

Section 4

COURSES AND MODULES

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Semesters

The academic session is organised into three semesters: autumn, spring and summer. Whilst the majority of courses are taught in the first two semesters, some including full-time Masters require study during the summer period. There are opportunities for students on some courses to use an intensive summer semester to vary the pace of their study, or to bridge the gap between a lower level course and the corresponding stage of a related degree course at the University.

The first two semesters comprise 12 weeks' teaching, three weeks' assessment and a vacation period. The spring semester includes an additional one-week revision period. The intensive summer semester is eight weeks long. The full summer semester follows the standard pattern.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR: 2011/12

Semester I

Monday 26 September 2011

Teaching begins

Friday 16 December 2011

Teaching ends

Monday 19 December 2011

Christmas vacation begins

Friday 23 December 2011 to Monday 2 January 2012

University Closed

Friday 6 January 2012

Christmas Vacation ends

Monday 9 January to Saturday 21 January 2012

Examination Period

Friday 27 January 2012

Autumn Semester ends

Semester II

Monday 30 January 2012

Teaching begins (Spring)

Monday 19 March 2012

University Closed (St Patrick's Day)

Monday 2 April 2012

Easter Vacation begins

Monday 9 April 2012 to Friday 13 April 2012

University Closed (Easter) Easter Vacation ends

Monday 7 May 2012

University Closed (May Day)

Tuesday 8 May 2012 to Friday 11 May 2012

Revision week (non-teaching)

Monday 14 May to Saturday 26 May 2012

(with possible extension to 29 May if required for first sit examinations)

Examination Period

Friday 1 June 2012

Spring Semester ends

Monday 27 August to Friday 31 August 2012

Meetings of Boards of Examiners

Thursday 14 June 2012

Last date for meetings of Boards of Examiners

Resit Period

Wednesday 15 August to Thursday 23 August 2012

Supplementary Examinations

Semester III

Monday 23 July 2012

Teaching begins (Summer)

Monday 3 September to Friday 7 September 2012

Examination Period

Friday 14 September 2012

Summer Semester ends

Monday 17 September to Friday 21 September 2012

Meetings of Boards of Examiners

Please refer to the web page for updated details –

www.ulster.ac.uk/academic-services/student/

Exact dates of attendance may vary according to the requirements of your course

Modular Course Structure; Qualifications and Credit Framework

The University's courses are modular in structure. A module is a component of a course or undergraduate Honours subject with its own approved aims and outcomes and assessment methods. Each module is taught and assessed within a semester or across the whole year (often referred to 'long-thin'). Modules are combined in integrated programmes of study leading to awards or in Honours subject strands. Credit points and a credit level, appropriate to the module's content and learning outcomes are allocated in accordance with the overall requirements of the award. The table on page 44-45 sets out the requirements of the University's Qualifications and Credit Framework.

The University's awards are designed to meet the generic outcomes set out in the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of the Quality Assurance Agency. The Qualifications are grouped in five Higher Education levels from 4 to 8. A lower level (3) may be used in some courses in accordance with the limits in the University's Framework. Levels 1 and 2 are only found in Access Diplomas.

The University confers its awards on students who complete, in a manner acceptable to the Senate, the specified number of credits at the appropriate levels and meet the required standard of performance. Awards are only conferred on successful students who have paid all fees and debts owed to the University.

In addition to Single Honours degrees, Honours degrees are available for combinations of two or more distinct subjects where there is internal coherence within the subjects, but there is no expectation of integration between them. Honours subjects may therefore be offered as Single Honours degrees, or as Major (two-thirds weighting – 80 credit points at each of levels 5 and 6). Main (half-weighting – 60), or Minor (40) subject strands. The following combinations of strands may be approved: Major/Main; Main/Main (Joint); or three Minor (Combined). At level 4, study of more than two or three subjects may be possible.

Full details of the content, assessment requirements and regulations for your course are contained in the course/subject (and module) handbook(s). Individual course regulations conform to the general regulations for the award in question. They set out the conditions for progression between stages of the course, the consequences of failure and the requirements for the final award and its classification.

