

Department for Continuing Education

Non-payment of fees

Policy and guidance on non-payment of tuition fees

Pre-amble:

This document sets out the University's policy on the non-payment of tuition fees, together with guidance for students and staff on the procedures which will be followed within the Department for Continuing Education in the application of this policy.

Although the purpose of the policy is to protect the University from bad debts, it should be seen as the formal background to a general approach of seeking to assist students who fall into financial difficulties. Early intervention is nearly always more successful than allowing a situation to drift.

Policy:

- (a) **The University's regulations set out the procedures to be followed when a student fails to pay their tuition fees. These are annexed at A, and apply to all award-bearing courses.**
- (b) **The ultimate result of non-payment of fees for those students who fail to address the issue is suspension. This suspension removes the student's access to all of the services and facilities of the University including libraries and computing facilities. Access to any University email account is suspended, and the student is expected to surrender their University Card for the duration of the suspension. It also suspends the right to attend any University teaching, and to submit work for assessment or receive marks.**
- (c) **On receipt of full payment for the fees owing, or an agreement being made to pay in instalments if this should be deemed appropriate, the suspension is rescinded and full access to University facilities and services restored.**

Guidance:

1. The Student Contract advises students of the provisions for non-payment of fees. The matriculated student contract states:
"By signing and returning this document, you agree to pay the fees and charges due from you to the University.
A failure to pay fees and charges when due may lead to the imposition of sanctions by the University, including suspension from access to University facilities or termination of membership of the University."

The non-matriculated student contract has slightly different wording:

"If the Student has not paid the fees in accordance with the terms of this Agreement, the University will not allow the Student to register or continue his/her studies, nor will the University award any certification

to the Student; and the University reserves the right to recover any outstanding fees.”

2. The modular and/or coursework-based nature of the Department's courses means that some interpretation of the regulations is required. The Department will seek to balance a sympathetic approach to students in difficulty (and be mindful that often those struggling to pay fees may also be struggling academically) against the not insignificant cost to the University of managing such cases. Nevertheless, the Department has an obligation not to allow students to continue by default with their studies if they have not paid their fees.
3. If payment by instalments has been agreed, but a student fails to payments when they become due, then the instalment arrangement is deemed terminated and all the fees therefore become due immediately. This is intended to avoid a situation of rolling debt. The warning procedures set out below will then be invoked, unless, exceptionally, a revised instalment plan is agreed.
4. The procedure to be followed, regardless of whether the course is matriculated or non-matriculated, or, in the case of the former, whether it is the Department or the College that collects fees, is that any student who has not paid their fees by a reasonable period after the due date should be notified, referring to the relevant University regulation, that they are liable for suspension should the fees remain unpaid within four weeks of the date of that notification. Suspension removes the student's access to all of the services and facilities of the University including teaching, libraries, examinations or assessments, and computing facilities. For matriculated students, close liaison between the Department and the College is essential, and, normally, it would be the college that would initiate proceedings.
5. Immediately following such notification by the Department or College, the University's central Fees Team will issue a first warning to the student, emphasising that the student will be liable for suspension four weeks from the date of the above letter, and drawing attention to the regulations.
6. If this first warning has no effect, a second warning is issued by the Fees Team, giving the student a further opportunity to make contact, and notifying them that if no response is made within 7 working days of receipt, their suspension will take effect the following working day.
7. If the student fails to respond to the second warning letter, the Department and College will be contacted by the Fees Team to confirm that the student's suspension should go ahead.
8. A third and final letter is then issued by the Fees Team on the date the suspension takes effect to notify the student this is the case, and confirming the arrangements for the surrender of their University Card. The student is informed that should they fail to comply with the arrangements by the date stated the matter will be referred by the Fees Team to the Proctors.
9. The suspension imposed for non-payment of fees will be indefinite until either the fees are paid, or an instalment plan agreed, or, after extended non-payment, the Department withdraws the student from the course.
10. As noted in the regulations, students may apply to the Fees Panel for remission or waiver of university fees, for the resolution of issues relating to the non-payment of university fees, and for all other questions of doubt or difficulty

relating to liability for university fees. Students considering appealing should contact the Department, or their college (if matriculated students) in the first instance. If a student is not satisfied with the response, they may petition the Fees Panel. For more information on how to petition the Fees Panel, students should email the Fees Clerk.

Annexe A

Wording of regulation concerning procedures in the event of non-payment of the university tuition fee (*Examination Regulations, 2012, pp. 1105-06*).

cl. 5 §13. (a) The annual university composition fee shall be paid on or before the seventh day of Michaelmas Full Term (or of the term in which the student commences his or her course, as the case may be) unless the Bursar of the student's college or the Head of the student's department for programmes where fees are usually paid directly to the department, certifies in writing that

1. (i) the college has approved the student's application to pay by instalments, the first such instalment having been paid; and/or
2. (ii) the student has applied for, and is *prima facie* eligible for, a contribution to his or her fee from his or her local authority (or other fee-paying body), and the college is of the opinion that no contribution will be required from the student;
3. (iii) the student's programme did not commence on the first day of the relevant term, and payment is due on the seventh day after the actual commencement of the student's programme.

(b) In the event that any fee payable by the student, or the relevant instalment towards such a fee, remains unpaid after the due date of payment it shall be the duty of the Bursar of the student's college or the Head of the student's department for programmes where fees are usually paid directly to the department, to notify the student concerned that, in the event that the fees due have not been paid in full within four weeks from the date of such notification, the student shall be liable for suspension from access to the premises and facilities of the University (including the Examination Schools and other places of examination) from the end of such four-week period until such time as outstanding fees have been paid. The Bursar/or Head shall also inform the Registrar that he or she has so notified the student concerned; and if the fees due have not been paid in full within the specified four-week period, the Bursar/or Head shall inform the Registrar of the position, whereupon, subject to the other provisions of this clause, the University shall have the right forthwith to suspend the student concerned from access to the premises and facilities of the University.

(c) On application by their society, or by the Head of the student's department for programmes where fees are usually paid directly to the department, and subject to the approval of Council's Education Committee, some part of the fee for an academical year may subsequently be returned to those who do not work in Oxford as a result of suspension or withdrawal, for the whole of that year. In addition if a student withdraws or suspends their status on or before Monday of Week 4 of any term the fees payable in respect of that term will be reimbursed to the student.

(d) Applications for the remission or waiver of university fees, for the resolution of issues relating to the non-payment of university fees, and for all other questions of doubt or difficulty relating to the liability of individual students for university fees, including those covered under (a) to (c) above, and for questions of doubt or difficulty relating to the charging of deposits for course fees, or for tuition charge waivers or

bursaries as covered in §7, or for liability for the continuation charge as covered in §8 shall be determined by the Fees Panel. The Panel, shall be chaired by the Assessor and consist of two members nominated by Conference of Colleges, two members nominated by Council's Education Committee, and the Assessor-elect. Applications for dispensation from residence requirements, other than those specified above, shall be determined by the Proctors, on condition that if the Fees Panel or the Proctors, as the case may be, are unable to agree on how to deal with any individual application they shall refer the application to Council's Education Committee for decision.

(e) There shall be no appeal against a decision of the Fees Panel. A student may, however, make a further application under the procedures outlined above for relief from suspension or such terms as may have been imposed by a Fees Panel if the Bursar of his or her college supports an application on the basis that the student's financial circumstances have changed for reasons beyond his or her control.