

STUDENT DEBT POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTACT DETAILS

The Student Debt Policy details the University's expectations and procedures for the collection of all student related debt. Whilst the policy sets out the timescales for payment and sanctions for non-adherence, the University recognises that in some circumstances students may face financial hardship which will impact on their ability to pay. The University takes the welfare of our students seriously and can offer a variety of support and assistance. Should any student find themselves in financial difficulty, it is imperative that they contact Credit Control who can advise of the support available within the University.

The University accepts many different forms of payment, further details can be found at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/finance/paying.php> Details of the provision of statements and reminders, for the various categories of fees are provided in the relevant sections of this policy. The policy also details actions that may be taken to recover debt should a student or sponsor fail to either make payment, adhere to an agreed payment plan or to make contact with Credit Control or Registry regarding settlement of their account balance.

Students who are having difficulty making payments should contact either Credit Control or Student Support Services as appropriate.

Contact Details

Credit Control

Telephone: 01224 273517

Email: creditctr@abdn.ac.uk

Appointments: Can be requested by telephone or email

Fees Team

Telephone: 01224 273505

Email: tuitionfees@abdn.ac.uk

Student Support Services

Telephone: 01224 273935

Email: student.support@abdn.ac.uk

US Loan

Telephone: 01224 272046

Email: usloans@abdn.ac.uk

www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/finance/us-federal-direct-loans

2. INVOICES – PAYMENT TERMS

Payment of all invoices must be made in full within 30 days from date of invoice or alternatively a suitable payment plan must be agreed, details of the plans available are noted below under the specific headings.

3. DEFINITION OF ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC DEBT TYPES

Academic Debt

Tuition fees
Library fines
Print budget
Field trips
Graduation fees
Resit fees

Non-Academic Debt

Accommodation fees
Non-Academic fines for disciplinary offences
Loan equipment
Other miscellaneous charges

ACADEMIC DEBT

4. TUITION FEES

Tuition fees invoices will be sent (in paper format) to a student's term time address. Details of tuition fees are also available from the Student Finance website (www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/finance/). Students must confirm the value of their fees as part the eRegistration process and have the opportunity to query charges with the Tuition Fees team. The process offers either payment in full, or a payment plan requiring a 50% payment in advance of/during registration, followed by three equal and consecutive monthly instalments from the date of the invoice. Further information can be obtained at www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/finance/index

4.1. Tuition Fees collection process - Students

Days (approx. from due date)	Action
Reminder	A reminder will be sent out approximately 1 week before the due date highlighting that the invoice is about to become due for payment. This will be e-mailed to the student's university email address
5 Days	First letter sent advising student that the debt remains outstanding and is now overdue.
15 Days	Second letter sent advising student that the debt remains unpaid and the student ID card will now be invalidated. Full payment is required to re-validate the ID card.
30 Days	Third letter sent reminding student that debt remains unpaid and an administration charge of £30 will now be applied for outstanding fees greater than £500.
60 Days	Fourth letter sent requesting an explanation as to why the fees remain outstanding. Failure to pay may result in a student being barred from the re-registration process as per section 4.2.

The correspondence detailed above will be sent to students via e-mail or letter depending on the time of year (refer to section 11 Communication for further information). In addition statements are sent to all customers with an outstanding balance on a monthly basis.

4.2. Implications for non-payment of tuition fees

- **Student ID card & Library Rights** – once the second reminder letter for non-payment of tuition fees has been issued, the student's ID card will be invalidated for tuition debt of £500 or greater. This will deny access to buildings that requires a swipe access and the student will be unable to borrow books from the Library. The ID card will be reinstated once the University receives payment in full and this will normally be done within 5 working days of the payment.

If the debt remains unpaid after the above process the following sanctions will be placed against the student:

- **Returning student barred from re-registering and will be withdrawn from study** – registration into the next academic year could be denied dependant on the size of the debt. If access to eRegistration is blocked because of debt the student will not be a registered student, and should not remain on campus, attend classes or undertake research.

Students will not be eligible for a student loan or scholarship payments etc. Any student holding a Tier 4 Visa will also have their Visa reported to the Home Office Immigration authorities, UKVI.

