The Advice Centre
OPEN
Monday-Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm

Contacting: The Advice Centre:
Telephone: 023 8059 2085
Fax: 023 8059 5235
Email: advice@susu.org
Website: www.susu.org/life/
Address: Students’ Union Building 40
        Southampton University
        University Road
        Highfield
        Southampton
        SO17 1BJ

- We are an appointments based service, however occasionally quick queries can be dealt with immediately. All other enquiries will need an appointment.

- The advice and information service is provided by a team of trained and experienced staff who deal with matters of particular relevance to students.

The Advice Centre Mission Statement:
The Advice Centre aims to provide all students at the University of Southampton with free, independent, confidential advice and representation in a friendly, relaxed environment.
STUDENTS AND COUNCIL TAX

Introduction
The purpose of this booklet is to answer the questions most frequently asked by students about Council Tax. It is not intended to give comprehensive advice. For this, students should seek further guidance from The Advice Centre or one of the organisations listed in the back of this book.

What is Council Tax?
Council Tax is collected by Local Authorities and is used to fund Local Government expenditure such as the police and fire service. The amount of Council Tax payable depends on the value of the property.

Properties are banded according to Band A (the lowest) to Band H (the highest). Each year every Local Authority works out the yearly budget and sets its Council Tax accordingly.

The vast majority of full-time students do not pay any Council Tax.

Students who live in a shared house are not considered ‘joint and severally liable’ for Council Tax purposes. This means that in a shared house, with a non-student occupant, the bill should appear in the name of the occupant who is not exempt. Therefore, it is the non-student who is individually liable.

Halls
The University passes a list of names of students in Halls to the Local Authority, usually around October time. Therefore students in Halls do not have to worry about sorting out their Council Tax exemption.
Shared Housing

In private accommodation, it is normally the responsibility of students to inform the Local Authority of their situation. To do this you should contact the Council Tax section at the Council with proof of student status. The local City Council numbers are at the back of this booklet.

Acceptable proof of your student status means an official letter from your department or School Office confirming that you are a full-time student at the University. Photocopies are normally acceptable. It is worth noting there is no “exemption certificate”. This is something landlords sometimes refer to when they mean confirmation of your registration at the University. Sometimes students don’t pay any Council Tax because they are not the liable person. This affects students who live in lodgings or who live in properties which are designated Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO). An HMO will be characterised by it being occupied by more than one household such as a house full of bed sits with shared facilities. It is the local Environmental Health Department, not the landlord who decides whether the property is an HMO or not.

In these cases responsibility for Council Tax lies with the owner(s). They may be able to pass their costs onto you through the rent they charge, but they cannot pass you the Council Tax Bill and ask you to pay because you are living there.

If you suspect you are living in an HMO or are living in lodgings (your landlord lives in the same property) and the landlord tells you the Council Tax Bill is your responsibility, contact The Advice Centre for advice. Alternatively contact the Council Tax Billing section on the phone number at the back of this booklet. They will probably want to see a copy of your tenancy agreement or rent book. They will then decide who the liable person is.
We live with, or plan to live with non-students - will it matter?
If you live in lodgings or in an HMO, probably not. However, if it is a situation where a group of you have found a house to share for the following year and one or more of your group isn’t a student they will be liable for the bill.

We live with a student who has suspended - will this matter?
No, you are no longer ‘joint and severally liable’ for Council Tax purposes and therefore your full time student status makes you exempt.

If you are the suspended student(s), (because you failed your exams and did not get through on the resit), unless you have financial support from your family or similar, you have the following options:

1. Find work. You could visit e-jobs, run by the Career Destination Office at: www.soton.ac.uk/careers/ which lists, amongst other things, both permanent and temporary jobs in the local area. The address for Career Destination can be found at the back of this booklet.

2. Go home for the year and find someone to replace your share of the tenancy. You should discuss this with your landlord as you are likely to need permission.

A suspended or non-student present in the house will mean they will no longer be exempt, and the student will be liable to pay Council Tax.

This is only a problem for the non-students as the others are not held ‘jointly and severally liable’ for Council Tax.
Is there any help if I have to pay?

Council Tax will normally be collected over 10 months instead of one lump sum payment. This means that if you are liable for Council Tax in a property you would have to budget as follows:

For band E property in Southampton in 2011/12 the Council Tax set for 2011/2012 is: £1768.36 divided by 10 = £176.83 per month.

If there is only one non-student, there will be a 25% discount.

Please refer to the back of this booklet for the Council Tax Bands set for 2011/2012, or contact your Local Council for further details on the banding of properties.

If any person in the dwelling, including a child, is substantially and permanently disabled, and the dwelling has certain features which meet their needs, such as access, then the Band can be lowered by one. For example, a C Band to a B Band. However, a Band A cannot be reduced as it is already the lowest.

If you are a suspended student, you may also be able to claim Council Tax Benefit if you fall into the group of students who can claim Income Support, such as being a lone parent, being ill for a period of 28 weeks or getting some other qualifying benefit.