Qualifications and Credit Framework

Award	Qualification level (FHEQ)	Minimum overall credits	Typical range of levels	Minimum No. of credits at highest level	Maximum No. of credits at lowest level	Pass Mark %	Other Requirements/ Comments
Access Diploma	-	120	1, 2, 3	60	10	40	
Certificate of Personal and Professional Development	-	60	3, 4	-	60	40	Award framework for short course modules.
Certificate	4	60	3, 4	-	60	40	At least 40 at 4 for FHEQ Certificate.
Diploma	4	120	3, 4	-	120	40	At least 90 at 4 for FHEQ Certificate.
Certificate of Higher Education	4	120	3, 4	90	30	40	
Diploma in Professional Practice/ Professional Practice (International)	5	60	5	60	60	50	40% for progress to next stage 50% for award.
Diploma in International Academic Studies	5	120	3, 4, 5	90	30	50	40% for progress to next stage 50% for award.
Foundation Degree	5	240	3, 4, 5	100	40	40	Must include 40 credits of work-based learning at Level 5.
Associate Bachelor's Degree	5	240	3, 4, 5	100	40	40	

Award	Qualification level (FHEQ)	Minimum overall credits	Typical range of levels	Minimum No. of credits at highest level	Maximum No. of credits at lowest level	Pass Mark %	Other Requirements/ Comments
Advanced Diploma	5	120	3, 4, 5	90	30	40	
Advanced Certificate	5	60	3, 4, 5	40	20	40	
Non-Honours Degree	6	360	3, 4, 5, 6	60	30	40	
Honours Degree	6	360	3, 4, 5, 6	120	30	40	
Graduate Diploma	6	120	3, 4, 5, 6	90	30	40	Graduate entry
Graduate Certificate	6	60	3, 4, 5, 6	40	20	40	Graduate entry
Integrated Master's Degree	7	480	3, 4, 5, 6, 7	120	30	40	50% pass mark at Level 7 (from 2003 intake).
Postgraduate Certificate	7	60	6, 7	40	20	50	
Postgraduate Diploma	7	120	6, 7	90	30	50	
Master's Degree	7	180	6, 7	150	30	50	
Professional Doctorate	8	540	7, 8	420	120	50	

Qualifications and Credit Framework

FHEQ = Framework for Higher Education Qualifications designed by Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, second edition 2008.

The highest level in a range is typical: modules from higher levels may contribute to lower level awards, for example an Advanced Diploma may include level 6 modules. The minimum and maximum number of credits relate to a course with the minimum overall credits. Some degrees may include an additional foundation level comprising level 3 modules. The HE credit levels used by the University are those specified in the England, Wales and Northern Ireland (EWNl) credit guidelines. They are identified by a sequence of numbers from 4 to 8. Levels below Higher Education are also used as indicated.

The levels correspond to those used in the University's two earlier frameworks as follows: 1, 2, 3 = A; 4 = 1/B; 5 = 2/C; 6 = 3/D/M1; 7 = M/M2; 8 = D.

Levels

Credit levels are indicators of relative demand, complexity and depth of learning and student autonomy. Each module is assigned a particular level in a progressive series as follows:

- **Level 3:** pre-Higher Education access level
- **Level 4:** the standard generally associated with the first year of a full-time undergraduate degree course
- **Level 5:** the standard generally associated with the second year of a full-time undergraduate degree course
- **Level 6:** final year honours standard
- **Level 7:** postgraduate level (Master's)
- **Level 8:** Doctoral level

Each credit level has a generic descriptor which indicates the characteristics of the learning at that level. These are presented in an abbreviated form in the table below. They are in common usage in the UK higher education system.

Level 3	Apply knowledge and skills in a range of complex activities demonstrating comprehension of relevant theories. Access and analyse information independently and make reasoned judgements, selecting from a wide choice of procedures in familiar and unfamiliar contexts.
Level 4	Develop a rigorous approach to the acquisition of a broad knowledge base. Employ a range of specialised skills and evaluate information using it to plan and develop investigative strategies. Determine solutions to unpredictable problems.
Level 5	Generate ideas through the analysis of concepts at an abstract level with a command of specialised skills and the formulation of responses to well defined and abstract problems. Analyse and evaluate information; exercise significant judgement across a range of functions.
Level 6	Critically review, consolidate and extend a systematic and coherent body of knowledge. Critically evaluate new concepts and evidence from a range of sources. Transfer and apply diagnostic and creative skills and exercise significant judgement in a range of situations.
Level 7 (Master's)	Display mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills, employing advanced skills to conduct research or advanced technical or professional activity.
Level 8 (Doctoral)	Make a significant and original contribution to a specialised field of enquiry demonstrating a command of methodological issues and engaging in critical dialogue with peers.

