



Southampton  
**SOLENT**  
University

# Students and State Benefits

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Last updated: Aug 2015

Review date: Aug 2016

## Students and State Benefits

Full-time undergraduates are not eligible to claim state benefits during their course, including Income Support (IS), Housing Benefit (HB), Council Tax Benefit (CTB) or Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). However, the following exceptions may apply:

- single parents with a dependent child/children; although the age of your children can affect which benefits you are eligible for
- some students with disabilities
- students who are pensioners
- student couples with at least one dependent child (you can claim Housing Benefit throughout the year. One of the couple can claim JSA during the summer, subject to meeting the normal JSA requirements)
- students who have suspended their studies due to ill health or caring responsibilities (you can claim JSA from the date of recovery or the date your caring responsibilities end and until you resume your studies, or a maximum of 12 months - whichever is shorter)
- non-student spouses and partners, subject to the normal rules

**Please note, in all cases you must still meet the usual benefit eligibility rules.**

Entitlement to Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit remains unchanged by study or student funding. However, your Maintenance Loan and Maintenance Grant will affect and reduce your income-based benefits e.g. Housing Benefit and Income Support. Your student income can cancel out payment of some benefits altogether. **Please read on for further details.**

## Will student funding affect my benefits?

When you begin your studies, you must inform Job Centre Plus / the Department for Work and Pensions / Housing Benefit Office that you have started studying and you will need to notify them of your student income by providing your Student Finance England breakdown Letter.

### **Important!**

If you are a single parent or receive disability benefits, make sure that you are awarded the **Special Support Grant** instead of the Maintenance Grant when you apply for student funding. Even though these grants provide the same level of funding, only the Special Support Grant is ignored as income when your benefit entitlement is calculated. If you receive the Maintenance Grant in error, your benefits will be reduced as a result.

If you are not eligible to claim benefit yourself but your non-student partner is claiming benefit, you should normally receive the **Maintenance Grant**.

In most cases, the **Maintenance Loan** cancels out payments of Income Support or income-based Employment Support Allowance during term-time, including short vacations. This is because the weekly loan income is higher than the maximum benefit payable. The Maintenance Loan is unlikely to cancel out Housing Benefit completely as most eligible students retain some benefit throughout the year.

As the Maintenance loan does not count as income during July and August, benefits can be paid **in full** during the summer holidays. You'll need to contact your local benefit office to re-apply or to be re-assessed. Entitlement to Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit is unchanged by student income.

## What student income is used when calculating my benefits

Most grants are disregarded when calculating your benefits, but the **Maintenance Grant**, **Social Work Bursary** and **Adult Dependents' Grant** are used in the calculation. Some of your Maintenance Loan and the following funding and grants are **disregarded** when your benefit entitlement is worked out:

- Special Support Grant
- Parents' Learning Allowance
- Childcare Grant
- Tuition Fee Loan
- A fixed amount for books and equipment
- A fixed amount for travel
- £10 per week, which is normally set against the Maintenance Loan
- Most Solent Access Fund payments
- Any allowance to meet extra expenses because you're a student with disabilities (e.g. Disabled Students Allowances)

## Can I choose not to take out my Maintenance Loan?

Job Centre Plus and the Housing Benefit Office will assume that you have taken out your full Maintenance Loan entitlement whether or not you actually have. If you choose not to take the loan out, it will still be counted as income.

The loan is only ignored if you are not eligible to receive it and you can prove this to the relevant benefit department.

# Which benefits could I receive?

## Universal Credit

This replaces:

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- some Social Fund payments

If you're already claiming one or more of these benefits, you should carry on claiming as normal. You'll be told when you need to do anything differently. It is not yet known how being a student will affect Universal Credit. However, we expect the student eligibility and income rules will be similar to the current ones. You will make one online claim for your living costs, housing and dependent children. It will be made up of a standard allowance plus other 'elements' - for example for children, childcare, housing and caring. There will also be an element for those with limited capability for work. The amount you could get will depend on your own circumstances. If you qualify, your monthly payment will cover everyone in your family who qualifies for support. 'Family' could mean you as a single person for example, or you might also be claiming for a partner and/or children.

<b>Timeline of changes:</b>	
By the end of 2016	Universal Credit will be extended to the rest of Great Britain.
Between 2016 and 2017	New claims to existing benefits will close down and most existing claims will be moved over to Universal Credit.
After 2017	Anyone with an existing claim for Income-related Employment and Support Allowance may be moved onto Universal Credit after 2017.

For more details see: [www.gov.uk/universal-credit/overview](http://www.gov.uk/universal-credit/overview)

## Housing Benefit

You may be able to claim Housing Benefit if you fall into one of the groups of students who can claim benefits. Housing Benefit is only paid for rent and will not cover any mortgage payments. Your Student funding will reduce the amount of benefit payable, so it's likely that you will have to pay some of your rent yourself. If you claim a disability benefit and you live in student halls of residence, you may also be able to claim housing benefit.

## Income Support and Employment Support Allowance

Full-time study usually prevents students from claiming this benefit during term time. However, single parents with a dependent child *aged under five* can claim during the summer holidays.

Although students who receive Disability Living Allowance are eligible to continue any ongoing claim for Income Support while they are full-time students, when Income Support stops, e.g. because of student income, you will no longer be able to claim it.

However, a claim for Employment Support Allowance (ESA) could be made instead: [www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance/overview](http://www.gov.uk/employment-support-allowance/overview)

The Maintenance Loan normally cancels out any payments of Income Support (or income-related ESA) during term-time, including the short vacations, although not during the summer vacation (July and August).

## Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)

Students in full-time study cannot usually claim this benefit. If you are claiming this before you start your course, your entitlement will stop when you become a full-time student. The only exceptions relate to the following groups:

- Single parents and student couples with a dependent child (you can claim JSA **during the summer vacation** (July and August) only)
- Students who have suspended their studies because of ill health or caring responsibilities. Therefore you can claim JSA from the date of recovery or the date your caring responsibilities end until you resume your studies or for a maximum of 12 months - or whichever is shorter.

Students who fall into these groups will need to fulfil the following criteria to be eligible for JSA:

- You must meet the usual job seeking rules and be available for full-time work [www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance/eligibility](http://www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance/eligibility)

- If you are claiming as a single parent or part of a student couple, your child/ young person must either be under 16 years of age or under 20 years of age and in full-time non-advanced education (e.g. studying A levels) and you are therefore in receipt of Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit.

**Postgraduates** - if you are on a full-time taught Masters, you cannot usually claim JSA at any time during your course because you are treated as unavailable for work due to being on a full-time course which has no summer vacation.

If you are a **research student**, you might be able to claim JSA in the following ways:

- During any vacation periods from your course, which fall in the summer, if you can show that you are available for and actively seeking work.
- Once you have switched to writing up status, to claim JSA you would need to show that you are available for and actively seeking work, and that you would be able to fit your thesis writing around any job you are offered.

**Part-time** students may be able to claim JSA if you meet the ‘available for and actively seeking work’ rules.

For more information on JSA go to: [www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance](http://www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance)

## **Benefits related to disability or health**

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and the new Personal Independence Payment (PIP) are not affected by study. Receipt of these benefits can also qualify you to receive other benefits as a student.

**Moving from DLA to PIP** - from June 2013 onward Disability living allowance (DLA) was phased out and replaced with personal independence payments (PIP) for 16-64 year-olds. Therefore some claimants have to attend a new medical assessment.

Between January 2014 and March 2016, if you are still on DLA, you will be given the opportunity to apply for PIP. If you do not apply, your benefit payment will stop.

Please go to the websites below, for more information:

- [www.gov.uk/dla-disability-living-allowance-benefit](http://www.gov.uk/dla-disability-living-allowance-benefit)
- [www.gov.uk/pip/eligibility](http://www.gov.uk/pip/eligibility)

## Tax Credits

There are two types of tax credits; Working and Child. Tax Credits can be claimed whilst studying provided you fulfill the eligibility criteria. You're paid every week or every 4 weeks from the date of your claim up to the end of the tax year (5 April). You can claim at any time of the year and can apply for both on the same claim form. It can take up to 5 weeks to process a new claim. You will also have to renew your claim once a year. To support your claim, keep records of your income, bills, payslips, benefits, tax credits, childcare and your child's education. Keep any records you have from the past 3 years.

**Working tax credit** - Eligibility depends on your age and how many hours of paid work you do per week. Your income and circumstances will also affect how much you get. You must be 16 or over to qualify or 25 or over if you don't have children or a disability. You must also work a certain number of hours a week:

Aged 25 to 59	At least 30 hours
Aged 60 or over	At least 16 hours
Disabled	At least 16 hours
Single with 1 or more children	At least 16 hours
Couple with 1 or more children	Usually, at least 24 hours between you (with 1 of you working at least 16 hours)

You must get paid for the work you do (or expect to) and have an income below a certain level. Some self-employed people are also eligible for Working Tax Credit, but your self-employed hours must not be uncommercial or unprofitable.

**Child tax credit** - You can get Child Tax Credit for each child you're responsible for if they're:

- under 16
- under 20 and in approved education or training

You don't need to be working to claim Child Tax Credit. How much you get depends on your income and circumstances. Only one household can get Child Tax Credit for a child at a time.

For more information on tax credits and how to apply, please visit the following websites:

- [www.gov.uk/child-tax-credit/eligibility](http://www.gov.uk/child-tax-credit/eligibility)
- [www.gov.uk/working-tax-credit/eligibility](http://www.gov.uk/working-tax-credit/eligibility)

## Can I claim benefits during the summer vacation?

During July and August, student income no longer counts so your income is lower than during term-time. To claim you will need to fulfil some of the following criteria:

- You have a child/young person who lives with you under 16 years of age or under 20 years of age and is in full-time non-advanced education (e.g. studying A levels) and
- you are in receipt of Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit and/or
- you have a disability for which you claim a disability benefit.

Subject to any other income you may have, e.g. from work, you may be able to claim the following benefits in full:

- Students who receive Disability Living Allowance can claim Employment Support Allowance and maximum Housing Benefit
- Student couples responsible for a child can claim Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) during July and August as well as Housing Benefit.
- Single parents with young children under the age of 5 are eligible to claim Income Support and maximum Housing Benefit.
- If you are a single parent with a dependent child over the age of 5 you may be eligible for JSA instead as well as Housing Benefit.

## Can I claim Benefits when my course ends?

You can claim benefits when you have completed your course and it has officially ended, as you are then no longer registered as a student.

Your eligibility to receive benefits will depend upon meeting the normal benefit rules. The amount of benefit paid depends on your income and/or your partner's income if you live together, whether this is from benefits, employment or another source.

For more detailed information about Social Security Benefits, please visit [www.gov.uk/browse/benefits](http://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits)