



# ARE YOU THINKING OF...

**Leaving?, Interrupting?**

**Changing to Part Time or Full Time? Changing your course?**

If you are then this guide can give you detailed information about student funding, tuition fees, housing, tenancy agreements, procedures, University regulations, debt, Council Tax, welfare benefits and immigration that can all be affected.

To book an appointment with the Advice Service please email:

[studentsupport@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@lincoln.ac.uk)

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## **ALL STUDENTS MUST READ THIS SECTION**

### **Declaration**

**The Advice Service cannot be held responsible if the information here is incorrect.**

**The Advice Service makes every effort to ensure information on these pages is accurate and up to date; however policies, procedures and regulations are subject to change and therefore the Advice Service cannot accept responsibility for any loss, damage or inconvenience suffered as a result of using our pages. This information was checked on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2022.**

**The Advice Service offers confidential specialist advice to help you make the right decision for you. We can explain how rules and regulations will affect you personally. Please remember that everyone is different and rules and regulations will affect you differently, depending on your circumstances.**

**To book a confidential telephone appointment with a professional advice worker, please email [studentsupport@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@lincoln.ac.uk) or telephone Student Support on **01522 837080**.**

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## **SECTION 1: Thinking of Leaving?**

If you are thinking about leaving University altogether (withdrawing), or taking a break (interrupting), it is important to be aware of your rights and responsibilities. It's not unusual to think about leaving University and you are not alone.

Reasons why students think about leaving University can include:

- Money worries
- Choosing the wrong course
- Struggling to balance working and studying
- Struggling to make friends
- Unforeseen problems e.g. health or family problems

Leaving may feel like the only thing to do, but whatever your reasons it is a good idea to consider all the options. You can get help and information from the Advice Service, your Personal Academic Tutor and the Careers Service about the different options available to you.

**Personal Tutor** – Can help you if you are struggling with your course or something is affecting your ability to study. They can discuss the academic implications of a break from your studies. If you want to return to your course in future, then you will need to talk to your tutor about this before you leave.

**Careers and Employability Centre** - Leaving your programme of study at the University could have far reaching effects and potentially impact upon your career aspirations. The Careers and Employability Centre are here to support you to make a well informed decision. If you are considering leaving your programme of study or the University please make sure that you visit the Careers & Employability Service. They can help you to understand the career implications of your decision and support you in identifying the right path to fulfil your career aspirations. They offer one to one Careers Information, Advice and Guidance to help you to make the right decision for you. The Careers Service is situated on the ground floor of the Library. To access support please email: [careers@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:careers@lincoln.ac.uk) or call 01522 837 828.

## **SECTION 2: Working through your problems**

If you are having problems which affect your study you can talk to:

- The Advice Service
- Your personal tutor
- Other support services, for example the Wellbeing Centre or the University Chaplain.

You may come to the conclusion that you can carry on with your studies. However, if your work has been affected, remember that you may need **evidence** of the problem, e.g. a medical certificate, in case you need to claim Mitigating Circumstances or show Student Finance that you had Compelling Personal Reasons (CPR) to get extra funding.

**Please see Sections 13 and 14 for further information on Mitigating Circumstances and Compelling Personal Reasons (CPR).**

## **SECTION 3: Changing Courses**

If you are thinking of changing course within the University, you will need the permission of the programme leaders and you will need to discuss the details with academic staff. You will also need to think about how your new course will be funded. The Advice Service can provide advice on all areas of student funding. Please see page 2 for how to contact and make an appointment with the Advice Service.

The following information is taken from the University of Lincoln General Regulations 2022/23. Regulations do change from time to time and it is important that you check the most up to date version of the University of Lincoln's regulations before you make any final decisions.

### **E.1 Change of Studies**

E.1.1 A change of studies occurs when a student transfers their registration from one programme to a different programme.

E.1.2 A student may only change their studies with the agreement, given on academic grounds, of the relevant Programme Leaders and where the timing of such a change is not prejudicial to the academic progress of the student.

E.1.3 No student may change from one programme to another unless it is clear that they have adequate opportunity to complete all the assessments on the new programme in the teaching session assigned to the current cohort of students on that programme Level.

E.1.4 A change of studies may only take place where the transfer is explicitly approved by the importing Programme Leader, evidenced by the relevant signature on the student transfer form. In the case of a joint programme, authorisation from both importing Programme Leaders is required.

E.1.5 In allowing a student to change their studies, the University will not give an undertaking that the student will be entitled to support from any financial sponsor to pursue the new programme.

E.1.6 Students withdrawn on academic, fitness to practise, attendance or engagement grounds are not eligible to reapply for admission onto the same programme.