Module Size, Effort Hours and Study Load

Taught modules may have any value in multiples of 5 credit points. The common sizes in undergraduate courses are 20 and 10 credit points and in postgraduate courses 30 and 15 credit points.

Notionally one credit point represents 10 hours of effort. The normal workload for a full-time course of study in the standard academic year (comprising the autumn and spring semesters) is 120 credit points. This amounts to some 36-42 hours of study per week (inclusive of class contact, practicals, fieldwork, private study, and assessment). Courses of significantly longer duration comprise additional modules, taken during the summer semester. Some part-time courses allow flexibility in the number of modules which may be studied each year. The maximum part-time study load is 90 credits in a two-semester year (or 135 in a full calendar year) with 45 credits per semester, except in the intensive summer semester where 20 may be taken.

The undergraduate project/dissertation may count as one or two modules. Periods of placement which are assessed in relation to the learning objectives of the course carry credit points. The placement may be integrated with an existing module or considered equivalent to taught modules.

Postgraduate Courses

Masters courses usually have a total of one hundred and eighty credit points. Full-time courses are

completed in one calendar year, with 60 credit points being accumulated in each of three semesters. In Master's courses which integrate a Postgraduate Certificate and a Postgraduate Diploma, these represent 60 and 120 credit points respectively. Some Master's degrees carry 240 credit points.

Course Flexibility and Student Choice

Full-time students are expected to take a balanced study load of 60 credits in each semester. Exceptionally you may be permitted to vary this, for example because you wish to study a particular optional module which is only offered in one semester. With the course or subject committee's approval you must still study modules amounting to 120 credits in the year, with no more than 80 credits in one semester and no less than 40 in the other. Some courses have been permitted to exceed this norm.

The University's Personal and Professional Development framework provides new opportunities for those who wish to upskill whilst gaining academic credit for their studies. A range of flexible credit-bearing short-courses provides students with the opportunity to study modules from across the Faculties and having obtained 60 points worth of credit qualify for the award of Certificate of Personal and Professional Development (CPPD). Furthermore, current students enrolled on other programmes of study may choose to take additional modules from the framework in order to enhance their employability prospects.

In appropriate cases, depending on academic performance, you may transfer from your original course to a related course at a different or the same level. The credit framework, which is compatible with that operated by many other universities, will assist in assessing your suitability and potential exemptions if you wish to transfer to another course or institution. If the match between courses is very close, a course or subject committee may allow you to take an extra module, and therefore a heavier study load than normal, to make up a gap during a year. It will take account of prerequisites, timetable constraints, the content and level of your previous studies and your abilities in deciding the appropriate point of entry.

Additionally, some courses contain an element of delayed choice. A number of courses allow you to postpone the decision to opt for a single subject or interdisciplinary course, or a major, joint or minor course until the beginning of the second year. Optional modules are commonly available, allowing you to follow particular preferences. Particular options may not be available every year, have prerequisites, or require a minimum or maximum class size.

Course Approval, Monitoring and Review

The University has developed rigorous procedures to ensure that the standards and quality of courses are maintained and enhanced.

New course proposals are examined by a University panel which includes external academic members and

employer or professional body representatives, where appropriate. New courses are given a period of approval at the end of which they undergo re-validation. External examiners provide annual reports on the standards of courses. Courses are revalidated on a five yearly cycle.

Module review is conducted at the end of each semester in which a module has been provided. Faculties undertake annual monitoring of all provision.

Procedures for obtaining student views on aspects of course design and delivery are an integral part of the University's quality assurance processes and these views are considered both during delivery of programmes and as part of formal annual monitoring and revalidation. You will be asked to complete questionnaires on the quality of modules and, in your final undergraduate year, to participate in the National Student Survey.

Courses are subject to ongoing development and updating. You will be consulted about or informed of any changes that affect your programme of study.

