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## **MONEY BOX LIVE**

**Presenter: VINCENT DUGGLEBY**

**TRANSMISSION: 27<sup>th</sup> MAY 2009 3.00-3.30 RADIO 4**

**DUGGLEBY:** Good afternoon. We're talking about the cost of going to university, so if you're hard at work revising for exams, why not put aside your books for the next half hour and pick up some financial tips from Money Box Live? Whether you're a student or a means-tested parent, you're welcome to call 03700 100 444. Unfortunately it just isn't possible to generalise about student finance in the UK as a whole, and even if you qualify for the maximum package of loans and grants it's unlikely to cover all your expenses. Bear in mind, too, that the Government has cut the eligibility threshold for partial grants from £60,000 of household income to just over £50,000, and there's continuing debate on whether sufficient funding is available to meet demand for places this coming September. Even with careful budgeting, the vast majority will find themselves owing up to £20,000 by the end of a 3 year course. The good news for those about to graduate is that the Student Loans Company will apply a zero interest rate from next September to existing debt. The bad news is that getting a job is going to prove far more difficult in the present economic climate, and there's not much in the way of grants or loans to help post-grads. You might have built up some funds during a gap year, but for those starting their course in the autumn it's a matter of adding up the package of loans for tuition fees and living costs, plus non-repayable support in the form of a maintenance grant, and then working out a realistic weekly budget. The first port of call is usually the local authority for those in England and Wales with a deadline of June 26<sup>th</sup>. But, as I'm sure you know, things are different in Scotland, and to that end we have Alan Scott, Operational Policy Manager from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland in our Edinburgh studio; and here in London, David Malcolm, Research and Policy Officer at the National Union of Students; and Keith Houghton, Head of the Student Funding Service at Kingston

University. 03700 100 444, and first on the line Jacqui in Ilfracombe. Jacqui?

**JACQUI:** Hello.

**DUGGLEBY:** Hello.

**JACQUI:** My question is my son's just finishing his first year at university. He received a small maintenance grant based on our 2007-2008 income, which was a profit. We're self-employed and we've just completed next year's grant form. The form needed the 2007-2008 income to be stated again. We work in the building industry and in the 2008-2009 tax year made a substantial loss, which if those figures were used would give him the maximum grant. I queried the dates with the grant people, but the only way of not using the 2007-2008 figures was to predict our income for 2009-2010.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay, I'm going to stop you there, Jacqui, because you're in amongst quite a number of people who are concerned about this problem of falling income or in some cases complete job loss. So perhaps you could help us with this, Keith, where financial circumstances have dramatically changed?

**HOUGHTON:** Certainly. Where financial circumstances change - and in terms of student support, they talk about a drop in income of at least 15% over the course of a year - they would normally look at the current financial year assessment. So if this had been an ordinary year, the application would look at the 08-09. Instead of that, it'll predict the 09-10 income. What happens this year is that to allow the student finance application cycle to go in the same time frame as the UCAS application cycle, they now need to look at the year before, which is why they've asked you for the 07-08 income again. Now if you can show that income is likely to drop below that 15%, you can use 09-10 as a current financial year assessment.

**DUGGLEBY:** Is that a right? I mean can you actually insist on it being used?

**HOUGHTON:** Yes, you can.

**DUGGLEBY:** Because it sounds to me, Jacqui, as though perhaps you're not aware of this. You can insist on it.

**JACQUI:** Yes, I'm perfectly aware of it. But how can you possibly predict, being in the industry that I'm in and being self-employed, what the figures are going to be for 09-10?

**DUGGLEBY:** But you know the 08-09 ones, and that's a loss?

**JACQUI:** Yes. The 08-09, they will not accept. They will only accept predicted figures for 09-10.

**DUGGLEBY:** Well yeah, but I mean here again it's your prediction, isn't it? I mean you just have a stab at it.

**HOUGHTON:** The way that it would work is they would make a provisional assessment at the start of the year based on figures that you provide and then ask you for confirmation at year end. They'd do a recalculation based on the actual income for that figure - for that period, sorry - and then if not enough had been paid to the student, they'll make a top up payment. Conversely, if they've overpaid, they'll request the overpayment to be repaid.

**DUGGLEBY:** So you're not going to be committing fraud or anything ... I mean, Jacqui, if you just put in some ... You could, I suppose, put in that you're likely to make a loss. I mean would there be anything wrong with that, Keith?

