21st October 2019

Ref: PAC32-I-1600

Committee of Public Accounts,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2.

Dear Ms. Fallon,

Please find enclosed Information Note relating to SUSI processes and procedures for grant application cases involving difficult family situations as requested in your correspondence dated 14 October 2019.

If you have any further queries, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]
Carol Hanney,
Chief Executive Officer,
City of Dublin Education and Training Board
Information Note Prepared for the Public Accounts Committee

SUSI processes & procedures for grant application cases involving difficult family situations

Ref: PAC32-I-1600

Date: 18 October 2019

SUSI, the national student grant awarding authority, is committed to administering student grant applications fairly, reasonably and consistently in line with the Student Support Act 2011, the Student Grant Scheme and the Student Support Regulations thereunder.

Section 16 of the Student Support Act 2011 allows the Minister for Education and Skills to specify in an annual scheme, the manner in which the income of an applicant, his or her parents, spouse, civil partner or cohabitant shall be determined and to specify criteria with respect to the income of the applicant. Section 16 (4) (a) (ii) specifically requires that in the case of a dependent student, the income of the applicant and his or her parents, as appropriate, shall be taken into account in calculating whether the limit specified annually is exceeded. However when calculating income, Section 16 (4) (a) (vi) of the Act allows for the consideration of a dependent applicant’s parents residing in separate households.

The Student Grant Scheme is issued annually and Article 21 of the Student Grant Scheme 2019 sets out for the awarding authority the persons whose income is to be considered. Article 21 (2) states that where the dependent student’s parents are divorced or legally separated, or it is established to the satisfaction of the relevant awarding authority that they are separated, the reckonable income shall be that of the applicant and of the parent or parents with whom the applicant resides.

In such cases, SUSI requires documentary evidence to establish that the applicant’s parents are divorced or separated. The applicant can provide the following to confirm parental divorce or separation:

- separation agreement
- divorce decree
- court ordered maintenance arrangement
- barring order (within the last three years)
- decree of dissolution for a civil partnership
- evidence from the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection confirming receipt of Deserted Wife’s Allowance or a One-Parent Family Payment
- If there is no legal agreement, a letter from a solicitor, in which the solicitor confirms separation and/or legal proceedings are pending
- A letter or document from a Family Mediation Service, for example, the Legal Aid Board, that confirms current/past participation in family mediation
- Proof of living separately, e.g. separate utility bills for the same time period

Where an applicant demonstrates, by providing one or more of the above documents, that their parents are living separately, SUSI will only include the income of the applicant and that of the parent the applicant resides with.

ends