Under national arrangements and in common with all institutions of Higher Education in the United Kingdom, the University's quality assurance arrangements are subject to audit by the Quality Assurance Agency. These audits include seeking student views on the University's provision both from the Students' Union as representatives of the student body as a whole and from students in individual subject areas. In addition those courses, which have professional, statutory or regulatory body recognition or accreditation, are subject

to the standards and quality assurance arrangements of the relevant body.

Module Enrolments

Choice of Modules

Where it is compulsory for you to take a module on a particular year of a course you will be automatically enrolled for that module through the Online Enrolment process on the mandatory modules screen and it will be printed on your enrolment form.

You may choose optional modules prior to enrolment in consultation with your Course/Subject Director or Adviser of Studies. You can then enter your choice during the Online Enrolment process.

When selecting optional modules you should take particular care that you choose the correct semester, as many modules are offered in more than one semester. The course reference number (CRN) will be different for each semester. Ensure you select the correct CRN for the semester in which you wish to study the module.

Exemptions

You may apply for exemptions on the basis of previous study at the appropriate level. Your application would either be for exemption from specific modules on a subject for subject basis or exemption from a number of credit points at specific levels. Exemptions must be agreed in conjunction with the Course/Subject Director

or Adviser of Studies. Full-time students must maintain a full-time study load. **It is necessary to complete a form for the Notification of Approved Module and/or General Credit Exemption.** It is the responsibility of the student to return this form to either the Student Services Centre on the Belfast campus or the Registry office on other campuses.

Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

If you believe that you have met the intended learning outcomes of a module through your previous experience, but do not have a certificate or qualification to prove this, you may, in some cases, be able to claim exemption by submitting a portfolio of evidence, as an alternative to attending classes and undertaking set assessment. You will receive guidance from a member of staff who acts as an APEL adviser. The format of the submission is agreed with the APEL adviser. Consult your Course/Subject Director or Adviser of Studies.

Changing Modules

The University's regulations allow you to add or drop optional modules provided that you notify the Registry Office on a Module Amendment Form signed by your Course/Subject Director or Adviser of Studies within the first two weeks in Semester I (for Semester I modules) or the first two weeks in Semester II (for Semester II modules). You may obtain a Module Amendment Form from your Faculty Office, Registry Office or from your Course/Subject Director or Adviser of Studies. Remember it is your responsibility to complete the

form, obtain the signature of your Course/Subject Director and leave the form in the Registry Office by the deadline.

Profile of Enrolment

During October, a profile of the data held on your computer record will be available for viewing on the University Web page. This includes the modules for which you have been enrolled. It is your responsibility to check it carefully and notify the Registry Office of any errors or omissions by 31 October.

Consequences of Failure to Notify Registry of Amendments, Errors or Omissions

The Registry Office will not make any additions to the first semester modules on which you are enrolled after 31 October or to any second semester modules after the end of the second week of the second semester. You may still drop modules after that date but you cannot add modules. Full-time students who drop modules will become part-time which may affect their financial support entitlement. If you are a part-time student you should note that you will not obtain a refund for modules which you drop, unless you notify the Registry Office within two weeks of the start of the semester.

The consequence of not informing the Registry Office of missing or additional modules by the deadlines is that you will not be able to sit examinations or

get credit in the current academic year. You can still attend classes but you will be required to re-enrol in the next academic year if you want credit for the module. If you are a part-time student you will have to pay for the modules again, even if you failed to claim a refund within the time permitted.

If you are enrolled in the wrong semester for a module which is offered in two semesters you may get credit for the module provided your Course/Subject Director and modules co-ordinator are prepared to make special arrangements for any examination required and for recording your marks.

Module Coding Structure

The module code normally consists of two parts. The first indicates the subject area to which the module belongs and the second is a number. Together these provide a unique code for the module.

NUR
Indicates the
subject

309
Indicates the unique numerical
code and credit level

In the above example, NUR309 is a nursing module, with a credit level of 5. A module may be offered on a number of the University's campuses and in different semesters. It may also be offered on undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

As such it is important for students to be aware of which version, or section, of the module, they will be taking. Each section is given a unique course reference number (CRN). This is illustrated in the following example.