- **Non-registered student** –debts will be passed to Debt Collectors who will contact the Student directly. The University reserves the right to pass on any third party recovery fees in the pursuit of an unpaid debt. On payment of debt, full tuition fees for the next academic year are required in advance of being allowed to register.
- **Tier 4 visa holder** – international students not registered on time in each academic year holding a Tier 4 visa will have their visa reported to the Home Office Immigration Authorities, UKVI.
- **Renewal of Tier 4 Visa** - students with outstanding tuition debt will be required to pay the debt and all of their tuition fees for the next academic year before a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) for a Tier 4 Visa renewal can be considered.
- **Readmission to study** - students with outstanding tuition debt will be required to pay the debt and all of their tuition fees for the next academic year before an offer of readmission can be confirmed.
- **Correspondence** – students with outstanding debt will not be entitled to receive any letter, certificate of award, completion certificate or transcript until the debt is paid in full.

4.3. Tuition Fees collection process - Sponsors

Parents or guardians, family members, friends cannot be classed as sponsors. A student is classed as a sponsored student if funded by SAAS¹, SLC², their home government or any other organisation, company or University scholarship, etc.

Where a student has confirmed that they will be funded by a sponsor, the University will invoice the sponsor directly. The student should ensure that the University is provided with full contact details for the sponsor prior to registration. It is the student's responsibility to provide the relevant paperwork to the University as proof of a sponsorship, such as an award.

¹ Student Awards Agency for Scotland

² Student Loan Company

Days (approx. from due date)	Action
Monthly	Statement sent advising sponsor that the debt is overdue and the consequence of non-payment is the fee being transferred to the student.
15 Days	First letter advising student that their sponsor has not paid and to contact their sponsor to ensure the University receives payment promptly.
45 Days	Student is advised that they will become personally liable for payment.

The correspondence detailed above will be sent to sponsors via e-mail or letter, depending on the contact details held. Correspondence to students will be sent via e-mail or letter depending on the time of year (refer to section 11 Communication).

Where a sponsor fails to make payment by the date specified by our Tuition fees team, the fee liability will become the responsibility of the student and the standard tuition debt procedure will be followed, see section 4.1 above.

5. ONLINE PROGRAMMES AND SHORT COURSE TUITION FEES

Online programme and short course tuition fee invoices will be sent (in paper format) to the student's term time address or by e-mail to their personal e-mail account. For online courses purchased and paid in full via the Online Store, the payment confirmation e-mail is the invoice and receipt.

5.1. Online Programmes and Short Courses Tuition Fees Collection Process - Students

Tuition fees for online learning must be settled in advance of the course commencing. Should fees remain outstanding the following collection process will apply:

Days (from course start date)	Action
Reminder	A reminder will be sent out approximately 1 week before the course start date highlighting that the invoice is due for payment prior to the commencement of the course.
5 Days	First letter sent advising the student that the debt remains outstanding and is now overdue.
15 Days	Second letter advising the student that the debt remains unpaid and access to the course will now be removed and ID card invalidated.
30 Days	Third letter sent reminding the student that debt remains unpaid and an administration charge of £30 will now be applied for outstanding fees greater than £500.
60 Days	Fourth letter sent advising the student will be de-registered and the debt may be passed to the University's Debt Collector.

The correspondence detailed above will be sent to students via e-mail or letter depending on the time of year (refer to section 11 Communication for further information). In addition statements are sent to all customers with an outstanding balance on a monthly basis.

5.2. Implications of non Payment of Online Programme and Short Course Tuition Fees

- **Access to the online courses and materials** will be removed.
- **Future access to online courses** – students with outstanding online tuition fee debt may be required to pay the outstanding debt before being granted access to another course (all delivery methods).
- **Correspondence** - students with outstanding debt will not be entitled to receive any letter, certificate of award, completion certificate or transcript until the debt is paid in full.

5.3. Online Programmes and Short Courses Tuition Fees – Sponsors

Parents or guardians, family members, friends cannot be classed as sponsors. A student is classed as a sponsored student if funded by SAAS³, SLC⁴, their home government or any other organisation, company or University scholarship, etc.

Where a student has confirmed that they will be funded by a sponsor, the University will invoice the sponsor directly. The student should ensure that the University is provided with full contact details for the sponsor prior to registration. It is the student's responsibility to provide the relevant paperwork to the University as proof of a sponsorship, such as an award. The sponsor must settle the fees for online learning in advance of the course commencing.