**HOUGHTON:** I don't see why not since you're self-employed.

**DUGGLEBY:** I mean would that help matters, Jacqui?

**JACQUI:** No because you've still got to repay it if ... I mean if my son spent the money ...

**DUGGLEBY:** *(over)* Well hang on a minute. If you make an awful lot of money, I would have thought that's a reasonably fair ... I don't know what you think, David, but it seems to

me reasonably fair. I mean obviously it's guesswork, but ...

**MALCOLM:** There's no ideal system and that's the way the regulations are written - is it has to be in the same year that the student's at university that they use that income. And I guess you're right, if you've actually made more money than you expected then the theory is that you'd have that money there to pay back.

**DUGGLEBY:** I mean if, for example, you just chose a figure which was broadly in line with the lowest amount - which I think is around about £20,000, is it, something like that - as a possible profit, then that would trigger the maximum loan; and if it turned out that you earned more, well there would be a certain amount clawed back. So I think that's all you can do, Jacqui. What's the position in Scotland, Alan?

**SCOTT:** It's exactly the same. There's no difference there. The 15% threshold still applies. I mean previously we didn't really look at scenarios where there were fluctuations of income in terms of self-employment; but we've certainly put measures in place this year, because of the current economic climate, to allow parents to get the awards reassessed during the year.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay. So the mechanism is there, but you do have to exercise a bit of guesswork in order to satisfy the necessary form-filling. Now Janet in Guildford, your call.

**JANET:** Hi. My daughter went to uni 3 years ago and took out a student loan. She then had an illness, which prevented her to carry on the course. She's now on invalidity benefit and that's her only income. But she is being harassed for the £7,000 they say she owes them and they want immediate payment and they're threatening court procedures. When I took out - well she took out the loan - nobody told her that if she didn't finish her course for whatever reason, she would have to pay the money back instantly.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay, so this has been going on for 3 years but you never got any warning in advance. Is that ...?

**JANET:** You know all the adverts and things say oh until you're earning this amount, you

don't have to pay back.

**DUGGLEBY:** Sure. Yes, I understand your point. The thing was I don't quite understand whether there is some small print in it perhaps that people don't notice, David?

**JANET:** This is it.

**MALCOLM:** Hi Janet. It shouldn't be the case that they have to repay immediately. If it's just a normal student loan that your daughter took out in that first year ...

**JANET:** *(over)* No, it's just a standard ...

**MALCOLM:** ... it should be repaid. So just to ask the question: is it just the student loan that they're asking for repayment, or is it the grant that she received at the same time as well that they feel that they want repaid?

**JANET:** It's the loan.

**MALCOLM:** Just the loan. And have they given any reason as to why they want it repaid immediately?

**JANET:** They say because she didn't finish her course, therefore she didn't finish the terms in agreement behind ...

**DUGGLEBY:** *(over)* There's another call or at least an email that came in from Helen in Ashburton and she says her daughter had to leave the degree course because she was ill. She'd been awarded the grant and had received the payment. And then she too says she had to pay the grant back for the period of time she wasn't at university. Now that's a current thing. That's going on at the moment.

**HOUGHTON:** Certainly with grants, they work on you earn an amount of grant for every day you attend the course; and if you withdraw from the course early, even if it's at the end of

the summer term, you'll still be asked to pay some back immediately. With loans, you normally would only go into repayment if you're earning above £15,000 per year.

**DUGGLEBY:** Even if you had to leave through illness?

**HOUGHTON:** Even if you have to leave through ill health. The exception could be if a student withdraws from a course mid-year but doesn't notify the local authority or the Student Loans Company. In those cases, they are receiving money that they're not entitled to ...

**DUGGLEBY:** Ah!

**HOUGHTON:** ... and there have been instances where the SLC will ask for that money back straightaway.

**DUGGLEBY:** If there is hardship though, surely there must be some appeals mechanism, isn't there?

**MALCOLM:** She should discuss with the collections part of the Student Loans Company the situation. And, yes, they have discretion to ... You know they won't be able to just take all that money if that money isn't there. So they need to discuss that with the Student Loans Company and work out a way of repaying that that's acceptable to all.

**JANET:** She's told them she is on invalidity benefit and that is her only income and they're still threatening to take her through the court for the whole £7,000.

**MALCOLM:** I mean if they're really being that intransigent and not listening to what you're saying, the only other suggestion I can make is you go through the complaints process for the Student Loans Company and raise this with the next level up. The complaints process is on their website.

**DUGGLEBY:** And these are the sorts of things where there should be some appeals mechanism which you can go through to see if you can get some ...

