Student Development and Well-being



STUDENTS AND SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

Part-time Students

April 2016 - March 2017

Liverpool Hope University
Student Support
& Well-being

Liverpool Hope University





Part-time students have access to the whole range of available benefits as long as they satisfy the individual conditions of entitlement and are less restricted because of their student status.

Students who are unable to work due to sickness or disability, who are unemployed, on a low income or have caring responsibilities may be entitled to claim Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit, depending on their circumstances.

Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)

Job Seekers Allowance is both a means-tested and a non means-tested benefit. You satisfy the contribution-based (non means-tested) part which can be paid for up to six months if you have paid sufficient National Insurance contributions, usually in the previous two tax years before the year of your benefit claim. You can only qualify for the means-tested part if your income and/or that of your partner is below what the law says you need to live on and you satisfy the individual conditions of entitlement.

There is no restriction on the number of hours a student is allowed to study whilst claiming this benefit, as long as the course is described as part-time and you are registered as part-time with the University. You need to meet the job seeking conditions i.e. you are available for work, actively seeking work, and you have a valid jobseekers agreement. You will be required to satisfy your claimant commitment as defined. You usually have to be willing to give up the course if a full-time job becomes available and can be sanctioned if you do not meet the conditions of your work requirements.

In addition, you must not unreasonably restrict your chances of employment, for example, by stating an unacceptably high wage or by only looking for a certain type of job. The regulations state that when deciding availability for work in any particular week, the decision maker must ignore the pattern of study as long as the student is willing and able to reorganise his/her hours of study so as to be able to start work within a reasonable timescale.





Further conditions have recently been introduced and there is now an increase in Jobcentre support for employment, where claimants have to attend Jobcentres weekly in the first three months. New work programmes have been introduced for long term claimants and new work and health programmes for those with health issues.

Lone parents or the main carer in a couple have to prepare for work when their child reaches three years old and meet all work requirements, including signing on for JSA when the child reaches five. However, if the youngest child is 13 or under you only need to be available for work during your child's normal school hours. It is more difficult for part-time students to stay on courses and claim JSA.

Telephone Claims

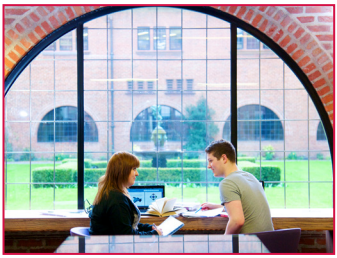
All Social Security claims can be made by telephone. Claimants remain entitled to make paper claims if, for some reason, it is difficult for them to make a claim by phone, e.g. communication problems or disability. Claim forms can also be accessed via the internet.

To make a claim you first need to apply online at www.gov.uk, then after 48-hours you can call the local contact centre (0800 0556 688). This is an initial contact to register your claim where a telephone interview will be conducted and claim your form completed. This will usually be followed up by a face-to-face appointment with a Claimant Adviser at the local Jobcentre for a work-focused interview.

The aim of the interview is to help you back to work as soon as possible. Make sure that you are eligible to claim JSA and to draw up a Jobseekers agreement with an agreed claimant commitment. You are required to agree to a claimant commitment and adhere to it as a requirement of claiming benefit. If you break your agreement, the Jobcentre may then impose sanctions and you could have your benefit reduced. If this happens you need to seek advice.

At the interview remember that you are expected to be available and actively looking for work and should not communicate any doubt on your willingness to work. If you are entitled to the benefit it should be backdated to the date of the initial call.





Income Support

If you are not required to be available for work you are entitled to claim Income Support for yourself and your family. Generally, those entitled to Income Support are carers, single parents with a child under three years old, and certain disabled students. For further details see our leaflet on Income Support to check eligibility and entitlement. The initial claiming procedure is the same as that for Job Seekers Allowance (see previous section).

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

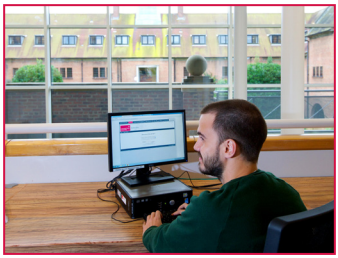
If you have limited capability for work due to sickness or disability and can get a sick note from your doctor confirming you are unfit for full-time work (16+ hours), you should claim Employment and Support Allowance.

