

NOT HAPPY WITH YOUR COURSE

Welcome to Advice Direct..., the written information service from Guild Advice.

This leaflet is designed to provide advice and information for full-time Undergraduate students who may have become dissatisfied with their course or student life at the University of Birmingham for a variety of reasons. It looks at voicing concerns about your course, and the procedures involved in transferring courses or leaving the University.

It is important that you seek advice before taking a course of action, either with a Personal Tutor, a Guild Advice Advisor, or the University's Counselling

Problems With My Course

During your course of study you may experience some difficulties; these may be issues with your computer facilities, module problems or access to library resources. Raise these concerns with your department via your Personal Tutor in the first instance. If you cannot resolve the situation, please visit the ARC to discuss your options further with a Guild Advice Advisor.

You may also experience concerns or problems in relation to the content of the course of study you are enrolled on to, the academic direction of the course, or you may simply not be enjoying your time at the University.

In all these cases, you are always advised to make contact with Guild Advice preferably at our drop – in sessions, seek support from the Student Counselling & Wellbeing Service, or pastoral support from your Personal Tutor or the Chaplaincy.

The remainder of this advice direct will focus on what other options you have.

Can I Transfer To Another Course?

Yes, subject to the procedures and deadlines from **Academic Services - Registry**. Applications must be made as soon as possible, as after the second week of the session it becomes more difficult to complete an immediate transfer.

At the University of Birmingham you cannot, in normal circumstances, transfer to a course whose entry requirements are higher than those you originally entered the University on. That means if you have 300 points from your AS Levels, and the course you would like to transfer to requires 340, you will not be able to transfer in most cases.

There is no right to transfer courses at the University of Birmingham – it is at the discretion of the Admissions Tutor of the course you would like to join. So, you will need to contact them as quickly as possible to discuss your options and the availability of places on their respective course(s).

Course Transfer Procedure (at the University of Birmingham):

1. You must complete Section A of an 'Application to Transfer Degree Programme for Undergraduate Students', which is available from the Student Information Team desk in the Aston Webb Building or online at:-
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/studentrecords/documents/public/ugtransfer.pdf>
2. Contact the Admissions Tutor of the 'receiving' course (the one you wish to begin attending) for formal approval, i.e. that they will accept you.
3. Once the new department has accepted you, you will then need to terminate yourself from the 'losing' department. A senior tutor's approval and signature are required.

The completed form must be returned to the Student Information Counter, in the Aston Webb Building.

If, upon a successful transfer, you are required to enter into the first year of the new course the following September, it may be reasonable for you to leave University until the start of your new course (See 'Things To Think About' below).

Can I Transfer To Another University?

This is possible, but, it is very important that you contact the Admissions Tutor of the course you are interested in. Most universities have their prospectus' available online via their website, so take a look and see what the course involves and what qualifications/skills (e.g. A-Level grades) are required. The Admissions Tutor may invite you for an informal or formal meeting and for a tour of the department and/or campus in certain circumstances.

Sometimes changing to another course can be easier at a start of a session and more difficult later in the academic year, which may mean entering into the first year of the new course in the following September. You may, however, be able to enter directly into the second or third year of a new course at another University, if your current year's modules' content is similar. The Admissions Tutor should be able to clarify if this is a possibility.

If you decide to transfer during the second or third term, the Admissions Tutor may request that you apply to the course through the Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), which may mean entering via the Clearing process. For more information see — www.ucas.com.

Things To Think About Before Transferring

Before moving to another course at this University or to another institution you **must** consider the following:

Student Finance England Funding

It is advisable to contact Student Finance England (SFE) and inform them of your transfer as soon as possible.

You can normally transfer the financial support you receive for fees to another course, even if it is at a different university.

If you transfer after one academic year, there may be a period where you will have to pay for your fees. This is dependent on the number of academic years for which you have already received financial support.

You may either be entitled to support for the length of:

- 1. Your original course, or**
- 2. The course to which you are transferring.**

Student Loans

If you change course at the University of Birmingham your entitlement to a student loan may well be the same, unless the new course is of a different length. If you are transferring to another university you will need to apply for a new loan once you have started the course, unless it is a mid-year transfer and you have already taken out a loan. **Seek further advice from SFE as soon as possible, or support from Guild Advice.**

Tuition Fees

The amount of tuition fees you will need to pay/be refunded will depend on your official last date of attendance on the course. **If you are considering leaving, please check as soon as possible with the Finance Office (located in the Aston Webb Building) to find out your liability for tuition fees.**

Housing Contract

Whether you have a room in University Residences or live in private-rented accommodation the same rule applies in most cases for fixed term tenancy's: **you will need to find a replacement tenant to take over your housing contract** — until one is found you will remain liable for rent on the room or property.

