Funding for students who have opted to take a period of ‘Voluntary Interruption’ from their studies

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact Financial Support:
t: +44 (0)115 823 2071
e: financialsupport@nottingham.ac.uk

This factsheet provides financial information for UK ‘home’ undergraduate students during the period they have opted to take a voluntary interruption of their studies. (Student Finance may refer to this as a period of ‘suspension’.)

A student can ask to interrupt their course for a specified period for a number of reasons including: ill health; pregnancy; financial reasons; academic reasons; caring responsibilities.

NB The period of interruption has to be agreed with the relevant School or Department.

What does this mean for me?
If you interrupt for a full academic year, then you do not register with the University for that period. If you interrupt for a semester or term you register with the University at the start of the semester when you return to carry on with your course.

During the period of interruption you will not usually receive any statutory support from the Government via the Student Loans Company (SLC), unless you are interrupting due to ill health or pregnancy. In that case you may receive funding for 60 days from the date the period of interruption commenced.

If you interrupt part way through the academic year and you have received financial support via a grant and or loan, you may be asked to repay any overpayment the SLC have made you. You should be aware that part year funding will count as a full year’s funding when the SLC calculate your years of entitlement.

The University will not pay you any Bursary and/or Scholarship while you are within a period of interruption.

What about tuition fees?
If you interrupt part way through the year then you may still have to pay part or full tuition fee. Your eligibility for the fee loan will depend on when you interrupt your course, and whether or not you intend to return to study within the same academic year.

- At Nottingham you will not be charged any fee if you are a NEW student and interrupt within the first three weeks of the academic year and you do not return to your course until the following academic year. Continuing students become liable for 25% of the fee on Term 1, day 1.

- If you interrupt your course during the academic year there are key points where you become liable for a percentage of the fee, and if eligible, you will be able to have a tuition fee loan to cover the appropriate fee:
Term 1, day 1 (or see new students above) – 25% of the fee
Term 2, day 1 – 25% of the fee
Term 3, day 1 – 50% of the fee
(See www.nottingham.ac.uk/fees for full fee tables.)

How can I fund my living costs while I am on a voluntary interruption?

You will need to find a source of income for the relevant period, which is usually either a semester or a year. The majority of students find work; some return home to live and manage with family support.

Whilst there is no automatic access to student loans or grants during a period of interruption, in cases where this will cause financial hardship you can write to the SLC to request they consider providing ‘funding through a period of interruption’. You should apply to your funding body; for example if you usually live in England address your letter to:

The Discretionary Payments Team
Student Finance England
PO Box 210
Darlington
DL1 9HJ

Points to include:

1. Reason for interruption and evidence, if this is due to ill health or other extenuating circumstances
2. Length of interruption
3. Evidence of financial hardship e.g. 3 months bank statements; a copy of your rent agreement

Student Finance will then consider your request and advise you of the outcome.

Students are NOT usually entitled to any state benefits unless they have dependants, a disability or long term medical condition. However, if you are not able to return to your studies straight away after a period of illness or caring responsibilities, you may be able to claim Jobseeker’s Allowance and Housing Benefit until your agreed date of return to your course or one year after you interrupt your studies (whichever is sooner). If you remain ill for more than 28 weeks you may be able to claim Employment and Support Allowance. Further information is available from your local Jobcentre Plus or Housing Benefit office or contact the Student Advice Centre on +44 (0)115 846 8730.

Already signed a housing contract for the period of interruption?

If you have signed a contract for a room/house then you are legally bound to pay rent as agreed. If you are successful in finding work, or have sufficient family financial support, then this may not be a problem.

If you know that you are going to struggle to pay the rent try to find a replacement tenant as soon as possible. If you can, talk to your housemates and explain what is happening; they may know of someone who would be happy to move in.

Visit a Welfare Advisor in the Student Advice Centre, Portland Building or telephone +44 (0)115 846 8730 for advice.
Do I need to pay council tax?

If the period of interruption is within the start and expected completion date of your course, then you may be able to continue to claim council tax exemption. Contact the Student Services Centre on 0115 951 3710 as you will need an exemption certificate to send to your local council.

