

Other relevant departments:

- ◆ **University's Student Funding Team:**
Tel: 023 82013427
Email: student.funding@solent.ac.uk
- ◆ **The Accommodation Office (if in halls):**
Tel: 023 82013461 /3637
Email: accommodation@solent.ac.uk
- ◆ **University's Employability team (for career options):**
<http://portal.solent.ac.uk/careers/careers.aspx>
Email: employability.enterprise@solent.ac.uk
- ◆ **Student Finance England (SFE):** Tel: 0300 100 0607
Address any correspondence to:
Student Finance England
PO Box 210
Darlington
DL1 9HJ

Always get advice before you make any decision which could affect your future funding / study.



How to apply for 'Compelling Personal Reasons' and Discretionary Payments

Student Funding Team

Student Hub (RM050)

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Compelling Personal Reasons (CPR)

(If suspending, withdrawing, or changing course)

A student may have to suspend / withdraw or change their course for many reasons. If the reasons are unforeseen or due to a personal situation this is known as 'Compelling Personal Reasons' (CPR) for student funding purposes.

Student Finance England (SFE) should extend your funding for *up to 60 days* (includes weekends) *after* you suspend if you have CPR. This can be applied for each time you are unable to complete a year due to CPR. Reasons for CPR could be:

- Bereavement
- Depression / mental health
- Health issues
- Family crisis
- Caring responsibilities

Please note this list is not exhaustive.

N.B. CPR won't be given if a student just doesn't like their course. Reasons must be beyond the student's control.

How will claiming CPR help me?

SFE's discretion may be applied on each occasion you are unable to complete a year due to your compelling personal reasons. Therefore any future study should ignore the year of funding where CPR has been accepted for not completing it. You may then be entitled to:

- state benefits whilst suspended if you're ill for more than *28 weeks* or caring for someone.
- Your student funding for *up to 60 days after* you suspend.
- If you withdraw part-way through a payment period, SFE has discretion to still pay you your grants for living and other costs to the end of the payment period (see section on 'discretionary funding')
- apply to the Solent Access to Learning fund if you suspend due to CPR.

If you attend a course that lasts at least one academic year and leave:

- *before* you start your course you may get a full refund of fees - providing that prior to the commencement of the course, written notification of withdrawal has been received by the University
- Within the first term you will be charged **25%** of fees
- *During* the second (spring) term you will be charged **50%** of fees
- *During* the third (summer) term you will be charged **full fees**.

If you applied for a tuition fee loan, the relevant percentage of this will still be paid to the University.

A suspension is regarded as a temporary break in study, the intention being to return to study the following academic year. Tuition fees charged at the time of suspension are calculated in line with the withdrawal charges.

Returning onto the same course will result in tuition fees being calculated on a pro-rata basis. Returning to an alternative course (subject to approval) would result in the total tuition fee being charged for that year of study.

Important!

ALL students **must** give 'Written Notification' to their School Office (especially if withdrawing) before they intend to leave. Failure to do so will mean you remain liable for your fees.

Seek advice

You must seek advice if you have any issues with your academic progression. This is essential if you have to repeat a year or any aspect of your course. For information and advice on the academic implications and course please go to the Student Hub, in RM050 and speak to the students@solent team.

For funding implications and advice on state benefits talk to the Student Funding Team.

3) *Professional evidence regarding your circumstances.*

- Provide a letter from a professional person or agency. This could be from a doctor, other health professional or counsellor.
- It should confirm the difficulties you had; the effect they have had on your studies and, if applicable, proof you are not currently able to work due to your difficulties.
- If you are getting evidence from a doctor, you should ask for a 'fit note'. This is an official document which confirms your limited capacity for work. It can cover a future period as well as a past period.
- Ask your GP to confirm your limited capacity for work for as long a period as they feel able to.
- If you have not received help or support from a professional, a letter from a friend or family member who knows about your difficulties *might* be ok.

4) *A letter from your university Funding Adviser*

- This letter can help because it will outline the aspects of your case that meet the guidance and regulations used by the funding authorities to assess applications for additional periods of study.