ESA is both a means-tested and a non-means tested benefit and you would satisfy the non-means tested part if you have paid enough National Insurance contributions. The means-tested part is paid as long as your income is below what the law says you need to live on. It is possible to receive one or both types of ESA.

In order to make a claim you need to call the contact centre (0800 0556 688). In addition, you will need to provide medical certificates from your G.P. confirming that you are unfit for full-time work until you are assessed under the work capability assessment. Most claimants will also have to attend work focused interviews at the Jobcentre and may be required to undertake work-related activity, (for more details see the disability benefits leaflet).

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is a new benefit which will eventually replace most means-tested benefits. It has been introduced in a small number of areas and is also limited to single job-seekers without children. There are plans to expand the claimant groups able to claim Universal Credit over the next few years, with full implementation expected by Spring 2021. For more details, see the separate Universal Credit and Students leaflet.


Housing Benefit and Other Housing Costs

Students with housing costs can claim help for rent and Council Tax from the Local Authority via the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support Scheme. If you receive Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance for yourself and your family, you should receive enough benefit to have some of these costs paid. The exception to this is where there is another adult living with you (apart from your partner), or your rent is higher than the Local Housing Allowance limits. If you live in Social Housing your Housing Benefit may be reduced because of under occupancy by the 'Bedroom Tax'. Also, under most Local Authority Council Tax support schemes, claimants have to pay a percentage of Council Tax themselves.

You should be able to register your claim for Housing Benefit at the same time as you make your claim via Jobcentre Plus, but it may be quicker to claim directly from the Local Authority. This can be done by completing one of their claim forms and submitting it to a local One Stop Shop, where you will normally be guaranteed a decision on your claim within an agreed timescale. In Liverpool the time limit is usually 10-14 days, as long as you provide all of the required information to assess your claim. For further details see the Housing Benefit leaflet.

N.B. Claimants of Universal Credit will have their housing costs included and have no need to claim Housing Benefit.

Students with mortgage costs can claim these via Jobcentre Plus at the time of their Income Support/Job Seekers Allowance/Employment and Support Allowance claim. Mortgage interest can only be paid at the national average rate set at a level equal to the Bank of England monthly average mortgage rate on mortgages up to an upper limit of £200,000, with limited help for other specific costs. You can only start receiving this help after 39 weeks of claiming. Claimants who receive Job Seekers Allowance usually have a limit of a maximum of 104 weeks where housing costs can be paid.





Student Funding – Students who started a part-time course before 2012.

From September 2016 the maintenance grant of £280, which is disregarded for benefit purposes, will continue for part-time students. Payment does not depend on how intensive your course is. In addition, students can claim a means-tested fees grant which is available at three different levels depending on how intensive the course is - £855 (up to 59% of a full-time course), £1,025 (up to 74% of a full-time course) and £1,285 (for 75% or more of a full-time course).

Student Funding – New students 2016 onwards

New students starting on a part-time course in 2016 can claim a tuition fee loan to pay their tuition fees up to 50% of the full-time fee charged by the University, which for 2016 is £4,500. There is no maintenance grant or loan for living costs available to new part-time students.

For further details call Student Funds on: 0151 291 3435.

Disabled Students

Disabled Students have access to a wide range of disability benefits, all of which have individual conditions of entitlement. The most common benefits claimed by disabled students and their carers are Personal Independence Payment, Employment and Support Allowance, and Carers Allowance. These benefits are covered in more detail in the Disabled Students leaflet.





Student Funding

In addition to the general funding available to part-time students, the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) can be claimed for course equipment costs and non-medical helper services. For more information around DSAs please see: www.gov.uk/studentfinance and www.sfengland.slc.co.uk/quickstartguides. DSAs are disregarded for benefit purposes.

Further help

If you require any further advice or assistance in relation to a welfare benefits issue, help is available by contacting the Liverpool Hope Students' Union Advice Service.

Liverpool Hope Students' Union
Lecture Theatre Complex Foyer, Hope Park Campus

T: 0151 291 3708
E: suadvice@hope.ac.uk



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