



Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for writing to the Ministry of Education on 8 May 2019 to request the following information:

- *Can you please tell me how many university students who began study in 2018 under the fees-free system have not returned for a second year of study in 2019.*
- *Please include the number of people who fall into this category at each university in New Zealand.*

Your request has been considered under the Official information Act 1982 (the Act).

The Fees-Free policy is still in its early stages so it is too early to properly assess the changing patterns across the tertiary education system. It will take time for the policy to have an effect on participation in tertiary education and influence people's choices. As awareness of the policy grows over time and it becomes more embedded in the tertiary education system, we expect that more learners will consider taking up tertiary education and training.

I can advise you that Student Loan statistics for January to September 2018 show that 31,600 fewer students borrowed to pay tertiary fees. The amount of money students had to borrow for fees also fell by \$193 million on the same time last year. This represents strong progress in the Government's steps to remove financial barriers for New Zealanders accessing tertiary education.

A framework for monitoring and evaluating fees-free tertiary education was developed in 2018 in consultation with other agencies. The framework will report on a set of around 30 indicators across three broad goals and nine specific objectives:

<b>Improving access and affordability</b>	i.	More people participating
	ii.	More affordable study
	iii.	Reduced debt burden
	iv.	Other study barriers reduced
	v.	More engagement with education through life
<b>Improving educational outcomes</b>	vi.	More people achieving qualifications
	vii.	A more educated and skilled population
	viii.	Improved labour market outcomes
<b>Fiscal control and cost effectiveness</b>	ix.	Analysis of actual versus forecast costs

You may be interested to read the full detail of the monitoring framework, which is contained in *Briefing Note: Fees-free tertiary education monitoring framework*, which we supplied to the Minister of Education Hon Chris Hipkins in January 2019.

You can find this document by going to our website at <http://education.govt.nz/advice-seen-by-our-ministers> and selecting the table named **Advice seen by our Ministers – January 2019**.

The first set of reporting under the framework will be produced in July this year, when indicators showing participation and completion rates will be published on our website *Education Counts*. We also anticipate being able to provide data showing any reductions in student loan borrowing costs in October.

Reporting on the progress of students who undertook fees-free study in 2018 will likely be published in 2020, when we receive finalised 2019 study year enrolment information. For this reason, I am refusing your request under section 18(e) of the Act, as the data you have requested is not yet available.

Thank you again for your request. For any further questions on this matter, please contact the Ministry's Media Team in the first instance, at [Media@education.govt.nz](mailto:Media@education.govt.nz).

Section 28(3) of the Act gives you the right to ask an Ombudsman to review my decision. You can do this by writing to [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz).

Yours sincerely



Grant Klinkum  
**Deputy Secretary**  
**Graduate Achievement, Vocations and Careers**