## **SECTION 4: Studying Part-Time**

You may decide to study your postgraduate course on a part-time basis, or change from full-time to part-time study.

Part-time students from England can apply for a Postgraduate Masters Loan. The loan will be divided equally over each year of your course.

For more information about the Postgraduate Masters Loan please see Section 8.

You will need to make sure that you can support yourself financially while you are studying. You may be working, and/or you can apply for welfare benefits.

**If you would like confidential specialist advice to help you make the right decision about whether to study part-time please see page 2 for how to contact and make an appointment with the Advice Service.**

## **SECTION 5: Taking a break- Interrupting Studies**

If you have to leave university right now, but you know that you want to continue with your course at a later date, you can interrupt (take a break from) your studies. The usual period of interruption will be one academic year. The normal maximum period of interruption is two years, but this may be extended on a case by case basis.

You will need to discuss interruption with your School to agree on the period of interruption, the best time for you to return, and to discuss the academic implications of the break.

### **Some things to consider when interrupting:**

Interrupted students are still classed as full-time students by the welfare benefits system; this means you will continue to be classed as a full time student for council tax while you are interrupted.

Unless you already have, or are eligible for, an underlying entitlement to benefits, (e.g. you are a single parent, or you get a disability benefit such as Personal Independence Payment or Disability Living Allowance and are assessed by the DWP as having Limited Capability for Work), you **will not** be able to claim welfare benefits during your period of interruption.

You remain liable for the fees for the academic year in which you interrupted. If you have a payment plan, this will usually be suspended during the interruption and resume once you start studying again. Please see section 9 for more information about fees.

There are restrictions on the amount of student funding postgraduate students can get from the Student Loans Company: for more information please see Sections 8 and 14.

If you have missed deadlines to hand in work at the point when you interrupt, you may not be able to repeat that work when you return unless you have already made a successful claim for Mitigating Circumstances. More information about mitigating circumstances can be found in Section 13.

Below are extracts from the University of Lincoln General Regulations 2022/23. Regulations do change from time to time and it is important that you check the most up to date version before you make any final decisions.

#### **Part D - Interruption of Studies**

D.1.4 A student will normally be expected to return to their programme in the following academic year at the point in the teaching or assessment calendar equivalent to when study was previously interrupted. Where students interrupt at the semester break this may be relatively straightforward but where an interruption has been at another point this will require monitoring by the Programme Team. Academic judgement may be used when deciding upon the relevant point of return to study.

D.1.5 A student returning after an interruption of studies will enrol on modules not previously assessed, or where reassessment has been agreed by the Board of Examiners. Any assessments already completed will be carried forward.

D.1.6 The University cannot guarantee that changes to a programme will not be made during a student's period of interruption. Where changes have occurred the Board of Examiners, in consultation with relevant departments such as Student Administration and Student Services, will make appropriate arrangements to enable the student to complete the programme.

D.1.7 During a period of interruption of studies the student and the University remain bound by the University's Regulations, Policies and Procedures.

D.1.8 Where a student has formally interrupted their studies, the period of interruption of study will not normally be included for the purposes of calculating their maximum period of registration. The normal maximum for a period of interruption of studies is 2 years, but this may be subject to more restrictive requirements of professional bodies and as agreed at validation.

D.1.9 A School Fitness to Practise Panel has the power to suspend a student from their studies for a specified time or until the occurrence of a specified event. Such suspension has the effect of a mandatory interruption of studies.

#### **Part A.3.E – Students Interrupting or Withdrawing from a Programme**

A.3.E.5 A student on an unregulated fees programme interrupting their studies will remain liable for their full tuition fee for the interrupted academic year.

A.3.E.6 A student on a regulated fees programme interrupting their studies will be charged in the academic year that studies are resumed.

A.3.E.7 Fees will be adjusted to reflect those already charged during the interrupted academic year.

A.3.E.8 A student who resumes studies in a later academic year at an earlier point than the original interruption and/or resumes on a greater number of credits will incur an additional charge.

A.3.E.12 The overriding principle is that the student will pay for one complete period of study (for full time students this would be one academic session) although this may be spread over two academic years, provided that the student resumes studies in the same term as the initial interruption. Where a student resumes studies in an earlier term than the initial interruption, an additional charge will be payable for the subsequent term(s) of study repeated.

## **SECTION 6: Studying elsewhere**

If you decide that another course at a different university would suit you better, a good first step is to get advice from the University of Lincoln Careers Service or the careers advisor in your faculty. Once you have decided on a new course and a new university you should approach the new university to see if you can get an offer.

Changing universities has serious implications for your student funding and possibly your accommodation contract. For more information please see sections 7, 8, 9, 10 and 14.

