



A Parent's Guide to University: Student Finance and Support



What is student finance?

Student Finance England (SFE) provides financial support to students on behalf of the UK Government to students from England entering higher education in the UK. The two main costs students will have are tuition fees and living costs. Luckily there is student finance to help you with both, and depending on your circumstances, you could also get extra financial support. If you normally live in England, [Wales](#) or [Northern Ireland](#) and are studying anywhere in the UK, you should apply for student finance to the relevant regional authority.

You may be eligible for funding from Student Finance England if you:

- Are a UK national or you [have settled or pre-settled status in the UK under the EU settlement scheme](#)
- Normally live in England
- Have lived in the UK for three years before starting your course
- Will be studying an eligible higher education course at a UK college or university

Applications for student finance for the academic year 2022/23 are likely to **open in February 2022**. It is recommended that you apply as soon as possible to ensure that the funds will be in place for when you start. In order to apply, you need to:

- Register online at www.gov.uk/student-finance
- Have your parent/guardian or partner with you to complete their section
- Complete the application and provide proof of ID

Tuition loan

For many, university is the first time they will make a long-term financial commitment so it requires some serious thought! Students don't need to pay tuition fees upfront, instead, they can get a Tuition Fee Loan to cover the fee charged by their university or college (these fees can be up to £9,250 per year).

The tuition fee loan goes directly to a student's university, it will not enter a student's bank account. All student's need to do is provide proof of student finance to their university when they register. Tuition fee loans do have to be repaid but only when students have finished or left their course and their income is over the repayment threshold.

Maintenance loan

Students can get a maintenance loan to help with living costs. The maintenance loan is partly means-tested which means that the amount you receive will depend on your household income. There are several things to consider when working out how much you could be entitled to based on your circumstances: your age, where you live, any dependents, parental income, and other factors.

The Maintenance Loan is paid directly into your bank account at the start of each term. Maintenance loans are similar to tuition fee loans, in that they have to be repaid but only when students have finished or left their course and their income is over the repayment threshold.

Maintenance loans are the highest for students that live away from home and study in London. In 2021 maintenance loans could be as much as £12,382 per year, (£37,146 over a three-year course) but remember this isn't free money, you will have to pay it back so don't get too excited!

Having gotten your loans it might be time to sort out a budget, to ensure you don't spend it all at once! You'll be responsible for:

- Food
- Rent
- Travel
- Clothing
- Social life activities
- Bills, such as a TV license
- Any additional monthly payments (we're talking phone bills and gym memberships)



Disabled Students' Allowance

Disabled Students can apply for a [Disabled Students' Allowance \(DSA\)](#) to cover the study-related costs they have because of a mental health problem, long-term illness or any other disability. Undergraduate and postgraduate students can get up to £25,000 a year for support and the allowance does not need to be repaid. When budgeting your DSA you might want to consider the costs for:

- Specialist equipment
- Specialist travel to attend your course
- Other disability-related study support, such as printing additional copies of documents
- Non-medical helpers, for example, a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter or a specialist note taker

Additional Information on support available for students with children or dependent adults can be found [here](#).

What is a bursary?

A bursary is a sum of money that universities can award to students to incentivise and support their studies. The best thing about it is that it does not have to be repaid, which makes it a great option for students who might not otherwise be able to afford to study. Bursaries offered and eligibility vary depending on providers, but most universities offer a streamlined service to make bursary applications simple.

A bursary is either awarded in a lump sum at the start of the academic year, or it's paid in instalments each term. Universities may offer bursaries to increase the appeal of certain courses, or to widen participation for less privileged students. For students that are studying certain medical, dentistry, healthcare or social work courses [NHS bursaries](#) and [social work bursaries](#) are available.

What is a scholarship?

Scholarships are similar to bursaries, in that they do not need to be paid back. However, scholarships usually come from independent third parties, (although universities also offer them), which means that they are able to draw up their own criteria for scholarship qualification. Once students have found a scholarship that best suits them, they will need to apply for it through that scholarship's website or through an affiliate site and then go from there.



Earn some extra cash

Most university students like to supplement their loans by getting a part-time job. There are usually loads of opportunities on campus, students could work as student ambassadors, responsible for giving tours on open days or they could get involved in the logistics of sports and societies for example driving the hockey team to their next game. Working on campus is a great way to make friends and get involved with all the university has to offer.

