the student becomes a family member of an EU national. What if they become a family member, a UK national is that treated as an event?

Leave that one with me, I'm fairly sure it does, but I can't say without 100% certainty. So I'll consult my guidance material straight after this and I'll drop it in an email for you. Yeah, leave that one with me. And that is the questions on the iPad. So thank you so much again for listening. I really do hope you found it useful and as I say, I'll be milling around for the next 5-10 minutes. Please feel free to come and grab me.

And if anybody has any questions on the back of this. Feel free to contact the account manager, I have a pretty good relationship with them. They'll come and find me and ask me anything from there. Super, thank you very much, everyone.



For more information:

events@slc.co.uk

www.slc.co.uk