

St Chad's College

Student Debt Policy Relating to College Residence

1. Introduction

Background

1.1 It is recognised that a large proportion of students are young adults and that residence charges are of significant value. It is probably the first time that many students have needed to handle such high value transactions. In addition many students do not use English as their first language.

1.2 On occasion factors beyond a student's control can change their financial circumstances significantly notwithstanding the fact they had a sound financial plan in place when embarking on their studies. In recognition of this the University provides some financial support for students in this position via the Access to Learning Fund (for home students) and the Hardship Fund (for international students).

1.3 It is recognised that if a student has significant overdue debt with the College and or the University, and little prospect of being able to pay, then it is not in the student's best interests to permit them to continue to study and amass more debt.

1.4 Home / EU Undergraduate students are entitled to change their mind as to whether they will pay personally or take out a loan from the Student Loans Company within nine months of the start of the academic year. They cannot apply for Access to Learning Funding (ALF Loans) even for hardship if they have not taken out a Student Loans Company loan.

1.5 Irrespective of the source of funding (student loan's company, parental assistance, external sponsor etc), the student will be held liable for payment personally. The responsibility for acting as an intermediary and ensuring adequate information is provided rests with the student.

Scope

1.6 This policy applies to all amounts owed by student's resident at St Chad's College, and owing to the College. The University has a similar policy relating to Tuition Fees and Residence Charges relating to the Maintained Colleges.

2. Objectives

2.1 To explain in an open, transparent and accessible way how the College will treat students who have outstanding debt owed to the College.

2.2 To demonstrate what actions students can take to mitigate any steps likely to be taken by the College to recover outstanding debt.

2.3 To apply a student debt policy that is “firm but fair”; that encourages all students to pay in good time, but has the flexibility to recognise and respond appropriately when this is not possible because of a genuine difficulty.

3. Student Debt Policy Statements

Operational

Late payment administration charge

3.1.1 The terms of payment for the residence charges for full time students are thirty days into the Michaelmas Term and fourteen days into the Epiphany and Easter Terms, unless prior agreement has been made in respect of instalments by direct debit.

3.1.2 Students who pay late will be charged an Administration Charge currently as set out in Appendix A.

3.1.3 The charge will be applied a reasonable period of time into term when the University’s debt collection costs have accumulated.

3.1.4 Students who contact College (either the Finance Department or the Bursar) before the due date and have reasonable grounds for requesting more time to pay will be given an extension as set out in Appendix A. The due date of the related invoice will be amended accordingly and a note added to ensure that the extension is visible to all.

3.1.5 Senior Tutors will be informed of any students who are to incur an administration charge so that they can target support to students accordingly.

3.1.6 The College will be transparent in operating this policy through regular e-mail contact with students, and other publication including:

- Reference to this student debt policy in the License Agreement
- A general email will be sent from the College Bursar / Accountant at the start of each term to all students to remind them of the requirement to clear any outstanding debt.
- A personal reminder process will take place each term via e-mail, to contact any student who has not paid within a reasonable period, in order to remind them of the need to pay very soon.
- Invitations will be issued for one-to-one discussion regarding the outstanding debt.
- Only when all the above procedures have been completed will an administration charge be levied.
- Individual letters will be sent to the students giving them a final deadline either by which to pay or to get in touch to explain why they are unable to pay or else incur the administration charge.

3.1.7 Students will only be able to appeal against the administration charge if they can demonstrate a deficiency in the communication process or if they can demonstrate that they

began the payment process on or before the deadline date. This is to recognise that some payment methods are quicker than others at providing confirmation of payment to the University.

3.1.8 Students may also appeal against the charge to the Finance Department if there are any other mitigating circumstances which could not be explained before the administration charge was levied..

Students withdrawn by the College and the University for non- payment of debt

3.1.9 Under the University's regulations students are not allowed to carry debt over from one term to another. In practice this will be applied to students who owe over £1,000.

3.1.10 Students who owe over £1,000 will be identified at the end of each term and a series of warning letters will be sent from the College Bursar.

3.1.11 Students will be permitted an alternative payment plan at any time provided it is reasonable and realistic. If a student fails to meet this plan they will be treated in the same way as any other non-payer at that time i.e. Letters will be sent.

3.1.12 Students who do not pay amounts owed to the College will be requested to be withdrawn by the University and the debt will be pursued using external debt collecting agencies in the same way as for non-student debt.

3.1.13 Students will be reinstated at the University if they pay all that is owed at that time plus a reinstatement fee as set out in Appendix A.