## **SECTION 7: Withdrawing from University**

Some people decide that being at university is not the right choice for them at this time and that they should leave the course permanently. If this applies to you, it is a good idea to speak to the University's Careers Service before you leave. They can help you to decide what to do next and what you can do with the skills, abilities and qualifications that you already have.

Withdrawing will have implications for your funding, your finances and possibly for your accommodation. You may still be liable for course fees when you withdraw. Please see sections 8, 9, 10 and 11 for more information.

**If you think you might want to withdraw from university, speak to the Advice Service. Please see page 2 for information on how to contact us.**



## **SECTION 8: Student Funding for Postgraduates**

Eligible postgraduate students who are ordinarily resident in England can apply for a Postgraduate Masters Loan (PGML) as a contribution towards the cost of their studies. In 2022/23 this will be £11,836. This is the **maximum** amount of funding available.

The PGML is also available for part-time study. The funding will be divided equally over the number of years in your course.

**(Please note that postgraduate funding is different if you live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland. Please contact your funding body or the Advice Service if you would like more information about this.)**

Normally students will only be able to get one PGML.

However, if you did not complete your course due to **compelling personal reasons** (CPR), you can get a new PGML for a **new course**. Repeat funding due to CPR may be awarded **once only** per student. Please see section 14 for more information about CPR.

If you **interrupt** (take a break from) your studies, your PGML payments will stop. If you get a payment for the term after you interrupted, this is an overpayment which you can be asked to repay immediately. If you don't repay an overpayment by the time you resume your studies, it can be deducted from your future PGML payments.

SLC have discretion to continue payments of your PGML during a period of interruption if you can show that you will be in financial hardship. Please note you will never receive more than the maximum PGML entitlement.

If you interrupt your studies for two years or more (whether this is a continuous period or a cumulative total of shorter interruption periods), you will only receive further payments of your PGML if you can provide evidence of compelling personal reasons (CPR).

If you **withdraw** from the course (leave the course completely), all future payments of PGML will be cancelled. You should notify the University and SLC immediately, to ensure that you do not receive any more payments of the loan.

## **SECTION 9: University Fees**

**As a postgraduate student you are responsible for paying the course fees to the University.** You must pay in full or set up a payment plan within 21 days of enrolment on the course. If you set up a payment plan, you will pay by monthly instalments: the maximum number of instalments is 9.

There is more information about how to pay your fees on the University's main website.

What follows is an extract from the University's General Regulations 2022/23, Part A.3.E:

### **A.3.E Students Interrupting or Withdrawing from a Programme**

A.3.E.2 Students interrupting or withdrawing from their programme will be charged a proportion of their tuition fee as set out below. Effective start date is the formal date on which the student completes the relevant enrolment process for a programme or the first day of the term, whichever is the later date.

Postgraduate Programmes (Withdrawal Only)	
0-4 weeks following effective start date	0%
5-10 weeks following effective start date	25%
11 weeks onwards following effective start date	100%

Please note: if you withdraw from the course **after** week 10 from your start date, or interrupt, you are not entitled to a refund of the fees and remain liable for any unpaid fees.

## **SECTION 10: Accommodation**

If you decide that you no longer want to stay, or cannot stay, in your rented accommodation when you withdraw or interrupt your studies you need to check the terms and conditions of your contract.

Most students in Lincoln have fixed term tenancies. This means that you are legally bound by your contract with the landlord to pay the rent until the end of the tenancy, whether you are living there or not.

If you do not pay the rent, the landlord could take legal action against you (and/or your guarantor if you have one, and/or your housemates if you have a joint tenancy) in the County Court.

Your tenancy agreement may have a “break clause” within the fixed term which allows you to leave early if you give the required notice. These are extremely rare in the Lincoln area.

You may be able to persuade the landlord (and your housemates if you have a joint tenancy) to let another person take over your tenancy. The landlord is **not** obliged to agree to this. If you do find a new tenant for the property and the landlord agrees, make sure that you get an agreement in writing that you are released from the tenancy. You will remain liable for the rent until that happens.

If you are stuck with having to pay the rent for the rest of the tenancy, but you are no longer living in the property, you may be in a situation where you cannot afford to pay the rent in full.

When you have moved out of the property and you no longer need to live there, you may still owe rent. The rent debt in this case is known as a non-priority debt, because the landlord’s ability to evict you for non-payment has no effect on you.

In this situation you can negotiate with the landlord to ask if they will accept payment of the outstanding debt in smaller instalments, based on what you can afford to pay.

The Advice Service can help you to do this, or if you have withdrawn from the University, your local Citizens Advice office can help.