NUR 309, Section 1 or

CRN 51952	Campus MG	Semester 1	Level 5	Credit Points 10
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NUR 309, Section 2

CRN 51953	Campus MG	Semester 2	Level 5	Credit Points 10
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An explanation of the components making up the code follows:

- a) The first three characters denote the academic subject or topic (a full list of topics and codes follows this section).
- b) The next three digits are unique to the module and provide an indication of credit level, as follows:

Undergraduate:	000–099	3	Postgraduate:	700–899	7
	100–299	4			
	300–499	5			
	500–699	6			

LIST OF SUBJECTS/TOPICS FOR CODING MODULES (BY FACULTY)

Faculty of Arts		Faculty of Art, Design and Built Env	
AMS	American Studies	AAD	Art and Design
CHN	Chinese	ARC	Architecture
CRE	Creative Technologies	BLD	Building
CUS	Cultural Studies	CIV	Civil Engineering
DAN	Dance	DES	Design
DRA	Drama	ENE	Environmental Engineering
ENG	English	ENH	Environmental Health
EUS	European Studies	FAA	Fine and Applied Arts
FLM	Film Studies	FIR	Fire Safety Engineering
FRE	French	LSA	Landscape Architecture
GER	German	PHT	Photography
HIS	History	SUR	Surveying
HUM	Humanities	TFD	Textiles and Fashion Design
ICS	Irish Cultural Studies	TRA	Transport
IPS	International Peace Studies	VIC	Visual Communication
IRS	Irish		
LAN	Language Studies	Faculty of Comp & Engineering	
MED	Media Studies	BME	Biomedical Engineering
MUS	Music	COM	Computing
PCS	Peace and Conflict Studies	EEE	Electrical/Electronic Engineering
PHL	Philosophy	MAT	Mathematics
PHO	Photo-Imaging	MEC	Mechanical Engineering
POR	Portuguese		
SPA	Spanish		
THS	Theatre Studies		

Faculty of Life and Health Sciences		Faculty of Social Sciences	
ABC	Applied Biological & Chem Sciences	AED	Adult Educ & Comm Dev
ARS	Area Studies	CMM	Communication
BIO	Biology	CYM	Community Youth Work
BMS	Biomedical Sciences	EAP	English for Academic Purposes
CLS	Clinical Science	ECO	Economics
EGM	Environmental Sciences	EDU	Education
EQU	Equine Studies	EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FOR	Food Regulation	LAW	Law
FOR	Food Technology	POL	Politics
HEP	Health Promotion	PUP	Public Policy
HRC	Horticulture	SOC	Sociology
MDS	Medical Science	SOP	Social Policy and Administration
NUR	Nursing	SWK	Social Work
NUT	Human Nutrition	Ulster Business School	
OPT	Optometry	ACC	ACCA
OTH	Occupational Therapy	ACF	Accounting and Finance
PHA	Pharmacy (MPHARM)	ADV	Advertising
PHM	Pharmacology	BMG	Business & Management Studies
PHS	Pharmaceutical Sciences	CIM	CIMA
POD	Podiatry	CST	Consumer Studies
PSY	Psychology	HTM	Hospitality & Tourism Studies
PTH	Physiotherapy	LEC	Leisure, Events & Cultural Mgmt
RAD	Radiography	MKT	Marketing
SLS	Sport and Leisure Studies		
SLT	Speech and Language Therapy	All Faculties	
TOX	Toxicology	PPD	Personal & Professional Dev
		BEI	Study USA

Change of course

Any proposed change of course should be discussed with your Studies Adviser and also with the Course/ Subject Director of the course to which you intend to apply. All applications for a change of course or modules of study must be made on a Student Record Amendment Form obtainable from your Faculty/Campus Administrative Office or <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/academic-services/student/studentrecordamend.pdf>

Changes to modules are not normally permitted after the second week of the semester.

Students may be permitted, on educational grounds, to transfer to another course within or outside the University of Ulster with recommendation for continued financial help in the form of loans and means tested grants. The process must be completed within 16 months of initial registration. For initial advice on such transfers please contact one of the following:

Coleraine: Mrs S Hudson, Registry Office (ext. 24151)

Jordanstown and Belfast: Mrs S Dooley, Room 4F21 (ext. 66229)

Magee: Mrs M Martin, Academic Registry (ext. 75419)

Financial Help (Full-Time Students)

If you attend a course for no more than one year and change to another course you will remain eligible for financial help in the form of loans and means-tested grants.