**HOUGHTON:** Absolutely.

**DUGGLEBY:** It doesn't sound a very satisfactory thing at all - but as far as an existing grant or something, it's pro rata for the number of days that you actually ...

**HOUGHTON:** *(over)* Yes, that's right.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay, let's move on now to Foiz in Plaistow.

**FOIZ:** Hi.

**DUGGLEBY:** Your call.

**FOIZ:** Hello.

**DUGGLEBY:** Yes, carry on.

**FOIZ:** Alright, okay. Well I'm a sixth former and I'm hoping to go to university this autumn. But actually my dad, he's a pensioner, and I was just wondering concerning that side what grant and what financial support could I actually get?

**DUGGLEBY:** Right. What university are you going to, Foys?

**FOIZ:** University of Greenwich.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay, University of Greenwich. And your father's a pensioner. Obviously he will as your parent have to fill in a form to state what his income is just for general purposes. Presumably he's got his state pension? And is that all?

**FOIZ:** Yeah.

**DUGGLEBY:** He doesn't have any other source of income?

**FOIZ:** No, not really.

**DUGGLEBY:** No. Well obviously it's for him to fill in the form. Can you give us some guidance just basically for Foiz to say what he's got to do?

**MALCOLM:** Hi, Foiz. Basically your dad if he's a pensioner, it's about his income and his taxable income. If your dad only has the state pension, then that's not taxable and therefore it won't be taken into account when assessing what support you get. So you would get the maximum support if that was the only income that your household had.

**DUGGLEBY:** And what is that? What is the amount?

**HOUGHTON:** It's a non-repayable maintenance grant of £2,906. And then everything else on top of that would be loans - so you get a loan for living costs of up to just under £6,500 and a loan for fees up to the level of fees that the University of Greenwich will charge you.

**DUGGLEBY:** Right. And of course London is slightly higher than other parts of the country.

**HOUGHTON:** That's correct.

**DUGGLEBY:** Yes. What about Scotland?

**SCOTT:** In Scotland, certainly students from the lower income backgrounds, they're generally looking at support of round about £5,200, £5,300. And one of the key differences is half that amount would generally be made up of a bursary for the younger students, so effectively at the end of the course students in that position should have less debt.

**DUGGLEBY:** Indeed. Now there's an email I'll couple with this from Sudbury. It's from Patrick and he says, 'What is the amount my son can borrow from the Student Loan Company based on my income? I already have a daughter at university'. Now is there a concession here

for the second child?

**MALCOLM:** Yes. Essentially what would happen is that the household contributions - whatever they calculate based on the income - would be split equally between the two children going to university. So, in other words, it would be as if you'd be assessing half the family income for each child, and then whatever that ended up being would be what would be put towards the cost ...

**DUGGLEBY:** (*over*) And that presumably carries on for third or fourth children?

**MALCOLM:** As long as there are two or however many, yes.

**HOUGHTON:** Bearing in mind the rate at which a contribution becomes payable is different depending on which year the student starts their course because we now have three different funding rates for England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

**DUGGLEBY:** Right. Well this one, I think there's 2 years between these two. There'll be one first year, one third year. So that seems to be the pattern there. (*laughing*) Incidentally, Patrick asks as a supplementary, 'Is there any logic involved in this system?'

**MALCOLM:** Torture.

**DUGGLEBY:** Alan, any logic?

**SCOTT:** Not particularly, no. (*laughs*)

**DUGGLEBY:** Right. Let's see what we can do for Rosie in Clapham.

**ROSIE:** Hi, my question is a Scottish one. My daughter's planning to apply for a deferred place starting in 2011. Currently we're domiciled in Clapham in London, but by the time she takes up her place my husband will have taken early retirement and we will be living in the highlands of Scotland.

**DUGGLEBY:** Are either of you Scottish by birth?

**ROSIE:** No, sadly not.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay. Well there are rules, I think, that govern exactly where you're going to. But this covers quite a number of people who are going to a university in Scotland from England or sometimes living in Scotland and coming to England. So perhaps you could just deal with this specific case first, Alan?

**SCOTT:** Yeah, fine. I mean the key thing in terms of residency rules are generally 3 years in the UK and in Scotland at the start of the academic year, which for most autumn start courses will be 1<sup>st</sup> August. So that certainly allows the flexibility out there of students from the rest of the UK who have since set up residence in Scotland to receive funding through Scotland rather than through the rest of the UK. So as long as you are living in Scotland at the time, then ...

