

## **Briefing for: All staff on our next steps in collection of tuition fees and rental fees January - 2025**

### **Update to briefing issued November 2024**

#### **To be issued: January 2025**

To be sent to: Executive Deans, Divisional Directors, Heads of Faculty Operations for cascade to relevant staff in their areas. Also to be saved on the Finance web page.

#### **Staff briefing regarding collection of student tuition fees and rental fees - January 2025**

Following on from my [update in November](#), this briefing sets out what will be happening to collect outstanding termly tuition fee and rental fee (accommodation) instalments which were due by 14 January 2025.

This briefing is intended to ensure that all staff working with students are fully informed and are able to support affected students appropriately.

#### **What is happening now**

It is essential for the financial sustainability of the University that our students meet their financial commitments and make payments on time.

Whilst the overwhelming majority of our students do make their payments as agreed, a significant minority do not engage with Finance or other University services or pay their fees until sanctions are imminent or actually applied.

In accordance with the published [Student fee collection cycle 2024/25: information for University staff](#) and our collection procedures described in previous briefings:

- Students who have not settled their tuition fee or rental fee instalments in time will receive reminder letters on 21 January 2025 and 28 January 2025. These are emailed to students at their University of Sussex email address.
- Students who do not settle their termly tuition fee instalment are at risk of suspension of IT and Library services on or after 4 February 2025. They will receive an email to their personal email address notifying them when their IT and Library access has been suspended and detailing what they need to do next. They will no longer have access to University email accounts, campus Wi-Fi, Sussex Direct, Canvas or Library services.
- Students who do not settle their termly tuition fee instalment within two weeks of suspension of IT and Library services are at risk of withdrawal from the University. Students who are withdrawn from the University will need to leave University accommodation.
- Students who do not settle their termly accommodation rental fee instalment are at risk of receiving a notice to terminate their licence on or after 11 February 2025. This will require them to leave University accommodation within 28 days. IT and Library access is not suspended where students have paid their tuition fees but have rental fee debt, and students who only have rental fee debt are not at risk of withdrawal from the University.

As I explained in my [November briefing](#), we recognise that it is not appropriate to apply sanctions in certain situations and a number of students were exempted from non-payment sanctions last term in order to allow them time to organise their funding or to withdraw from their studies until they can afford to make their payments. These students have been contacted proactively since November to remind them that action is needed.

Students who came forward last term to request payment arrangements in line with the timing of their third party funding (e.g. monthly bursaries) will continue to be exempt from termly

sanctions. PGR students with teaching responsibility this term will also be exempt from sanctions, as well as students awaiting the outcome of relevant complaints or appeals to the University, or where the Director for the Student Experience has recommended a postponement of sanctions owing to known and significant wellbeing concerns.

We will be using the same procedures piloted in October and November last year which are described in the [November briefing](#). These worked effectively to encourage students to take action and minimise disruption as far as possible.

[Comprehensive FAQs](#) for students are published on the Student Hub and there is further guidance for staff below.

### **Supporting our students**

We know that everyone in our community will wish to support students who are affected by our fee collection processes and to maintain a fair and manageable approach for all students.

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. We know that many of our students face significant financial challenges. These pressures, compounded by economic factors both in the UK and internationally, require a clear, consistent approach from the University to ensure fair support for all students, past and present.

The Finance, Faculty and Student Services teams have worked hard to create clear processes and resources to support students. Staff are asked to encourage students to access these resources, read the information sent to them and, where appropriate, engage with student services early via [the Student Centre](#). Finance should only be contacted where there are queries regarding how and when to pay.

Staff can familiarise themselves with advice to students using the published [student FAQs](#).

In all cases we ask that staff refrain from contacting services on behalf of individual students, outside of existing referral protocols. While we understand the well-intentioned nature of such advocacy, it places additional pressure on University services and leads to delays. The offer of direct interventions by staff may also lead students to believe that there can be flexibility in University policy, which is not the case.

### **University services**

Our [student FAQs](#) explain where and how students can get the help they need. In summary:

There is access to specialist Finance staff in the Student Centre by appointment only, and by email at [creditcontrol@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:creditcontrol@sussex.ac.uk). To book a face to face appointment with Finance, students should email [Finance.appointments@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:Finance.appointments@sussex.ac.uk).

Students can be signposted to raise an enquiry via the [My Sussex online student support portal](#) and be connected directly with the relevant service depending on their need.

Alternatively, the Student Centre Welcome & Triage team are available to assist students to find the information they need or to support them to access specialist services. The team are available in person (8.30am-5pm weekdays) or by calling 01273 876767 (10am-3pm weekdays).

Topics covered might include:

- Students requiring advice and guidance to understand the personal or academic impact of a decision. For example, if a student is unable to pay fees and is considering taking a period of temporary withdrawal, they can access information about withdrawal and the

support available via the [Student Hub](#), or be connected with the Student Advice team by raising an enquiry via [My Sussex](#). Note that students are also encouraged to discuss their situation with their Academic Advisor.

(NB Where students are considering withdrawal from their studies, it is important to note that continuing studies on or after 27 January creates further fee liability under University policy, so they do need to act rapidly to avoid incurring essentially another term's fees, dependent on their course of study. Students who have contacted Finance or relevant DSE services have been made aware of this.)

- International students needing support to understand the impact of non-payment sanctions on their student visa can access information and support available on the Student Hub [Visa and Immigration pages](#) or raise an enquiry via [My Sussex](#) and be connected with the International Advice team.
- Students who are in hardship or experiencing other financial challenges, or have an issue with their Student Finance England application, can find money and funding information on the [Student Hub](#) or raise an enquiry and be connected with the University's Money Advisor or Student Funding team via [My Sussex](#).
- Students experiencing significant wellbeing or welfare challenges affecting their ability to act should be referred into support services in line with existing internal referral protocols.
- Students with queries regarding housing charges should contact [housing@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:housing@sussex.ac.uk).
- Students with queries regarding tuition fee status should follow guidance on the [University's Fee Status webpage](#).
- Students with queries regarding continuation fees should email [studentprogress@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:studentprogress@sussex.ac.uk)
- Students who do not know how much to pay, or how to pay, should contact Finance by email at [creditcontrol@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:creditcontrol@sussex.ac.uk), or book an appointment to see Finance colleagues in person at the Student Centre by emailing [Finance.appointments@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:Finance.appointments@sussex.ac.uk).
- Students with funding in place but who are experiencing particular circumstances that are preventing them from accessing their funds to meet University due dates should contact Finance by email at [creditcontrol@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:creditcontrol@sussex.ac.uk) or in person at the Student Centre. They will be required to present third party evidence of their ability to fund their studies, e.g. bank statements, loan agreements.

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

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).

If you have further questions or comments regarding the ongoing student engagement please contact [internalcommunications@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:internalcommunications@sussex.ac.uk).