Check carefully before taking any irrevocable decisions.

It is most important that, after consultation with the Registry Office, you let your Education and Library Board know as soon as possible in writing of any transfer in courses. The transfer to another course may be within this University or to another institution of higher or further education. The requirements are essentially the same:

- the transfer must be approved on educational grounds by the institution or institutions; and
- the transfer must be made within one academic year of the start of the original course.

However, you may transfer after one year and still receive financial help if you can complete the new course within the same timescale as the original course, for example moving from a non-honours to an honours degree of the same duration or from a 4 year to a 3 year degree course.

The Education and Library Board may refuse to transfer an award if it believes that the student did not intend to complete the course for which the original award was made.

It may, therefore, be important for your future fee entitlement to maintain satisfactory progress on your present course right up to the point where you withdraw; poor attendance, or just “drifting away” may lead to your Education and Library Board asking how serious you are about completing another course satisfactorily.

Be sure about what you are doing, and be clear about the consequences – you may, for example, be risking your future entitlement to future support with your fees or to continuation of an NHS bursary if you receive one.

Some types of course have the possibility of course change built in, and the University will inform your Education and Library Board at the appropriate point, when you have made the required choices; but the deadlines still have to be observed.

Loans (full-time students)

If you change to another full-time course within the University and you have already taken out a loan, you should tell the Student Loans Company (SLC) of any change in graduation date.

If your new course is not an eligible course for loans purposes you will not be able to apply for any more loans. You will also have to begin repaying any loans taken out for your first course, unless you apply to defer your repayments. The SLC will write to you about this.

If you change to a new course at a different institution you should tell the SLC that you have left (the University will also inform your Education and Library Board who will, in turn, notify the SLC).

Leave of Absence (full-time students)

Do not take a hasty decision to withdraw from a course. It may be possible, especially if your problems relate to health, family or money, to suspend your course for a time (usually a year) by taking leave of absence. Where students have to suspend their studies because

of illness or because of caring responsibilities, it may not be possible for you immediately to rejoin your course on recovery from illness or when your caring responsibilities end. Students in this position may now be able to apply for Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) and housing benefit.

JSA can be paid subject to the student satisfying the normal criteria for receipt of that benefit. JSA is not payable to students who are entitled to a student loan. It is payable up until the beginning of the student's next academic year but not beyond if the student cannot rejoin the course until later in that academic year. Students are not eligible for payments from the hardship fund while in receipt of JSA. Students who remain ill for more than a continuous period of 28 weeks become eligible at that stage to receive Income Support and Housing Benefit, providing that they have submitted satisfactory evidence to the Benefits Agency.

Leave of absence needs to be approved by your faculty and you should make arrangements to see your Studies Adviser or Course/Subject Director.

It is important to notify the University as soon as you intend to take leave of absence, as you may be liable for fees up to the point you go on leave of absence.

Loans and Grants (full-time students)

If you take leave of absence your Education and Library Board will usually suspend your award for the same period, allowing you to pick it up again from the point you left off.

In such circumstances the support will normally be suspended until the next academic year. If you want a further extension you should protect your entitlement by writing to your board. Any further leave of absence will need to be approved by your faculty.

You will not normally have to begin making repayments on your student loan, but you will not be able to apply for another loan until you have resumed your course. If, when you resume the course, the finishing date has changed (because you have to repeat a year for example) you should inform your Education and Library Board of the new date. The University will also inform the Board.

Leave of Absence (part-time students)

If you intend to apply for a leave of absence you should contact your Adviser of Studies or Course/Subject Director who will advise you of the procedures to follow before leaving the University.

Repeat Years (full-time students)

Loans and Grants

Your Education and Library Board/LEA will not normally provide financial help (loans and grants) to repeat a part of a course. The normal practice would be for you to pay your own living expenses and fees for the period you are repeating. The board will normally suspend support and later reinstate it when you have satisfactorily completed the repeat period. If there are mitigating circumstances which contributed to failure (e.g. serious problems relating to health, family circumstances or other matters outside your control), your Board may be sympathetic to a request for financial help during the repeat period of study; but any such plea will need the strong support of your Studies Adviser or Course/Subject Director.