**ROSIE:** When she takes up her place?

**SCOTT:** Yeah, certainly eligible to apply to Scotland for support. One thing we don't generally do is if students are kind of coming up before 1<sup>st</sup> August almost purely to move to Scotland for educational purposes, that generally wouldn't attract support. But because the family home is moving here, then it seems relatively straightforward and you'd apply to the Student Awards Agency, yeah.

**DUGGLEBY:** And vice versa. Do you provide any help for Scottish students coming down to study in England, additional help at all, or do they just fall in with the general rules?

**MALCOLM:** They fall in with the similar funding system that operates for English students, so Scottish students studying down south will still be affected by the variable top up fees and will effectively have to take out a tuition fee loan to support their costs down south, yeah.

**HOUGHTON:** That's right. And in this situation here that family are moving to Scotland

prior to the course starting, if it was a family moving from Scotland to set up home in England - provided that's done before 1<sup>st</sup> September because it's a month different to Scotland for the rest of the UK - then they'd be assessed under the English or Welsh or Northern Irish system depending on which part of the UK they were living in.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay. Now Kate in Newbury, your call?

**KATE:** Hello.

**DUGGLEBY:** Hello Kate.

**KATE:** I am a single parent earning about £5,000 a year, and I receive working tax credit and family tax credit. I wonder what assistance will I get to help my daughter who will be going to Winchester University in October this year?

**DUGGLEBY:** David?

**MALCOLM:** Hi, Kate.

**KATE:** Hello.

**MALCOLM:** Because you're again on a low income, the £5,000 of earnings is well below the threshold for maximum amounts of support. So what we mentioned earlier about a maintenance grant of around £2,900 and then a maintenance loan up to a certain amount - which for Winchester, it would be something in the direction of £4,000 - so that would be what you would get. So you'd get the maximum support from what it sounds.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay, we've got a ...

**KATE:** How do I apply for those, or how does my daughter apply for those?

**MALCOLM:** You would apply directly to Student Finance England, which is the national

body for student finance applications in England now. And you can do that by going to [www.direct.gov.uk/student](http://www.direct.gov.uk/student) finance.

**KATE:** Okay.

**DUGGLEBY:** We've got a couple more questions on tax credits here. One is from Alison in Salisbury and she says, 'When calculating income for the purposes of claiming the allowances, does the income include tax credits? My income last year was £20,000, plus £5,000 in tax credits'. So what would be the position there, Keith?

**HOUGHTON:** In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the general rule with student support income is that if it's taxable, they take it into account; and if it's not taxable, they *don't* take it into account. Now tax credit payments are *not* taxable, so they're ignored, so all that they would look at would be the taxable income in this case.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay. And for you, Alan Scott in Edinburgh, we've got a specific Scottish question - similar sort of theme. It's from Angela in Dundee and she says, 'I'm a lone parent currently working part-time and receiving working tax credits. Could you please confirm how this will affect my student funding as someone told me I wouldn't get my lone parent grant?'

**SCOTT:** Possibly that might be the case. Certainly in Scotland, we do take working tax credits into account if ... and indeed that's classed as student income. There is a disregard of roundabout £1,060, so it would depend on the level of tax credits that she was receiving, but if it was in excess of that amount then it's likely that a proportion of the lone parent grant or potentially *all* of the one parent grant would in effect be wiped out. She would still be entitled if she had any childcare costs for a lone parent childcare grant, which wouldn't be affected by the level of working tax credits she was receiving, so there certainly would still be some support in place.

**DUGGLEBY:** Indeed. Right, we've got an awful lot of emails here, which I'll deal with a couple of emails again concerned with benefits. There's Steve in Cumbria and Carol in Belvedere. They're both basically asking about the rights to claim benefits as soon as their

course ends. ‘Are you entitled to claim benefits as soon as the course ends?’, says Steve. And Carol wants to know when she has to start repaying the loan actually. But let’s deal with the benefits thing first.

**MALCOLM:** Yes as soon as you cease to have student status, you become like any other ordinary citizen, and as long as you make the eligibility requirements you can apply for benefits. Most full-time students can’t claim for benefits because of that status, but as soon as you cease being a student then you can.

**DUGGLEBY:** Right. And then the interest on the loan. Now if you’re on benefits, of course by definition you don’t have to start repaying the student loan, do you, because you haven’t got a job?

**MALCOLM:** That’s right.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay, that’s sorted that one out. And we can move on now to Chris in Greece. Good heavens! Chris, hello.