Days (from course start date)	Action
Reminder	Letter sent advising sponsor that the debt is due prior to the commencement of the course.
Monthly	Letter sent advising sponsor that the debt is overdue and the consequence of non payment is the fee being transferred to the student.
15 Days	First letter advising the student that their sponsor has not paid and to contact their sponsor to ensure the University receives payment promptly.
45 Days	Student is advised that they will become personally liable for payment.

The correspondence detailed above will be sent to sponsors via e-mail or letter, depending on the contact details held. Correspondence to students will be sent via e-mail or letter depending on the time of year (refer to section 11 Communication).

Where a sponsor fails to make payment by the date specified by our Tuition fees team, the fee liability will become the responsibility of the student and the standard tuition debt procedure will be followed, see section 5.1 above.

³ Student Awards Agency for Scotland

⁴ Student Loan Company

NON-ACADEMIC DEBT

6. ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation invoices are displayed on the e-Accommodation portal only. Payment is required either by termly instalment as per the accommodation contract or by payment plan. Payment plans allow for payment of the annual rent over nine/twelve monthly instalments from September to May/August (duration of the accommodation contract). Payment plans for accommodation lets for less than an academic year are dealt with on a case by case basis.

The accommodation contract states:

The Student will pay the Rent to the University by the instalments on the dates set out in paragraph 7 of the Schedule. Failure to adhere to University payment terms (30 days of due date for payment) may result in an administration fee of £30.00 payable for each overdue instalment.

If the Rent or any part thereof or any other money payable in terms hereof is in arrears or unpaid for a period of at least thirty days after the same has become due (whether formally demanded or not), or in the event of the breach of any of the obligations on the part of the Student herein contained, or in the event that the Student ceases to be a matriculated student of the University, the University may terminate the Lease as provided for in Clause 2.2 hereof and re-enter the Accommodation and take possession of the Accommodation, together with the fittings and fixtures therein and that without prejudice to any right or remedy which the University may have in respect of antecedent breach of the observance by the Student of any of the provisions of this Agreement.

6.1. Accommodation fees collection process – Students

Days (approx. from due date)	Action
Reminder	A reminder will be sent out approximately 1 week before the due date highlighting that the invoice is about to become due for payment.
8 Days	First letter sent advising student that the debt remains outstanding and is now overdue.
22 Days	Second letter requesting the student to attend a meeting with Campus Services and Credit Control. The aim of this meeting is to secure payment or identify the reason for non-payment
40 Days	Third letter sent advising student that the debt remains unpaid and an administration charge of £30 is applied against the account for debt in excess of £500.
70 Days	Fourth letter requesting the student to attend a meeting with Campus Services and Credit Control. The aim of this meeting is to secure payment or identify the reason for non-payment.
170 Days	Fifth letter sent to student advising of the implications of non-payment, including potential termination of contract in exceptional circumstances.

The correspondence detailed above will be sent to students via e-mail or letter depending on the time of year. In addition statements are sent to all students with an outstanding balance on a monthly basis.

6.2. Implications for non-payment of Accommodation Fees

Should debt remain unpaid the account may be passed to Debt Collectors who will contact the student directly. We reserve the right to pass on any third party recovery fees in the pursuit of an unpaid debt. Students with University accommodation fee debt may not be granted future leases at University or University managed accommodation in future.

7. OTHER INVOICES – STUDENTS

Other charges applied to the student account during the year must be paid in full by the given due date; otherwise the process below will be followed:

7.1. Other Invoices Collection process - Students

Days (approx. from due date)	Action
15 Days	First letter sent advising customer/student that the debt remains outstanding and is now overdue.
30 Days	Second letter sent requesting payment of the outstanding balance.
60 Days	Third letter sent requesting payment and advising that failure to make payment may result in the account being passed to the Debt Collector.

7.2. Implications for non-payment

Should debts remains unpaid after the above process the account may be passed to Debt Collectors. We reserve the right to pass on any third party recovery fees in the pursuit of an unpaid debt.

8. PAYMENT PLANS

If a student is unable to pay an invoice by the due date, they should contact the Credit Control section immediately. The University offers payment plans for students predominantly for tuition and accommodation fees. The University can refuse to offer a payment plan at any time.

Failure to adhere to any payment plan will result in the agreement being cancelled and an administration charge of £20 will be applied against the student account.