Financial difficulties?

The Financial Support Team may be able to help. We offer support and advice to students, can make referrals to other support services and can advise on the availability of support/hardship funds. (For full contact details see Useful Contacts)

Will this impact on my eligibility for funding for future years of study?

Every eligible student is entitled to funding for the length of their course plus a year to use for a period of repeat study. This extra year is sometimes referred to as a ‘Gift Year’.

All years of study, even if self-funded, are deducted from this entitlement. Any part-year attendance is counted as a full year within the entitlement calculation so, if you interrupt your studies a few days after the start of the academic year, you will still have used one year of your funding entitlement.

If you haven’t completed any other previous study, and this is your first and only course interruption, the remaining years of your course should be funded as usual because you have access to the gift year. If you have already used the gift year funding, due to a previous interruption or previous study on a different course, you may have to self-fund part or all of the remainder of your course.

If self-funding you would not be eligible for the Tuition Fee Loan or Maintenance Grant, but you would be eligible to apply for the Maintenance Loan (which can still be means-tested), DSA support and supplementary grants such as Parents Learning Allowance, Adult Dependant Grant and Childcare Grant (if applicable).

If you have a means-tested assessment carried out by Student Finance you may also be eligible to apply for the University Core Bursary.

If you have already used your gift year of funding, and are repeating a period of study due to ‘Compelling Personal Reasons’ or ‘CPR’ (e.g. ill health, disability), you may be able to apply to Student Finance to be funded for more than your standard entitlement. For more information please refer to our CPR factsheet.

If you are studying on a NHS funded course your entitlement to funding will not be the same as if you were funded by Student Finance. Please contact the NHS Bursaries team for clarification on +44 (0)300 330 1345

If you are considering interrupting your course speak to the Financial Support Team based in the Student Services Centre, Portland Building. They can give help and advice on student finance and funding - See Useful Contacts.
Useful contacts

**National contacts**

**Student Finance England**  
w: [www.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.gov.uk/studentfinance)  
t: +44 (0)300 100 0607  
(This site includes information/links to support for non-English domiciled students)

**Student Finance Wales**  
w: [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk](http://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk)  
t: +44 (0)300 200 4050

**Student Finance NI**  
w: [www.studentfinanceni.co.uk](http://www.studentfinanceni.co.uk)  
t: +44 (0)300 100 0077

**Student Awards Agency for Scotland**  
w: [www.student-support-saas.gov.uk](http://www.student-support-saas.gov.uk)  
t: +44 (0)300 555 0505

**University contacts**

**Financial Support, Student Services Centre**  
Advice on all aspects of student finance including Student Loans, Government grants, University scholarships, bursaries and support funds.  
t: +44 (0)115 823 2071  
e: financialsupport@nottingham.ac.uk  
w: [www.nottingham.ac.uk/financialsupport](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/financialsupport)

**Academic Support and Disability Support, Student Services Centre**  
Study support, support for students with dyslexia, dyspraxia and other specific learning difficulties and disabilities.  
t: +44 (0)115 823 2070 or +44 (0)115 951 3710  
e: dyslexia-support@nottingham.ac.uk or disability-support@nottingham.ac.uk  
w: [www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices)

**Student Administration**  
Student Services Centre, Portland Building, University Park  
t: +44 (0)115 951 3710

**The University of Nottingham Students’ Union Student Advice Centre**  
A confidential service available to all University of Nottingham students, giving advice and information on a range of matters, such as housing, money and academic issues.  
t: +44 (0)115 846 9730  
e: SUAdvice@nottingham.ac.uk  
w: [www.su.nottingham.ac.uk/helpadvice](http://www.su.nottingham.ac.uk/helpadvice)

All information was correct at the time of writing and is based on data from Gov.uk, The University of Nottingham, and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

We make every effort to ensure the accuracy of the information we provide however it can only give general guidance. We would always advise you to contact the relevant funding bodies referenced in relation to your specific circumstances.

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