

Students in cash alert

Page1/2

News Story

THOUSANDS of university students are missing out on the chance of free money to help them through their studies.

College coffers are awash with cash meant to be given out as bursaries - grants which don't have to be repaid - but many students have no idea it's there.

According to a recent poll, two-thirds of 16 to 19-year-olds weren't aware they could be eligible.

Now a website has been launched to help students claim the cash, at direct.gov.uk/bursarymap.

Created by the Department for Education and Skills, which looks after student finance, it gives students a chance to find out what extra money they could get.

Each university or college has a different way of doing things and different people who can claim.

And we're not just talking about money - some offer help with laptops or transport.

But where universities charge the full tuition fee of £3,070, anyone who gets a full maintenance grant can also get a bursary of at least £305 on top.

Not all bursaries are linked to income either - some are based on where students live or what they study.

Last year more than £115million was paid out in bursaries and scholarships, and estimates suggest that there could be more than £350million a year available by 2010.

Higher Education minister Bill Rammell said: "Many universities and colleges offer bursaries - and they do not have to be repaid.

"I hope this new map will be a helpful tool for students to find out about the bursaries on offer at higher education institutions. Students should be confident that, no matter what their background, there should be no financial barrier to studying at whichever university or college they choose.

"I'm pleased to see applications to higher education in 2007 have risen by 7.1 per cent, and that financial concerns do not deter students from applying.

"I would urge applicants to investigate all the financial support they might be entitled to, including bursaries."

Tom Dinning, from Sunderland, is studying for a fine art degree at Newcastle College. He started his three-year course in September last year having completed a BTEC National Diploma in Art and Design at the City of Sunderland College.

When he signed up for the degree course, Tom's key financial concern was how he would meet the extra cost of art materials and equipment. He was delighted to discover he would get a non-repayable bursary of £500 a year from Newcastle College.

The bursary is paid in two instalments - the first at the beginning of the university year and the second before the summer break.

This meant Tom could set himself up at the beginning of the year and he is looking forward to the second chunk to help support himself over the long summer break.