**If you are struggling to prioritise your financial commitments, the Advice Service can give confidential specialist advice on budgeting and debt. Please see page 2 for how to contact us.**

## **SECTION 11: Welfare benefits**

If you have withdrawn from your course and are no longer a student, or you are studying part-time, you can make claims for all welfare benefits.

If you are interrupted from your course, you are still treated as a full-time student for benefits purposes. Most full-time students are not eligible for welfare benefits and this will not usually change when you interrupt. This could mean that you have no income for a year or more, unless you are well enough to work. Students who **CAN** get benefits include:

- Lone parents;
- People with a disability;
- Couples where both of you are students and you have a child.

If you are a full-time student who can get benefits, or a part-time student, and you get the PGML Master's, 30% of the maximum loan you can get is treated as income when calculating means-tested benefits. So if you are eligible for the £11,836 loan you are treated as having £3551 of income when calculating your welfare benefits.

**If you would like confidential specialist advice about how your postgraduate funding will affect your welfare benefits, please see page 2 for the Advice Service contact details.**

## **SECTION 12: Immigration**

If you are in the UK on any type of visa or you are an EU national there may be other implications if you decide to change course, interrupt or withdraw. Our specialist immigration advisers can advise you further. **Please see page 2 for how to contact and make an appointment with us.**

## **SECTION 13: Mitigating Circumstances**

### **Mitigating Circumstances**

There may be times when your ability to study, or to hand in work at the right time, has been affected by exceptional and unforeseen circumstances beyond your control. If so, you can apply for mitigating circumstances (MCs) to be taken into consideration where you feel your performance in assessments has been affected.

You apply for MCs through Blackboard or the Student Services website:

[Mitigating Circumstances \(formerly known as Extenuating Circumstances\) – Student Services \(lincoln.ac.uk\)](#)

**There is a strict deadline when applying for MCs** and you will need to provide independent evidence (eg medical evidence) of the circumstances which affected your ability to do the work.

If you are not able to attend an examination or in-class test (eg a hospital appointment), you should apply for MCs **BEFORE** the date of the test or examination. If this isn't possible (for example, you become ill on the date of the examination), you then have a **maximum of 10 working days** from the date of the test or examination to apply for MCs.

If you are not able to complete an assessment (eg coursework), you should apply for an **extension** from your school in the first instance. If you believe, or you are advised that an extension will not give you enough time to get the work done, you should then apply for MCs **BEFORE** the submission deadline or within **10 working days** of the submission deadline.

Once your results have been formally ratified by the Board of Examiners **you will not usually** be able to make a claim for MCs unless you can provide evidence of really exceptional circumstances.

If your MCs claim is successful you will usually get the opportunity to do the work again. If, after re-assessment, your original mark is higher, then this will override the mark you get in the new assessment.

If your claim for MCs is not successful, you will have **15 working days** to provide further evidence. You can only do this once after submission of the initial MCs claim. If you wish to access the Review and Appeal procedure after this point, you will need a clearly evidenced reason for doing so as resubmission of the same evidence a third time to the panel or via the Review and Appeal procedure will not be permitted.

### **Evidence for an MCs claim**

In order to make a successful claim for MCs, you will usually need independent evidence to show how the MCs has affected you at the relevant time.

For example, if you have been ill, a medical certificate, hospital record or a letter from a medical professional/counsellor which confirms the illness and also the impact on your ability to study, on the relevant dates.

If you have been affected by the illness of a family member, medical evidence will be required including how the circumstances have affected you and your ability to study.

If you have been the victim of a crime, you may need evidence from the police and medical evidence.

One of the most important things to remember is that the evidence must relate to the time of the assessment(s) claimed for. You may need to explain this to your doctor/counsellor, or whoever is providing the evidence for you.

Letters from friends or family will not usually be considered independent evidence.

Please remember that it is your responsibility to supply the evidence. It is not enough to ask the University to contact your GP or the Police.

### **Long-term Disability or Illness**

If you make an MCs claim which is based on your long-term health condition, the MCs Panel will take into account whether this was known in advance to the University.

If you have a new health condition that has started or become evident after enrolling, then your claim can be considered by the MCs Panel. However you will be referred to the Student Wellbeing Centre for ongoing support.

Where your disability or long-term health condition is covered by a PASS Plan through the Student Wellbeing Centre, you cannot rely on this in support of an MCs claim unless you can show that other, unforeseen, circumstances have affected your situation.