**CHRIS:** Hello from Greece. I’m Chris. I’m 20 years old, and I found the university that I want to study in and this particular university is Dundee in Scotland. I’m about to apply for the degree through UCAS and I have to take the exams as well. Well my question now is how am I supposed to apply for the grant or loan as I am an EU student?

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay, Chris. Let’s put that to our expert in Scotland. That’s Alan Scott.

**SCOTT:** Hi, Chris. As an EU national, you would certainly be entitled to get your tuition fees paid from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland. In addition to that, you’d have to obviously approach the authorities and the Greek Government as well to find out if there was any additional help you can get from them. In terms of the application process, once you have a confirmed place through UCAS, then you’ll be able to apply online from our website at [www.saas.gov.uk](http://www.saas.gov.uk).

**DUGGLEBY:** Is this a reciprocal arrangement? For example, if somebody in Scotland wanted to go and study in Athens, would they get the same sort of treatment?

**SCOTT:** Probably not. It would depend. Certainly students doing their entire degree courses overseas, generally they *don't* get any support, although there are moves in place to implement an EU portability scheme that will allow Scottish students to take their funding to the rest of the European Union. Generally the only funding that we offer for Scottish students studying out with this country is where they're spending a year overseas as part of their UK based course.

**DUGGLEBY:** What about the English position? And indeed we haven't mentioned Wales or Northern Ireland.

**HOUGHTON:** Well for the rest of the UK in general, if a student from another European Union member state comes here, they can apply to Student Finance Services for a tuition fee loan, but that's the only support they would qualify for. Similarly, if a student went to study in Europe for the entire course, they wouldn't qualify for anything; but if they were there on a year abroad, then they may get funding for that year.

**SCOTT:** And one thing to say is that if a student from the UK, any part of the UK, goes to study in the EU, what should happen is that they're treated the same as other students in that country for the tuition fee purposes. So as it's free in Scotland, that's what EU students get - it's fee tuition there - an EU student in ... sorry a UK student in Greece would get whatever the Greek fee system is.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay, Mary in Everitt, your call. Sorry, Mary in Bristol, I'm sorry.

**MARY:** Hi. My question is about my son who completes his degree this summer, and I think he's finishing up with about an £18,000 loan, and I wonder if it's better for him to pay that off. He does actually have the resources to pay that off, but I'm just concerned that it might not be in his interest to pay it off because I wonder if the Government might eventually cancel student loans.

**DUGGLEBY:** *(laughs)* If only, David. I don't they'll cancel them, but ...

**MARY:** Mind you, these have been very odd economic times, haven't they, and lots of unpredicted things have happened.

**MALCOLM:** Well unfortunately I can't imagine that the Government will rush to cancel student loans as the first thing to do. But essentially if it's worth paying it off for him, it will depend really. Interest will be very low, and particularly from September it will be zero.

**MARY:** It'll actually be zero from September?

**MALCOLM:** It will be zero from September. So it's not worth paying it off I suppose if he has other things that he can use that money for. So if he's got debt from a credit card or something else ...

**MARY:** No, he certainly has no other debt. He's got money in ISA's.

**MALCOLM:** Otherwise, then yes he will certainly be making more interest in savings accounts than he would be saving by paying off the loan. Or possibly he might want to put it down on a deposit on a flat or something like that. And in terms of cancellation, it can be cancelled in certain circumstances, but it'll be some time off before that would apply to your son.

**DUGGLEBY:** David in Eastbourne wondered whether it was worth paying off a loan. He's luckily enough come into a legacy and he says, 'Well should I pay the loan off with the legacy?' Strictly speaking, I suppose no because he could get interest on the legacy whereas he's not going to pay any interest on the loan.

**HOUGHTON:** Again especially from September and the interest being charged on the loan is going to be zero.

**DUGGLEBY:** And incidentally added to that, David, he also asks, 'Is there tax relief on

repayments to the Student Loan Company on what income I earn?"

**MALCOLM:** Sadly not.

**DUGGLEBY:** The answer's no, I'm afraid not. They've thought of that one. There's somebody who's going to get a nice surprise from Nick. I'm sorry, not ... Yes it is. Where's my ... Oh I've lost my thing. It was, yes, Nick in West Devon. Now he's got a lucky nephew. We don't know who the nephew is, but he says he wants to essentially finance Nick's nephew through university and he's wondering how to do it. But most importantly, he's saying if I do do this, will I affect his entitlement - if any - to loans and grants?