8.1. Instalment Plans by Direct Debit

The direct debit will be set up against the customer's bank account and will be collected on or around the specified date as agreed on the plan. Confirmation of the payment plan will be sent to the student once the plan has been processed. Further information regarding the plans offered can be found under the tuition and accommodation sections (sections 4 and 5 respectively).

As above, the dates are "due by" dates and are not normally adjustable, however, the University may consider some amendment in extreme circumstances. Cases for adjustment must be made to Credit Control and will be considered on an individual basis.

Collection Process & Penalties

Days (approx. from due date)	Action
Reminder	A reminder will be sent approximately 1 week before the due date highlighting that the instalment is about to become due for payment.
4 Days	The direct debit failure cycle will advise the student that the University has been unable to collect the instalment. The follow up action on this will be different depending on the reason for failure: <ul style="list-style-type: none">insufficient funds – the University will advise that it will attempt to re-collect the instalment on a specified date.mandate cancelled – the plan will be cancelled and an administration fee of £20 will be applied accordingly.
8 Days	First letter advising student that the instalment is outstanding
20 Days	Second letter sent advising student that the plan is now cancelled and an administration fee of £20 is applied

The University will only try one re-collection per instalment before cancelling the agreement and applying the administration fee of £20.

8.2. Instalment Plans by Alternative Payment Method

The instalment dates are “due by” dates and are not normally adjustable, however, the University may consider some amendment in extreme circumstances. Contact Credit Control before the instalment is due and the University will look at these on an individual basis.

Collection Process & Penalties

Days (approx. from due date)	Action
Reminder	A reminder will be sent approximately 1 week before the due date highlighting that the instalment is about to become due for payment.
8 Days	First letter advising student that the instalment is outstanding.
20 Days	Second letter sent advising student that the plan is now cancelled and an administration fee of £20 is applied.

8.3. Instalment Plans for US Loans & Veterans Affairs (VA) students

The US Loan Administrator will work closely with the Credit Control section and ensure payment plans are input against the accounts to reflect when the loan payments will be released; students will not be asked for confirmation of this. A similar arrangement is in place for VA funded students.

Collection Process & Penalties

Days (approx. from due date)	Action
Reminder	A reminder will be e-mailed approximately 1 week before the due date highlighting that the instalment is about to become due for payment. If no e-mail address held for the student the process will not run.
8 Days	First letter advising student that the instalment is outstanding.
20 Days	Second letter sent advising student that the plan is now cancelled and an administration fee of £20 is applied.

8.4. Exceptional plans

For students who have no control of when their funding is released, such as Student Loan Company (SLC) loans or Norwegian funding, the University may enter into an agreement matching when the funding is released. Credit Control will require confirmation from their loan provider of the details on the provider's headed paper.

Collection Process & Penalties

Days (approx. from due date)	Action
Reminder	A reminder will be e-mailed approximately 1 week before the due date highlighting that the instalment is about to become due for payment.
8 Days	First letter advising student that the instalment is outstanding.
20 Days	Second letter sent advising student that the plan is now cancelled and an administration fee of £20 is applied.

9. SCHOLARSHIP OFFSETS

Students who are in receipt of a University scholarship can choose to offset the scholarship against any outstanding fees. This can be arranged with Credit Control section by providing written confirmation.

10. REGISTRATION (MATRICULATION)

10.1. Payment of Outstanding debt(s)

In accordance with University procedures, returning students may have their registration blocked if they have an outstanding academic debt from a previous academic year and could also be withdrawn from study (see Section 4.2).

Prior to the start of the academic year, payment should either be made in full or a payment plan agreed. Whilst standard payment plans are in place, the University encourages students with financial difficulties to discuss their circumstances with Credit Control section to determine whether an alternative agreement can be reached in order that students can continue their studies.

11. COMMUNICATION

The University contacts students via their University e-mail account where possible. However as there is a requirement to ensure that students receive all correspondence the University changes between e-mail and standard mail depending on the academic year.

- Term time – contact by email where possible (otherwise sent to term time address).
- Easter and Summer breaks – standard mail.

It is recommended that students continue to check their University email account on a regular basis.

12. STATEMENTS AND REMINDER LETTERS

Statements and reminder letters are e-mailed to students' University e-mail account, where possible. If there is no registered e-mail account, the document(s) will be printed and sent to the Home or Term time address, as appropriate. Correspondence to third parties is by e-mail where possible.

