

03: STUDENT FINANCE FUNDED STUDENTS

UNDERGRADUATE, HOME AND EU

Academic Year 2017/18

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INTRODUCTION

This annex to the tuition fee policy provides the detailed information supporting the processes for exchange of data between the University and Student Finance. It also provides the detail of the requirements for reporting progression for the purposes of receiving funding.

UNDERGRADUATE

STUDENT FINANCE

Designated undergraduate courses attract funding from the UK Government (and the devolved administrations) via the Student Loans Company (Student Awards Agency for Scotland for student from Scotland). For ease of reference, '**Student Finance**' refers to both the Student Loans Company (SLC) and the four assessing authorities (listed below) and is used throughout the tuition fee policy and its annexes:

- Student Finance England (SFE)
- Student Finance Wales (SFW)
- Student Finance Northern Ireland (SFNI)
- Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS)

FEE CAPS

The fee cap, set by the UK Government is the maximum fee chargeable for a particular student group or course. The department of Business Innovation and Skills is the department responsible for determining the fee caps and may revise them on an annual basis in line with government policy. Transitional protections notwithstanding the University will maintain its fees in line with the maximum fee cap.

Depending on where they normally live, all students requiring financial support should make an application for a finance assessment with one of Student Finance assessing authorities. This may include an assessment for living cost support and/or a loan for the payment of tuition fees.

Most EU students will only be eligible for tuition fee support. Details about the forms of UK government support available to Home and EU undergraduate students can be found on www.gov.uk.

The fee cap does not apply to students who have already achieved a higher education qualification. These students are not normally eligible for further support from Student Finance and the University is permitted to set the fees.

HOME AND EUROPEAN UNION FEES

The maximum amount of tuition fees that an institution may charge full and part-time Home and EU undergraduate and PGCE students are set by BIS. There are three fee-charging regimes currently in force for these students:

- **Pre 06/07** – for students registering for the first time before the 2006/07 academic year
- **06/07 – 11/12 (Pre 2012)** – for students registering for the first time between 2006/07 and 2011/2012

- **12/13 onwards (Post 2012)** – for students registering for the first time from 2012/2013
 - **2016/17** – introduced changes to the maintenance support for students, this was reflected in the addition of a 2016 funding cohort.
 - **2017/18** – introduced an increase in the fee capⁱ.

COHORTS

Students in receipt of tuition fee support from the SLC are assigned a cohort based on the support package that they are entitled to access.

- For students commencing study on or after 01 September 2012 they are attached to the '2012' cohort.
- For students commencing study on or after 01 September 2016 they are attached to the '2016' cohortⁱⁱ

CHANGE TO FEE REGIME

There are situations when a student's fee regime will change.

- When a student completes or withdraws from a course, where they were charged under an earlier fee regime and later registers on a new course under a new fee regime.
- When a student completes a mode shift, this means that a student switches from a full time course in a full time mode of attendance to a part time course in a part time mode of attendance. Mode shifting will normally cancel any transitional protections that are in place.

TRANSITIONAL PROTECTIONS

Some courses and patterns of study are protected from fee regime changes in some instances by the government, details can be found on the gov.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/education/student-finance> ¹

For students progressing from a foundation degree to a top-up or end-on year with no break in study apart from the long vacation between the two academic years their fee cap will not normally change.

ACADEMIC YEARS

For funding purposes, the academic years start on the dates outlined in the table below. When assessing eligibility on the first day of the academic year these dates apply:

First day of academic year	For courses starting between:
1 st September	1 st August to 31 st December
1 st January	1 st January to 31 st March
1 st April	1 st April to 30 th June
1 st July	1 st July to 31 st July

STUDENT FEE LIABILITY, LIABILITY PERIODS AND TERMS

For the purposes of monitoring student attendance for the collection of fee charges each academic session is divided into liability periods. These liability dates are different to

ⁱ The University is not responsible for the content of external internet sites

semester or teaching block dates. Full details are published in Annex 08; Liability Dates and Withdrawal from the University

The University has an obligation to monitor and report on Student Finance funded undergraduate students three times a year, at the start of each term. A liability period is a period of time in which a student's entitlement to tuition fee funding from Student Finance increases and therefore the liability for payment of fees accrues; liability periods are aligned to term dates rather than to semester or teaching block dates. This is a Student Finance requirement.