**HOUGHTON:** Well if he just gives the nephew, the very *lucky* nephew, a monthly allowance - so perhaps just transfers money into his bank account on a monthly basis - that will have no affect whatsoever. However, if he sets up a trust fund, which then becomes the student's money ...

**DUGGLEBY:** (*over*) He did mention as a possibility.

**HOUGHTON:** ... that would then become unearned income for the student and would then be taken into account in the assessment that Student Finance England do. So by far and away what I would suggest would be the best way to do this would be to give the student just a monthly allowance.

**DUGGLEBY:** So same in Scotland is that, Alan?

**SCOTT:** Yeah, that's exactly the same. The minute it becomes a trust fund, then that has a much bigger impact on the overall award that we can give to students, yeah.

**DUGGLEBY:** Nick also says we should mention it is possible also for grandparents and other benefactors outside the immediate family ... He sort of says you should stress that that's the key to it, isn't it? But he says nothing we do is going to affect the parents or the student as long as we don't make it a sort of contractual thing or anything like that.

**MALCOLM:** Or unless he became the legally adoptive parent of that child.

**DUGGLEBY:** Now we've got John in Oldham. John?

**JOHN:** Oh good afternoon. My question is my daughter is probably going to go to university in 2011. I'm separated from her mother. Who would be liable ... Sorry, whose income would be calculated for the grant and the maintenance contributions?

**HOUGHTON:** Hello, John. It will depend on who your daughter lives with at the time the assessment's done.

**JOHN:** Yes, she lives with her mother.

**HOUGHTON:** So it will be usually based on the mother's income. However there is something in the regulations, something that I'm having an argument with the local authority at the moment about - is if that person who the student lives with has a very, very low income, they can sometimes treat that as unrealistic and then they can decide to go for the other parent's income.

**JOHN:** Right.

**HOUGHTON:** But under the broad sense of how it usually works, it will be whoever the student lives with. And if her mother has a new partner, they'll also look at their income.

**JOHN:** Right. Does it matter whether it's a common-law partner or a married partner?

**HOUGHTON:** It'll just happen to be who lives in the house.

**DUGGLEBY:** Again the Scottish dimension, Alan, quickly?

**SCOTT:** Yeah, the Scottish dimension's exactly the same. We moved to the same system as England in 2008 regarding household income and the income of partners - so we would take

them into account, yes.

**DUGGLEBY:** And one more call. This one from Wendy. Hello, Wendy?

**WENDY:** Hello.

**DUGGLEBY:** Your call, quickly please.

**WENDY:** My son's just finishing his final in a Drama degree and wants to do a Masters or PhD and he wants to know if there's any funding he can get from the LEA or from his loan for that?

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay, well we've got about 45 seconds. We've got a lot of emails as well. We've got Sarah in Glasgow, we've got James in Birkenhead. We have got Mark in London and several others, all again basically asking postgraduate help.

**MALCOLM:** Well Wendy, what course is it your son wants to do? What subject?

**WENDY:** It's Drama, it's Classical Drama.

**MALCOLM:** It would be Drama. I mean possibly the Arts and Humanities Research council. Otherwise it would be something like a career development loan or charitable funding, but there's not a huge amount out there.

**DUGGLEBY:** And Alan in Scotland, your one specifically refers to Sarah and she's going into accounting. She wants to do a further course in that.

**SCOTT:** Yes, slightly different in Scotland. We do fund some postgraduate diploma courses, which tend to be the top postgraduate level. The research based courses such as Masters and PhD's, generally they don't attract funding and it would be via one of the research councils for support, yes.

**DUGGLEBY:** And a final quick one for you, Keith. Mark is going to do a PhD in the area of social work.

**HOUGHTON:** In some postgraduate courses for social work, there is some help available. The NHS Bursaries Unit have information on their website as to exactly what's available because it's quite complex for their postgraduate scheme.

**DUGGLEBY:** Okay. Right, well thanks very much panel. That's David Malcolm from the National Union of Students, Keith Houghton from Kingston University, and Alan Scott from the Student Awards Agency for Scotland. All three have websites where you can find links to our own website, [bbc.co.uk/moneybox](http://bbc.co.uk/moneybox). You can listen again, download a podcast, and call our information line on 0800 044 044. Paul Lewis will keep you up to date with the latest personal finance news in Money Box at noon on Saturday. I'll be back same time next Wednesday afternoon to take calls from the self-employed and anyone running a small business and looking for advice in these testing economic times.