Be sure about what you are doing, and be clear about the consequences – you may, for example, be risking your future entitlement to support with your fees or to continuation of an NHS bursary if you receive one.

You should apply to your Education and Library Board for renewed financial support in advance of returning to full-time study.

Withdrawal from a Course

Withdrawal from your course is not a step which should be taken lightly, and before doing so you should talk to your Studies Adviser or your Course/Subject Director or the counselling service – or to all of these. They may be able to give help and support which enables you to overcome your difficulties. It is important to remember that all students have problems, but some are more affected by them than others. Seek help early, before a problem gets out of hand.

If all else fails, you may have to make the difficult decision to withdraw from your course. Be sure about what you are doing, and be clear about the consequences – you may, for example, be risking your future entitlement to future support with your fees or to continuation of an NHS bursary if you receive one.

Talk to careers advisers about the next steps; maybe they can suggest a more suitable course or give guidance about possible jobs.

It is very important that you discuss your withdrawal with your Studies Adviser or Course/Subject Director and that you notify the Registry Office using a Student record Amendment Form so that they can then inform your Education and Library Board or LEA and the Student Loans Company promptly; otherwise you may unintentionally fall into arrears with repayment of your loan (or you may be faced with a demand for repayment of part of your grant if you are in receipt of an NHS bursary).

You should be aware that you may be liable for fees up to the point you notify the University that you are withdrawing so inform the registry office without delay.

You should also write formally to your Education and Library Board or LEA (if applicable) to let them know about your withdrawal. If you have a loan from the Student Loans Company you are obliged to write and tell them that you have withdrawn from the course.

Loans

You will not have to start repaying your loan until the April after you leave. If you leave in February or March, however, you may be asked to begin repaying almost immediately. The Student Loans Company will contact you about repaying your loan once they have been told that you have withdrawn from the course. You will be eligible to defer making repayments if your gross income (before tax) is below £15,000 a year.

If you withdraw from the course and you do not tell the University or the Company straightaway, you may fall into arrears with your repayments when they become due in April.

If this happens, you can still apply to defer your repayments and have your arrears cancelled. This can be backdated for up to 12 months. It is very important, to avoid falling into arrears, that the Student Loans Company is notified as soon as possible after you have finally decided to withdraw.

If you withdraw and move to a course at a different institution (unless it is part of a franchise arrangement) repayments will formally be due to begin in the April after you cease to attend your course; you must therefore apply for deferment of repayments before arrears of instalments begin to accrue.

Repayments are not due to begin if you withdraw from one course but immediately transfer to another loan-bearing course at the same institution without a break in attendance.

Grants

Students who leave their courses do not have to pay back their grant for the time while they were still studying; but they have to repay any grant covering the period after they leave, plus the Christmas or Easter vacation immediately following.

In other words, if you drop out four weeks before the end of the autumn semester, the Education and Library Board will normally demand repayment for those four weeks, plus the Christmas vacation.

It must be emphasised that you are not entitled to any proportion of your loan or grant after your official date of withdrawal. If you want to claim benefit you should apply immediately to your local DHSSPS / Benefits Agency office.

Other Obligations

Before deciding to withdraw, or to suspend your course, you should also consider the implications of any other

financial commitments, such as a contract to occupy and pay for accommodation (whether belonging to the University or to a private landlord) for an agreed period. You may be legally liable to pay for the full duration of the lease even if you withdraw from the course.

Fees

Whether you are entitled to a refund or still owe fees to the University will depend on when you withdraw from your course, and whether you have paid any of your fees yourself. If you are considering withdrawing from your course you should seek advice from the Finance Office on your fees position. No refunds will be payable for attendance after the fourth week of each semester.

Future Entitlement

If you decide to withdraw, you may have no immediate intention of returning to higher education. However, it is still important to understand how withdrawal from a course can affect your loan or grant entitlement if you decide later to return to higher education.

Do not forget that you need to safeguard for the future your entitlement to loans and grants or NHS bursary should you apply to a course for which one is available.

If you attend a course for no more than one year and change to another course you will remain eligible for support for financial help in the form of loans and means-tested grants.