Of course, there are plenty of opportunities off-campus too, supporting a whole range of working hours and styles. Students could tutor younger students for big exams, such as GCSEs or A levels or more sporty students could look into being couriers for Deliveroo. Working in bars, cafes and restaurants is another great way to lay down some roots in your new town.

Accommodation

Students who listed their university as their first choice will usually be guaranteed first-year accommodation in student halls. If you are planning to live at the university you should take the opportunity to visit accommodation, after all, you wouldn't rent a house without seeing it in person first!

Accommodation isn't one size fits all, there are usually a variety of rooms available ranging in cost so students may want to compare a top-of-the-range-ensuite with a standard shared bathroom room.

When trying to decide which university is right for them a helpful trick is to create a university scoreboard where students rate elements that matter to them most out of ten; this could be the range of clubs offered by the student union or the travel links of the local town. A scoreboard can be really helpful if students are struggling to decide as it will help them remember each university clearly and reach an informed decision.

Student support

A Student Union is a student-run group, supported by the university, that dedicates its time to supporting the student body. They are made up of elected student representatives and are there to listen to student views and deliver change. They help arrange socials, sports and societies for a wide range of different hobbies and interests, all great ways to make friends and fill up a social calendar!

Whether students need help finding a part-time job while they study, are wondering what career would suit them, or simply want to improve their transferable skills; most universities will have whole teams dedicated to careers advice for students – after all many students will look at graduate employability when deciding on a university and course! Advisors are also available to help students obtain work placements and even graduate opportunities. Careers teams are able to help in a whole range of areas, such as:

- Looking for jobs, including part-time work on campus
- Finding work experience and placements
- Attending careers fairs, networking sessions and other events
- Writing CVs and drafting job applications
- Preparing for interviews and psychometric tests
- Finding volunteering opportunities
- Getting mentoring
- Choosing a career path

Student support varies by university, so it's a good idea to research it in but there are also multiple nationwide resources for students struggling with university life. Helplines provide support on issues such as living away from home, money management, housing, relationships, mental health issues and struggling with workloads. We've listed a few helplines below, but there are many more out there – all you've got to do is reach out!

Nightline is a confidential, anonymous, non-advisory listening and information service run by trained student volunteers for students. Many UK universities are covered by Nightline, but if they aren't Nightline is able to point students to other appropriate resources.

Student space (from student minds) provides one-to-one support on phone, text, email and webchat. Their support is catered to university life and can include tailored support for students from religious backgrounds.

For Welsh students the **C.A.L.L. helpline** offers emotional support and information/literature on mental health, anyone concerned about their own mental health or that of a relative or friend can access the service.

The **Muslim Youth Helpline** provides culturally sensitive support by phone, live chat, WhatsApp or email.

What if your plans change?

Plans change all the time, it's part of life. The best advice we can give is to stay flexible. If students don't end up getting into their first choice university, they shouldn't be too disheartened, it doesn't mean they can't go to university at all, they can always apply to others through clearing!

What is clearing?

Clearing is how universities and colleges fill any places they still have on their courses. Clearing is available from July to October and students can apply for a course using clearing if they don't already have an offer from a university or college, and the course still has places. Students can also use clearing if they change their mind and no longer want to go to their firm choice.

Around one in five students go through clearing before starting university, so it's a pretty popular service. There's a big gap between the UCAS application Deadline Day and Results Day so plans may change and clearing presents a great opportunity for students to look at alternatives: a last-minute change in course or location could be a blessing in disguise!

Rethink ideas

If university doesn't work out this time around, that's OK! Instead, students can take time out to work and gain experience. University isn't for everyone and students might realise they earning money and rising through the ranks of a company appeals to them more.

There are loads of apprenticeships available so students should have a think about what suits them best. Many students opt for a gap year where they travel, learn more about the world and themselves. Travelling can be eye-opening and teaches students things they wouldn't learn on a university course!

What can you do now to prepare?

Living away from home the first time can be pretty overwhelming and students usually develop some newfound gratitude for their parents.

To help students feel a little more settled they can:

- Learn how to do laundry – who doesn't love fresh sheets!
- Learn some money management, perhaps they can budget the weekly shop.
- Master some basic dishes, everyone needs to eat and what better way to bond with new flatmates and save money!