**You can contact the Advice Service for more advice and assistance with and MCs claim. Details on how to contact us are on Page 2.**

Further details can be found in Part M of the University's General Regulations 2022/23. [University Regulations and Schedule of Awards – Secretariat \(lincoln.ac.uk\)](https://www.lincoln.ac.uk/secretariat)

## **Section 14: Compelling Personal Reasons**

If you have been unable to complete a course, or have interrupted your studies because of compelling personal reasons, you can ask SFE to take these into account.

If you have withdrawn from a course because of CPR, you may be able to get another PGML for a new course. **You can only do this once.**

If you have interrupted your studies you generally can't get funding to repeat a year or part year of the same course.

If you have interrupted your studies for 2 years or more, you will need to provide evidence of CPR before your payments of PGML can be resumed.

Students awarded CPR will still be liable for any previous loans taken out during the year(s) affected. A successful CPR claim does not write off your loans. It allows you to apply for additional funding that you would not otherwise be awarded.

**To apply for CPR you write a letter to:**

**Student Finance England  
PO Box 210  
Darlington  
DL1 9AZ.**

**We recommend that this is sent by 'Signed For' delivery.**

A successful claim for CPR will be accompanied by independent evidence of the compelling personal reasons. This could be medical evidence, letters from a professional adviser, or a letter from a tutor who is aware of your situation.

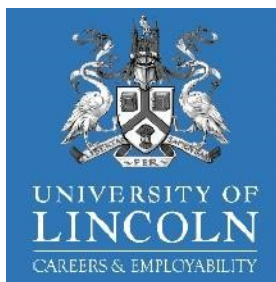
You should, in your own letter, explain in detail how the CPR affected your ability to study.

You should ensure that:

- Your CRN (Customer Reference Number) is clearly written on the letter and every piece of evidence. You can find your CRN on your student finance award letters.
- Any evidence from a professional is an original document.
- Your letter includes your full name, address, date of birth, customer reference number and is dated and signed.
- Your letter states clearly the academic year(s) to which your application relates.



**The Advice Service is an independent service located in the Student Support and Advice Centre. We offer confidential legal advice to all enrolled students at the University of Lincoln. Our advisers are members of professional bodies such as UKCISA, IMA and NASMA and we adhere to their professional codes of conduct and standards.**



## **Careers and Employability Service**

### **How can the Careers and Employability Service help?**

We will talk through your career plan with you and how well your current course and other options may fit within this as well as advising you on your next steps. We have a range of information sources that you can take advantage of to inform your decision. We will also be able to support you in finding part-time work to help with your financial situation. We are based in the library on the ground floor.

### **Don't forget!**

Even though you might be considering leaving your course, you should still attend all of your lectures and seminars and complete your coursework as you will need to get a reference from your tutor and will also be given credits for your study.

If it's a bit late for you to change your course, don't panic, persevere! Roughly two thirds of graduate jobs are open to graduates from all courses; what matters is your degree classification. You might also be able to do a placement year in the career that you're looking at going into, to give you the sector knowledge you may be missing.

Regardless of your course, you gain a variety of key skills from your time at university which can be applied in the work place, such as:

- **Independence**
- **Transferable skills**
- **Lifelong friendships**
- **New experiences**
- **Cultural experiences**

### **Leaving university:**

A lot of people are worried that if they leave university to pursue other avenues, potential employers will discard their applications. It is important that, if you're leaving university, you focus on what you've gained from your experience. You may like to conduct a skills audit before you leave, with the support of a Careers Adviser. It's important to convey your decision to leave in a way that makes sense to an employer.



Remember, it takes a lot of courage to change your plans and take steps to get yourself back on track.

### **Steps before you leave:**

- Talk to your accommodation provider either directly or at the accommodation office on campus
- Get a reference from your personal tutor – this is particularly useful when applying for another course
- Find out what credits you've accrued from your study, ask in the Student Support Centre
- Clarify the financial implications of your decision by talking to the Student Support team and your bank
- Formally notify the University at the Student Support Centre and the official body paying your fees – usually the student loans company

### **Considering your alternatives to Higher Education?**

The following websites may support your next steps:

Apprenticeships-[www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship](http://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship) Employment  
– <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>

### **Useful resources:**

Advice Service Resource: [Academic support – Student Services \(lincoln.ac.uk\)](http://lincoln.ac.uk/academic-support)

Prospects leaving course resource: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/applying-for-university/changing-or-leaving-your-course> Students Loans Company - [www.slc.co.uk/](http://www.slc.co.uk/)

### **Contact us:**

The Careers & Employability Centre is located on the ground floor of the Library and is open 9am-4.30pm weekdays.

Email us at: [careers@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:careers@lincoln.ac.uk) or visit: [www.uolcareers.co.uk](http://www.uolcareers.co.uk)