Please see The Advice Centre booklet on Students and Benefits 2011/2012 or contact The Advice Centre, the Department of Work and Pensions or your Local Council Tax Billing department for details.
But I’m an International Student so it won’t affect me - will it?

For Council Tax billing, International students are treated the same way as home students. If you are a single, full time student then as long as you share with students, live alone, live in lodgings or in Hall, no Council Tax will be payable. If you have a spouse or dependants then you will be treated differently from Home Students. Your dwelling will be exempt if your non-student spouse or dependants are not British Citizens and they are prevented by the terms of their leave to remain from taking paid employment or from claiming benefits.

If you are an International student, please do not attempt to claim any benefits before talking to a Student Adviser in The Advice Centre. Even if it seems an official person says you can claim a benefit, they might not have all the facts. Do not sign or send in any forms until you have contacted The Advice Centre for guidance in case you accidentally prejudice your application for further leave to remain in the UK.
What happens if I decide not to pay?

If you agree to pay by monthly instalments and miss 3 payments you will have to pay the whole Council Tax Bill at once. If you don’t pay the Council Tax you are liable for, the City Council can begin legal proceedings against you to recover the money. The ultimate sanction for non-payment of Council Tax is imprisonment. If you are threatened with legal action or receive a summons for non-payment of Council Tax, contact The Advice Centre or one of the other agencies in the back of this booklet immediately.

Council Tax proceedings are issued in the Magistrate Court, which has the power to send non-payers to prison.

What happens if I have to work for a year as part of my course?

A student who has to gain work experience as part of their course, e.g. on a sandwich course, will still be treated as a full-time student as long as the time spent on the work experience does not exceed the time spent on study or tuition during the whole course.

For example, if you are a student on a four-year degree course, one year of which is spent on work experience, the University should still view you as a full-time registered student (check this with your department if unsure).
I am in Nominal Registration - Does this affect Council Tax?
Yes, you should become visible for Council Tax purposes; however, contact The Advice Centre for further guidance on this, as it is possible in some circumstances to remain classified as a full-time student and keep your exemption.

What about Academic Visitors - Are they invisible for Council Tax purposes?
No, Academic Visitors are not regarded as full-time students, and are therefore not normally exempt from paying Council Tax. However, you can always check with the Advice Centre staff if you wish to establish whether you are entitled to any discounts as a result of individual circumstances.

For example, if the UK is not your main or only home you may be entitled to a 25% discount.

Appendix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Band</th>
<th>Total Charge</th>
<th>Band With 25% Discount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>£964.56</td>
<td>£723.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>£1125.32</td>
<td>£843.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>£1286.08</td>
<td>£964.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>£1446.84</td>
<td>£1085.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>£1768.36</td>
<td>£1326.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>£2089.88</td>
<td>£1567.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>£2411.40</td>
<td>£1808.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>£2893.68</td>
<td>£2170.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Information on other local areas may be obtained by phoning the relevant number in the back of this booklet, or your own Local Council if not listed.
USEFUL ADDRESSES & TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

The Advice Centre
Students’ Union Building 40
Highfield, Southampton, SO17 1BJ
Tel: 023 8059 2085
Email: advice@susu.org
www.susu.org/life/

Southampton City Council
Local Taxation Services
Civic Centre, Southampton
SO14 7LYD
Tel: 023 8083 3009
For Southampton City area

Eastleigh Borough Council
Council Tax Billing/Collection
Civic Offices, Leigh Road
Eastleigh, SO50 9YN

For Eastleigh, Bishopstoke, Chandlers Ford:
Tel: 023 8068 8470

For Botley, Bursledon, Fair Oak, Hamble, Hedge End, Netley, West End:
Tel: 023 8068 8000

Winchester City Council
Council Tax Section
City Offices, Colebrook Street
Winchester, SO23 9LJ
Tel: 01962 848 288

Portsmouth City Council
Local Taxation Section
2nd Floor, Civic Offices
Guildhall Square
Portsmouth, Hampshire, PO1 2BE
Tel: 023 9268 8588
All the above should also be able to deal with any queries about Council Tax Benefits.

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Civic Offices, London Road
Basingstoke, RG21 4AH
Tel: 01256 844844

Isle of Wight
Revenue Services Division
Civic Centre, Sandown Broadway, Sandown
Isle Of Wight, PO36 9EA
Tel: 01983 823901

Career Destinations
Student Services Centre
Building 37, Highfield Campus
University of Southampton, SO17 1BJ
Tel: 023 8059 3501
Email: careers@soton.ac.uk
OTHER PUBLICATIONS IN THIS SERIES

- How to Budget and Successfully Manage Your Finances
- Changing, Dropping or Leaving Your Course
- How to Deal with Problems Affecting Your Studies
- Students and Benefits
- Academic Integrity
Please note that at time of publication every effort was made to ensure the accuracy of the information in this booklet. The Advice Centre and University of Southampton Students’ Union cannot accept responsibility for errors, omissions, or subsequent changes in legal requirements. The Information and figures quoted in this publication were believed to be accurate at the time of going to print, but may be subject to change.

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Alternative Formats of this leaflet are available on request.
The Advice Centre  www.susu.org/life/

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