Try not to delay dealing with an overpayment and get advice from a Student Funding Adviser at the university as soon as possible to try and avoid the overpayment being deducted from your ongoing entitlement to Student Finance.

Will I still have to pay my tuition fees?

This will depend on if and when you leave (withdraw) from your course. *If you:*

- Attend a course lasting *less* than one academic year, you remain liable for the *full fee* regardless of the date of withdrawal.

For more information on how this can affect your future funding entitlement please read our leaflet on '*Suspending, Leaving, Changing or Repeating your course*'.

How do I claim CPR?

Whenever possible a joint approach to SFE from the university (supporting the case to extend student support) and the student, is recommended. Therefore you must:

- Inform your School of your situation as soon as possible.
- Speak to a Student Funding Adviser to ensure you understand what you have to do to claim CPR and the implications on your future funding.
- Ask the university (*maybe your previous one, if applicable*) to provide a letter confirming your situation and reasons for suspending and your intention to resume your studies.
- The university should complete the agreed 'Notice of Student Suspending Study' form (the 'Change of Circumstances: Administration' Guidance) and should also take account of how the institution treats the student's absence, particularly if the institution has given the student permission to be absent, and on what terms.
- Approach SFE, requesting that you be assessed for continued support if required. You must provide evidence of your situation. This could be:

- * A letter from your Doctor / solicitor / counsellor etc
- * Death certificate
- * Medical information

Please note this list is not exhaustive.

Where do I send my evidence?

Send the evidence to SFE (address on back page) and include your own letter clearly explaining your situation. The Student funding team have a template letter you can ask for which shows you what information to provide and how to set it out. It is advisable to send all the evidence and letters together and by special delivery. Keep photocopies of all original documents.

Can I claim benefits?

Students who have suspended their studies due to illness or caring responsibilities for more than *28 weeks* and are required to wait until they rejoin their course, may be able to claim Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), Housing/Council Tax Benefit.

This can only be claimed *from* when you recover from illness or your caring duties end and until *the day before* you rejoin your course, but not exceeding one year. JSA can be paid subject to you satisfying the normal criteria for receipt of that benefit.

If you are a student who **can** normally claim benefits while studying, such as lone parents or someone with a disability or ongoing ill-health, your claim should continue during your period of suspension.

Further information is available from your local Jobcentre Plus or the benefits office.

Discretionary Funding

Usually if you suspend your studies your funding payments should stop. If you continue to receive any payments after your suspension date you could have an overpayment and will have to repay the money, *unless you have suspended due to CPR*.

Therefore, most students will need to find a source of income whilst they are suspended from studies. The majority of students find work; some return home to live and manage with family support.

However, if this is not possible and you need your funding to continue *after* the 60 day period for CPR, you will have to apply for 'discretionary funding' for the time of suspension.

There is no automatic entitlement to receive your funding during a period of suspension. However in some cases, where this causes financial hardship, you can write to Student Finance England to request they consider 'Funding through a period of suspension'.

What do I need to send SFE?

You will need to send several documents to apply. The Student Funding Team can check your letter and any evidence before you send it. The following list will help you prepare your application:

1) *Write your own letter to Student Finance, to explain:*

- When your difficulties started and how long they affected you
- How did they affect your ability to study and why it meant you had to interrupt your studies
- Why you were unable to support yourself financially during your suspension, for example: explain how your ill health meant you couldn't work; what you needed funding for (rent, food, bills, travel to medical appointments, prescription costs, etc)
- Why you needed to continue paying for essential costs during your suspension.

This is because SFE believe students may be able to move in with their family during suspension and don't need to pay for things like rent e.g : *It may be your medical treatment is in London and you need to stay there; or you might be estranged from your family; or you are a mature student who has lived independently for some time.*

2) *Show evidence that repaying any overpayment now would cause you financial hardship via:*

- Bank statements for the most recent 3 months, or for the period when you were suspended if you are applying retrospectively
- A tenancy agreement confirming your rent amount
- Evidence of outstanding bills or any financial commitments you are struggling to meet
- Evidence of the lack of other financial options available to you
- Whether you are employed or not and, if not, evidence of your inability to work