

Briefing for: All staff on our approach to the collection of tuition fees and rental fees 2024/25

Update to [briefing issued 7 June 2024](#)

To be issued: 1 October 2024

To be sent to: Executive Deans, Divisional Directors, Heads of Professional Services for cascade to relevant staff in their areas. Also to be saved on Finance web page and shared in PS Essentials.

Staff briefing regarding collection of student tuition fees and rental fees 2024/25

Following on from my updates in April and June, this briefing sets out the approach we are taking to collecting student tuition fees and rental fees in the 2024/25 academic year. It also explains how staff can support any students who contact them about fee payments or issues they have relating to debt owed to the University. To help staff understand more about how and when we communicate with students about debts over the course of the academic year, please view the [student debt cycle calendar](#) (log in with your usual Sussex username and password), which you are welcome to share with colleagues.

Context

Tuition fees comprise over 50% of University income and fund our Academic and Professional Services staff, our teaching resources, our library, our infrastructure (including IT infrastructure) and our campus.

You can see here how we apply the home undergraduate (UG) tuition fee: [[Where your tuition fee goes : Strategy and funding : About us : University of Sussex](#)]

The majority of home UG student tuition fees are funded by student loans, which we receive directly from the Student Loans Company. Other students commit to pay their fees themselves or demonstrate that they have other funding arrangements, such as sponsorships, when they register to study with us. These students are asked to arrange for fees to be paid in advance or according to an agreed, structured instalment plan allowing payment over the academic year.

To maintain the financial sustainability of the University we rely on all our students to ensure tuition fees (and where relevant, rental fees) are paid. The majority of students do pay their fees, and in this way ensure we can provide staff for teaching, learning, research, student support services and our facilities, now and in the future.

Update on 2023/24 student debt

As per previous updates, we are allowing the maximum time for students to gather resources and to pay their debt, subject to the constraints of the academic timetable and, in some cases, UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) requirements.

Continuing students

Students with historic debt who wish to continue their studies in 2024/25 have been advised that that they can make payments themselves during the registration periods.

Where the student has non-academic debt (e.g. accommodation rental fees, library charges) they may register without settling the debt, but are advised that they may not be able to attend their graduation ceremony until the debt is paid.

A student with historic tuition fee debt which is not paid by 11 October 2024 will not be allowed to register and will be withdrawn from the University. There can be no further flexibility around this date for continuing students.

If an international student is not able to re-register due to tuition fee debt they will be withdrawn from their course. As required by law, the University will report this withdrawal to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) within 10 days. UKVI will then assess the status of their Student Route visa, which is likely to be cancelled.

Students expected to graduate January 2025

PGT students who are expecting to graduate in January, and PGT students who have resits in January 2025 or have a deferred submission of their dissertation to January 2025 (referred to as students on continuation) with debt incurred in 2023/24 were, by exception, allowed to extend the repayment of their debt beyond the end of the academic year, to 19 November 2024.

Students with material tuition fee debt have been informed that they will only be able to graduate once their debt is settled. They will be entitled to receive a notification of marks, for personal information, but this is not an official transcript.

If an international student is not awarded their degree before their student visa expires, they will be ineligible for the Graduate Route Visa. More information on the Graduate Route Visa can be found at [Visas and immigration : University of Sussex](#).

Students with material non-academic debt only (e.g. accommodation rental fees) will not be allowed to attend a graduation ceremony until their debt is paid, but they will graduate and receive their degree 'in absentia'.

All students who leave the University with debt

In all cases if we are unable to reach agreement on the payment of debt after a student has left the University, the University may have to use the services of a debt referral agency to recover the debt owing.

Our approach in 2024/25

Over the summer the University Executive Team approved the approach to tuition and rental fee collection for 2024/25. This builds on the work first reported in April 2024 where teams from across the University were working together to support student debt recovery, with valuable input from USSU.

In 2024/25 we will apply our existing policy and procedures whilst continuing to balance the need to maximise the collection of University income with consideration for the wellbeing of our students and supporting them to continue with their academic studies. It is very important to all of us that our students have a positive experience of their time at University and leave us with the academic outcomes they have worked for.

The University student debt recovery policy is here: [Student Debt Recovery Policy](#)

A full calendar, setting out key points in the academic year, the financial cycle and the associated student engagement is [available to view](#) (log in with your usual Sussex username and password). Teams across Finance, School Professional Services, DSE, the Library, Communications and IT will be working together to ensure that resources are organised around this plan to support our students in meeting their liabilities to the University.

It is important for our community to recognise that the financial sustainability of the University depends on the collection of our income, and to support this. In accordance with our policy,

proportionate sanctions will be enforced where student debt exists from October onwards. This includes the withdrawal of IT and library services, withdrawal from studies and the requirement to exit University accommodation. Students with material non-academic debt will only be able to attend a graduation ceremony once their debt is paid. Students with material tuition fee debt will not graduate until their debt is paid.

How all staff can support students

Colleagues are able to support students directly and through referral to University services.

The best and kindest way to support our students is by helping them to reach the appropriate University services and being honest about the University's approach to debt. Staff in direct contact with students might help them to understand that the University has limited funds and that by registering with Sussex they are under a contractual obligation to pay their tuition and (where applicable) accommodation rental fees. This is in line with messages that we have shared with students in recent letters letting them know that tuition fees enable us to pay tutors, provide learning opportunities and spaces, staff and run the Library service – and provide essential support to students in need through our wellbeing and student support services.

- **Direct support**

Please encourage students to:

- take financial matters seriously, to plan ahead and act as soon as possible
- check their emails from Finance, and if necessary take the time to make sure they have understood what is being asked for and have checked their account on Sussex Direct.

- **University services**

- Students requiring guidance to understand the personal or academic impact of a decision, for example if they are unable to pay fees and are therefore considering taking a period of temporary withdrawal, should be referred to the My Sussex portal where they can raise an enquiry with specialist advisors for individualised advice
- International students who need support to understand the impact of non-payment sanctions on their student visa should be referred to student visa information on the Student Hub and/or encouraged to contact an International Advisor by raising an enquiry via My Sussex under My International Journey.
- Students who are in hardship or have other challenges affecting their ability to act should be referred into the existing support services for students in line with existing referral protocols
- Students who do not understand their fee liability or how to pay should email creditcontrol@sussex.ac.uk or telephone 01273 678076 on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 4pm.

Note that Finance does not directly consider requests for payment flexibility due to hardship, students should be signposted to resources as above. Finance cannot share personal information about a student with a member of staff.

Further support and advice

The Student Centre offers advice and guidance to students on issues such as managing money and managing mental health. All students can take advantage of the financial advice and information provided by the University at [Money advice : University of Sussex](#) on the Student Hub.

There is also information about financial support from the University Hardship funds and welfare loans, and Blackbullion's free financial education platform.

If you have further questions or comments regarding the process to collect student fees please contact Sian Thomas (Deputy Director of Finance) or Jacinda Humphry (Chief Financial Officer) through the [Finance Service Desk](#).

If you have further questions or comments regarding the planned student engagement please contact internal.communications@sussex.ac.uk.