- Statements are normally issued on a monthly basis.
- Reminder Letters are run on a weekly basis.

13. ADDITIONAL ADMINISTRATION FEES

In addition to the administration fees applied for non-payment of tuition, accommodation, and payment plans, as detailed above. The University applies the following:

- £10 for returned/bounced cheque payment
- £15 for stopped cheques

14. GRADUATION

Students may not be permitted to graduate from the University of Aberdeen with any outstanding academic debt. Deadline dates are given for payment of debt in advance of graduation ceremonies (see www.abdn.ac.uk/graduation). If the date is missed it is likely to be too late to be included in the ceremony. Any queries should be directed by email to graduation@abdn.ac.uk.

Where a student is funded by a sponsor, and their sponsor has failed to make payment of any academic fees e.g. tuition fees, the debt will be transferred to the student's account and must be paid in full prior to graduation. Contact tuitionfees@abdn.ac.uk immediately if you receive a letter from the University stating that you are liable for paying an invoice which you expect to be paid by a 3rd party sponsor.

Students will not be issued with any letter, Certificate of Award, Confirmation of Completion of Studies or Transcript whilst they have an outstanding academic debt.

Prior to 1 August 2014 this policy also applied to non-academic debt e.g. Accommodation Fees, and is not retrospective.

15. WITHDRAWAL

15.1. Tuition Fee Liability – withdrawing from study

A student will continue to be charged tuition fees until such time as a Withdrawal Form is submitted to the Infohub or the Registry. The date that the Withdrawal Form is received will be the date that fee liability will cease. A Withdrawal Form can be obtained from the Infohub website at www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/downloadable-forms-693

15.2. Accommodation Fee Liability – withdrawing from study

Accommodation fees are calculated to the last date of attendance, or the day the room is vacated and keys are returned to the Halls, whichever is the later. There may also be additional charges incurred to the student once an inspection has taken place.

15.3. US Loans - withdrawing from study

Students in receipt of US Loans may also be subject to a repayment of loans should withdrawal from study be granted. The US Loan Administrator can provide further information at www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/finance/us-federal-direct-loans .

15.4. Procedure after withdrawal from study confirmed

Only when a student's status has been updated on the Student Record system will any adjustments to the amounts charged be made. Any adjustments can take up to 4 weeks to be reflected on the student's account. Credit Control will then amend any payment plans or process any refunds that are due. Any remaining debt on the student's account must be paid in full and any payment plan honoured. An instalment plan will not be cancelled until the Registry has granted and applied amendments to fee liability.

16. REFUNDS

Refunds are returned to the source of payment, i.e. if paid by credit card the refund where possible will be credited back to that card and if paid by bank transfer, it would be refunded back to the same bank account.

The Credit Control section aim to process refunds as soon as possible but authorisation from the relevant sections must be obtained prior to payment being made.

The Tuition Fees Refund Policy can be viewed in the Tuition Fees website under the relevant year <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/finance/tuition-fees.php> .

17. NON REGISTERED STUDENTS WITH DEBTS

Students that have completed or withdrawn from studies with outstanding debt without entering into a payment plan are subject to the following process.

17.1. Collection process – Non Registered Students

Days (approx. from notification to Credit Control of withdrawal)	Action
10 Days	A final notice is sent requesting payment or asking them to contact Credit Control regarding the outstanding balance within seven days from the date of the letter. The letter also advises that failure to pay/enter into an agreement will result in the account being passed to Debt Collectors for further action, which may affect the individual's credit rating.
24 Days	Where the debt remains outstanding the account will be passed to Debt Collectors. The University reserves the right to pass on any third party recovery fees in the pursuit of an unpaid debt.

Correspondence is sent to the home address or next of kin address. If none of those details are held, the University will send the documentation to the address details that the University holds, which would be the last known term time address.

Title	Student Debt Policy
Author / Creator	Income & Credit Control Section
Owner	Director of Finance
Date published / approved	30 June 2015 Reviewed January 2018
Version	Version 1.0
Date for Next Review	January 2020
Audience	Students/Customers
Related	n/a
Subject / Description	Non-payment of Debt
Equality Impact Assessment	n/a
Section	Finance
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Keywords	Payment, Debt