

ABOUT

This leaflet is designed to give you more information about Council Tax Exemption, Council Tax Reduction and Housing Benefit*.

View a selection of frequently asked questions about these topics and find out more information about the correct procedures to follow.

* PLEASE NOTE:

Housing Benefit is due to be replaced by Universal Credit. This is a new benefit for people who are in or out of work originally introduced in parts of Manchester and Cheshire in April 2013 with an additional six new areas of the UK in October 2013 the intention is to eventually roll it out across the whole UK. For more information visit: www.gov.uk/universal-credit

The SRC website will be updated when Universal Credit is in operation in Glasgow. For more information, please speak to a member of staff in the SRC Advice Centre.

www.glasgowstudent.net/advice

SRC ADVICE CENTRE

If you have a problem or enquiry about any aspect of student life, you can drop in to the SRC Advice Centre for a confidential chat with one of the professional advice workers.

**No appointment is necessary
and the service is free.**

The Advice Centre is run by the SRC which is independent from the University and there to fight your corner in academic matters like academic appeals, complaints, student conduct procedures and other issues.

SRC Advice Centre staff also deal with welfare issues including: benefits/tax credits, council tax, debt, national insurance, tax, housing, student financial support and employment rights.

SRC ADVICE CENTRE
JOHN MCINTYRE BUILDING
UNIVERSITY AVENUE
GLASGOW
G12 8QQ

Normal opening hours below.

May vary dependent upon staff commitments.

Please call or check our website if planning a long journey to see an advisor.

MON - FRI 11.30AM-4.00PM

0141 330 5360
advice@src.gla.ac.uk

www.glasgowstudent.net/advice

THE SRC ADVICE CENTRE GUIDE TO COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTION, REDUCTION & HOUSING BENEFIT

2014 EDITION



www.glasgowstudent.net/advice

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT IS COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTION?

Council Tax Exemption is a status that full-time students, and a few other groups, can apply for that makes them non-liable for Council Tax. The exemption serves two functions:

- 1) It makes an individual student (or other exempt person) 'invisible' when calculating the number of occupants of a property on which Council Tax is due;**
- 2) It means no Council Tax is due on properties occupied only by exempt persons.**

WHO COUNTS AS A 'FULL-TIME STUDENT'?

For Council Tax purposes, a student whose course lasts at least 24 weeks, and requires them to study for at least 21 hours a week (including both taught classes and expected individual study) is classed as full-time. In the University of Glasgow system, 21 hours translates to a total of 63 credits in both semesters. Note that the University's definition of 'full-time' differs from the Council Tax regulations. Therefore even if you are considered 'part-time' by the University, you may still qualify as 'full-time' for Council Tax purposes, provided you are studying sufficient credits.

European Union students who attend Glasgow University for less than 24 weeks, but whose total period of study for their course is greater than this, (e.g. Erasmus) are also counted as full-time students, provided they will be graduating from an institution in the EU at the end of their course.

Distance-learning students are also covered, provided they meet the other criteria as set out above.

Postgraduate Research students, who do not study credit-bearing courses, may need to ask their Graduate School to certify that they study for at least 21 hours a week. Download a form for this online at: www.gla.ac.uk/students/enquiries/documents.

DO I NEED TO DO ANYTHING TO GET EXEMPTION, OR IS IT AUTOMATIC?

If you live in **University accommodation**, you will be exempt from Council Tax and do not have to do anything.

If you live in **private rented accommodation**, you will need to submit a Council Tax exemption application each year to the local authority in which you live. This is normally done by filling in an exemption form (downloadable from the local authority website).

From 2014-15, you can opt-in on MyCampus to allow the University to confirm your student status directly with Glasgow City Council if you

wish. Please note that if you do this, you will still have to fill out part 1 of the exemption form and send it to Glasgow City Council. For more information visit: www.gla.ac.uk/students/enquiries/documents and click the 'Council Tax' tab.