STUDENT FINANCE REASSESSMENTS

All student are responsible for applying on time and providing all information and evidence required by student finance to ensure that students receive the correct funding at the right time. In the case of any dispute between the University and Student Finance over a student's fee level the University recognises the authority of Student Finance as the definitive position.

Where the University and/or student believe a Student Finance assessment to be incorrect the assessment will be challenged and student should be prepared to supply more information and evidence as may be required. The University will accept the final decision of Student Finance as definitive and ultimately it is the decision of Student Finance that will be reflected in the fees charged to students.

Student Finance have the right to reassess students and where necessary award or remove funding. The University will reflect these changes in the student fee record. This may mean students have funding removed after it has been paid and may, therefore, become liable for tuition fees. The University will work with students to mitigate the impact of any changes however; students retain ultimate responsibility for the payment of the fees due for their course.

ENTITLEMENT TO TUITION FEE LOANS FOR FUNDED UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Student Finance will make payment to the University in three disbursements, based on the loan liability points illustrated in the table below:

Loan Liability for proportion of Fee Loan	First payment by Student Finance to the University	Proportion of full year's fee paid to the University by Student Finance	Cumulative loan liability	Example Period
Term 1 - Day 1	3 rd Wednesday in October	25%	25%	Sept – Dec
Term 2 – Day 1	1 st Wednesday in February	25%	50%	Jan – April
Term 3 – Day 1	1 st Wednesday in May	50%	100%	April - July

Entitlements and liability come into force and/or accrues on the first day of each term subject to the conditions detailed in Annex 07; Liability Dates and Withdrawal from the University.

Students not applying for support from Student Finance are required to make arrangements for the payment of their fees to complete their registration, see Annex 02; Payment of Fees.

Students who have funding applications rejected by Student Finance after they have started their course will be liable to pay their own tuition fees. Students receiving late notification of rejected applications will become liable to pay their own fees and should contact the University as soon as possible to discuss their options.

Students with tuition fee loans from Student Finance may transfer to another institution following the official start date of their course. In these cases, the University will retain the tuition fee loan for the period up to and including the transfer, as detailed in the table above. Except where the transfer occurs during the cooling off period.

Similarly, for students with approved tuition fee loans transferring into the University following registration at a different institution, the University will expect to receive tuition fee funding from the liability period following the transfer.

The University has aligned all of its liability and withdrawal dates, including those for students not funded by Student finance, to the same pattern. For consistency and ease of interpretation, the University applies the same liability pattern across all of its courses and students groups.

FEE PAYMENT BY STUDENT FINANCE

UK/EU students on a designated undergraduate, integrated masters or PGCE course may be eligible for a tuition fee loan from Student Finance. Students are responsible for entering the correct course and fee information when applying for support.

The University will endeavor to make available information relating to the funding application periods in each year.

Students are responsible for making their funding application in good time regardless of notification by the University.

- For English Student Finance funded students the application cycle is normally open from mid-February for new students and mid-March for returning students.
- Student Finance in the devolved authorities Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland work to their own locally agreed timetables, and details can be found on their respective websites.

Applications for support must be made for each year of study, in a timely manner and for the correct course, course year and amount.

Where appropriate, students should ensure that they submit their Notification of Entitlement letter at registration.

Students applying for tuition fee support from the Student Finance have up to 9 months after the start date of their course in each academic session to make their application.

Students applying late for funding (after the Student Finance application cycle closes usually in May) should expect their tuition and maintenance funding to be delayed. In such cases, students should notify the University of this late application as soon as practicable.

Students taking up a place at the University through the clearing process should inform Student Finance at the earliest opportunity about their change of institution and notify the University that they are expecting to receive funding from Student Finance so that the University may undertake the necessary work to transfer funding from another institution.

DATA RETURNS TO STUDENT FINANCE

For students in receipt of fee support from Student Finance the University is required to return certain information about students and their registration(s) to the Student Loans Company in order to release tuition and maintenance funding. The data returns include details of,

- registration,
- course,
- course duration,
- transfers,
- periods of repeat study,

And

- periods of suspension.