3.1.14 The University is obliged to inform the UKBA if an overseas student is withdrawn as they are no longer eligible to stay in the UK. However, if the UKBA is informed as soon as the students are withdrawn there is a risk that the student will pay the sum due and be reinstated and so the UKBA will have been informed unnecessarily. In practice the University will inform the UKBA after 30 days

Debt holds

3.1.15 A debt hold can be placed upon a student's account so that they cannot register to be a member of College for the following academic year. The hold will be applied with respect to any overdue debt at the start of the Easter Term for which the student has not made alternative payment arrangements.

Graduation

3.1.19 Under the University's regulations students will not be permitted to attend Congregation or receive a degree parchment if they have any outstanding debt owed either to the University or an Independent College.

3.1.20 As part of the preparation for Congregation, a hold will be applied to the Banner student record for any student who has overdue debt. The student will be advised to contact the College

Finance Department or Bursar and to make payment in order to proceed. Banner will be updated when the receipt clears the debt.

3.1.21 Students who are due to graduate and who have any outstanding debt at the start of the Easter Term will be identified and contacted in writing to explain that they must pay in order to graduate.

Deposits

3.1.22 The University, on behalf of St Chad's College require an accommodation booking fee to be paid from any postgraduate requiring accommodation. This is to show a commitment to enroll and to help to manage room allocations.

3.1.23 The accommodation booking fee received will be held on the student's customer account ready to be applied to the invoice for residence charges when raised in the coming financial year.

3.1.24 In line with distance selling regulations, students will be given a "cooling off period" during which they can cancel the contract.

3.1.25 The circumstances in which the deposit can be returned are limited: either the student is unable to obtain a visa or they fail to meet the academic entry requirements set as a condition of their entry to the University.

3.1.26 If a student registers and attends the University, even for one day, the deposit becomes a part payment towards the invoice for residence charge. If the student subsequently withdraws voluntarily then this sum of money may be refunded to them. (See 3.1.28)

Voluntary withdrawal, suspension or concession

3.1.27 It is recognised that some students will not settle at the University and wish to withdraw voluntarily from their course. Likewise a small number of students seek a suspension of studies or a concession to return at a later date. Similarly some students wish to move out of University accommodation. Where this occurs a proportion of the normal charge will be made as set out below. In all cases this charge may be relaxed according to the discretion of the College Officers if the circumstances of the student suggest that it is appropriate to do so e.g. illness or change in financial circumstances.

3.1.28 If a full time student withdraws before 1st December they do not have to pay any Residence Charges. If they have made payment they will be refunded all amounts paid including any deposits. (See 3.1.26)

3.1.29 If a full time student withdraws on or after 1st December they are liable to pay for the period they have been resident plus the early termination charge as detailed in their License Agreement. (see also 3.1.30)

3.1.30 Students must pay their Residence Charge pro rata for the number of weeks occupied. There is in addition a penalty charge of 40% of the annual charge (or the remainder of the annual

charge due if that is less than 40% of the annual charge) unless the student finds a suitable alternative student to take up residence. All penalty charges are subject to the discretion of the Head of College.

Returned cheques and direct debits

3.1.37 Cheques presented for payment by students and direct debit collections are sometimes returned by the bank as there are insufficient funds in the bank account. This creates additional administration work in the Finance Department and a charge will be made as set out in Appendix A.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Definition of roles and responsibilities

4.1.1 The Bursar will review this Student Debt policy annually.

4.1.2 The Bursar will take responsibility to ensure that the policy is implemented consistently by all staff in the Finance Department of the Colleges.

4.1.3 College Officers will exercise discretion for residence charges arising where there is a withdrawal, suspension or concession and the circumstances of the student suggest it is appropriate to do so.

4.1.4 The Senior Tutor will support the policy locally and communicate carefully with students in financial difficulty.

Authorisation levels

4.3.1 The authorisation levels for the write off of bad debts are set out in Appendix A.

Appendix A

Student Debt limits and other details arising from the policy

Administration charges

Ref	Description	Credited to	Value
3.1.2	Late payment of	Student Opportunities Fund	£50
	Late payment of residence charge	College hardship fund	£50

Students withdrawn by the University for non - payment of debt

Ref	Description	Credited to	Value
3.1.15	Reinstatement fee	Student Opportunities Fund	£200

Returned cheques and direct debit instalments

Ref	Description	Credited to	Value
3.1.37	Returned cheque or direct debit instalment fee	Finance Department	£25

Authorisation levels for the write off of bad debts

Ref	Bad debt write off limit	Who may authorise
4.3.1	Up to £1,500	Bursar
	Above £1,500	Principal