Residents of local authorities outwith Glasgow will have to fill in the exemption form, have it certified by the Student Services Enquiry Team (or download a certifying letter from MyCampus), and send it to the local authority. If you own your own home, you may be liable for Council Tax even if you qualify for exemption as a student. For more information about owner-occupier liability, please contact the SRC Advice Centre.

I DIDN'T APPLY FOR AN EXEMPTION LAST YEAR, AND HAVE A BILL. IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO?

Yes. You can write to the Council for retrospective exemption. The University Registry website allows you to download an application for a 'certifying letter' that will show the period of your course. Download it now at: www.gla.ac.uk/students/enquiries/documents.

I HAVE APPLIED FOR AN EXEMPTION, BUT HAVE RECEIVED A BILL. SHOULD I IGNORE IT?

No, in most cases, you should not ignore it. If you have received a bill, this means that the Council thinks that someone in your flat is liable for Council Tax. Make sure everyone in your flat has submitted their exemption, and take your bill in to the SRC Advice Centre. They can call the Council on your behalf, find out if there is a problem, and help you to solve it. If the bill is a 'zero bill' that shows your council tax for the current tax year as £0.00, then this is confirmation that the council has classed the property as exempt. Please keep it safe in case of any future disputes.

SOME OF MY HOUSEMATES GRADUATE THIS YEAR. HOW WILL THIS AFFECT ME?

If there is only one housemate who is not a full time student for Council Tax purposes, they can apply for a Single Person Discount which takes 25% off the council tax bill for the property. If more than one housemate is not a full-time student, then the normal Council Tax bill will be applied to the property. Full-time students in the property can still apply for exemption.

DO I HAVE TO PAY COUNCIL TAX DURING THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS?

During the summer holidays that fall within the total length of your course (i.e. between years 1 and 2; 2 and 3 etc), you are still regarded as a student for Council Tax and benefit purposes, so you do not become liable for Council Tax (although you will probably still need to complete an exemption form for each year of your course). If you

stop one course and begin another the following year (e.g. your course finishes in June and you begin a postgraduate course in September) you do not qualify as a full time student during the vacation between courses. You need to pay Council Tax for this period. Please note that you stop being a student on the last day of the last year of your course, rather than when you graduate.

I AM A POSTGRADUATE STUDENT ON THE 'WRITING-UP' PART OF MY COURSE. AM I EXEMPT?

Postgraduate students who are in their writing up year are usually assumed to meet the above criteria, and can apply for Council Tax exemption. Occasionally the Council do not grant writing up students the exemption. If the Council are refusing to accept that you are a full-time student for exemption purposes, you should be able to claim Council Tax Reduction instead. If the Council will not allow you to do either, you should contact the SRC Advice Centre for assistance.

WHAT ABOUT COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION (FORMERLY KNOWN AS COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT)?

Full time students cannot claim Council Tax Reduction, but as they are eligible for exemption this should not cause a problem.

Part-time students who do not study enough credits to qualify for exemption under the 21 hours rule can claim Council Tax Reduction if they are on a low income. For further information on Council Tax Reduction, or for help with the application, please call in to the SRC Advice Centre to speak with an adviser.

WHAT ABOUT HOUSING BENEFIT?

For the purposes of Housing Benefit you are a full-time student if the University classifies you as being on a full-time course. As a general rule, full time students cannot usually claim Housing Benefit. They are expected to meet rent payments from their student support funding. Exceptions to this rule do exist, and include:

- Lone parents of children under 16 (or in some cases under 20)
- Student couples with a child under 16 (or in some cases under 20)
- Students who get Disabled Students Allowance for deafness;
- Some students who receive qualifying benefits e.g. Disability Living Allowance or Income Support or Pension Credit.

This is not an exhaustive list. If you think you may be eligible to claim Housing Benefit, you should contact the SRC Advice Centre for a Benefits Check. Please note you cannot receive Housing Benefit if you are living with and paying rent to your parents or other close relative.

I AM AN INTERNATIONAL STUDENT AND IN ONE OF THOSE GROUPS – CAN I CLAIM HOUSING BENEFIT?

Whether you can claim benefits will depend on your immigration status. You should contact the International Office for advice and assistance about benefits.