For data checking and payment of tuition fees, the SLC calendar runs on a September to July cycle.

This does not replace the student's **own** responsibility to inform Student Finance of changes to their studies.

Monitoring of student progression between academic years is in accordance with the data returns made to the Higher Education Statistics Agency; this is to ensure that the University is reporting students correctly in all data returns.

In order for students to be counted as progressing from one level of their course to the next for funding purposes they are required to achieve a specific number of credits in each year. The 'credit standard' is usually set at a lower level than the maximum number of credits required for a year to allow students to trail a module in to the following academic year. This may result in an additional charge.

Module composition on a year of study does not influence the credit standard for progression purposes and in regards reporting. For example a student may be taking a majority of level 2 modules but if they did not meet the credit standard to progress from level 1 to level 2 they will be considered a repeating student on level 1 for the purposes of reporting to Student Finance.

Students do not become eligible to progress from one level to the next part way through an academic year even if they complete all modules for the lower level. Progression for reporting to the Student Finance occurs between academic years.

Students not meeting the required credit standard do not progress to the next stage of their course even if, in their next period of registration, the majority of their modules are from the next level.

For example, a standard 3-year degree course has the following typical credit standards:

Stage	Standard credits taken per year as part of the course	Credit standard required at the end of each year to progress to next stage of the course	Stage student progresses to if standard not achieved	Stage student progresses to if standard achieved
1	120	80	1	2
2	120	200	2	3
3	120	360	3	n/a

The Fees and Student Finance Team handle all bulk data returns centrally and submissions are made via the Student Finance online 'portal' system. Staff in the Student Administration Team interacts directly with the information held by Student Finance for individual students.

The data checking processes commence on the first day of term relevant to a students' intake. For a September start, data checking commences 01 September. Data checking processes are run at least weekly for the rest of the year. The first data submission to Student Finance is made in accordance with their calendar in early October any changes to a student registration because of cancellation, withdrawal or suspension is in accordance with the details in Annex 08, Liability Dates and Withdrawal from the University.

Regardless of University provisions, policy and regulations all students in receipt of funding from Student Finance are ultimately subject to the provisions of the Student Support Regulations in regards maximum funding and maximum number of repeat years. The University is ultimately bound to adhere to a final assessment on eligibility and entitlement made by the Student Finance assessing authorities.

Registration Confirmation for Release of Maintenance Funding

Maintenance support is released to students 3-5 working days after the University submits a registration confirmation to Student Finance. Students are responsible for ensuring that a complete and approved funding application is in place and that all necessary documentation, including a signed declaration, has been submitted to Student Finance.

Attendance Confirmation

Tuition fee support from Student Finance is paid directly to the University once Student Finance has received an Attendance Confirmation Return (ACR).

PENDING OR DELAYED SUPPORT FROM STUDENT FINANCE

Students waiting for support from Student Finance are required to arrange for the payment of their fees to the University. Students in this position will be required to provide evidence that they have applied for funding from Student Finance.

In the event of serious delays, students may, at the discretion of the University, arrange a six monthly direct debit with a start date delayed by 4 months; this will allow Student Finance sufficient time to process applications.

For courses starting in	Delayed payment commences
September	January
October	February
November	March
December	April
January	May
February	June
March	July
April	August
May	September
June	October
July	November
August	December

After the receipt of payment from Student Finance, any payment made by the student will be refunded. In the event that funding is not forthcoming from the Student Finance or that delays in resolving funding issues are not likely to be resolved before the end of the second liability period students will be invoiced.

STANDALONE FOUNDATION YEARS

Standalone foundation years do not attract statutory support and UWE does not designate foundation years via Student Finance.

MIXED MODE STUDY

Mixed mode refers to courses specifically designed to allow students to study different years in different modes of attendance e.g. years 1 and 2 full time and year 3 part time. Courses that run with some years taught full time and some taught part time such as this do not attract statutory support.

ⁱ Pending confirmation by the UK Government at the time of publication of this policy

ⁱⁱ New cohort information for 2017 entry not confirmed at the time of publication of this policy