- *University Residences* — you must approach 'Living' and inform them in writing that you wish to vacate your room if you are no longer going to remain a student at the University of Birmingham or are temporarily classed as an external student. They will try to find a replacement tenant from their waiting lists.
- *Private Houses* — you must contact your landlord in writing to give notice that you are ending your tenancy agreement. You are likely to be responsible for finding a replacement tenant to take over your room or property. You may also advertise the room with Guild's Letting agent via their website - <http://www.guildofstudents.com/support/guild-lettings/>

For More Information See: 'Advice Direct...Ending Your Tenancy'

Taking Time Out— 'Leave of Absences'

You may need to take some 'time out' from your university studies for any number of reasons. A Leave of Absence is a recognised and authorised break from your studies.

It is quite reasonable to take time out of university for a variety of reasons including:-

- **Medical reasons**, where you will be required to provide third party evidence in relation to this
- **Non-medical reasons**, such as maternity/paternity, absences relating to transfer of courses, placements, competing in international level sports, and a compulsory absence.
- **Other reasons** can also include, family bereavements, financial hardship, and any other personal circumstances which you feel are important.

In all cases you will need to provide medical evidence or independent third party evidence in support of your Leave of Absence. You **should always seek further advice before applying** for a Leave of Absence by speaking with your Personal/Welfare Tutor, a Guild Advice Advisor and/or the Student Counselling & Wellbeing Service (located in the Aston Webb Building).

Leave of Absence Procedure:

You must complete a 'Application for a Leave of Absence' form which is available from your School or Student Information Team in the Aston Webb, or online at:-

<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/studentrecords/services/leave-of-absence.aspx>

2. On the form you must confirm your **last date of attendance**, and have signatures from the relevant tutor and yourself. You also must include all the relevant evidence with the form.

3. For those who apply on medical grounds, when the Leave of Absence ends and you return to University, you will need to submit a medical note to confirm you are fit to return to full-time study.

If you are an international student, you must also seek advice from the International Students Advisory Service (ISAS) under the **Code of Practice on Leave of Absence Procedures**, before that leave is authorised by the University. There is a reasonable possibility that a Leave of Absence will have direct implications on your immigration status here in the UK and your later return.

You will need to contact Academic Services around May (before any return in September) to confirm whether you will be returning or not. Once they have received confirmation of your intention to return they will take the relevant action, i.e. register you for the course.

'Will Student Finance England fund my repeat year?'

If you are repeating the year for the first time you may be able to secure funding for another year of study, but you must contact SFE as soon as possible. Their decision, however, will be dependent upon how many years you have already received support for. They may request further evidence to explain the reason(s) for the interruption in your studies, e.g. a letter from a counsellor or a doctor.

There may also be a need to formally challenge a decision made by SFE to not fund a repeat year – in these circumstances please **seek further advice and support from the ARC as quickly as possible**.

Leaving University— 'Permanent Withdrawal'

If, for any reason, you decide that you wish to leave University before completing your degree, there is a procedure you must follow to terminate your course registry.

The process for permanently withdrawing from your course is below, however, before completing the form and submitting it to the University you **should always seek further advice** by speaking with your Personal/ Welfare Tutor, a Guild Advice Advisor and/or the Counselling and Wellbeing Service (located at the Student Hub Aston Webb).

In normal circumstances you cannot retrieve a permanent withdrawal once submitted. Hence following submission of this, if you wanted to return to the University, you must re-apply afresh for the course you would like to study.

Additional support can also be found from the University's Senior Personal Tutor, Regina Santos.

The Withdrawal Procedure:

1. You must give notice in writing to Academic Services at the Student Information Team or to post it to Registry. The letter must include your name, University ID number, your course of study, and the reasons for leaving. Alternatively you must complete a 'Request to Permanently Withdraw' form which is available from the Student Information Team or online at:-
<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/registry/studentrecords/services/permanent-withdrawal.aspx>
2. Please also include your **last date of attendance**; this information is important as it will affect what proportion of your tuition fees refundable.
3. Return your University ID Card to Academic Services - Registry.

Will I Have To Repay My Student Loan?

- You will be required to repay your loan in the April after leaving your course.
- You will not, however, be asked to repay if your gross income (before deductions) is below the threshold relevant to the terms and conditions of your finance.
- Repayments will be:
 1. Deducted from your wages by HM Revenue and Customs (previously Inland Revenue) through the PAYE scheme, or
 2. Self-Assessment if you are self-employed or have significant unearned income.

International Students

As an overseas student you must adhere to the Immigration Rules, we would suggest that you contact the **University's International Students Advisory Service (ISAS)** or **seek further advice from the ARC** before changing courses or transferring to another University. This may have an impact on your student visa, so please make enquiries before making any decisions.

It Is Important To Speak with either your Personal/Welfare Tutor, a Guild Advice Advisor, or a Counsellor at Student Counselling & Wellbeing Service Before Taking Any Action

Sources Of Help

Guild Advice, Guild of Students

Email: thearc@guild.bham.ac.uk

Visit the website at: <http://www.guildofstudents.com/support/thearc/>

Opening Hours

Drop In Clinics

Saturday/Sunday

Monday - Friday

Monday - Friday

CLOSED

10am — 4pm

12 – 2pm

University's Senior Tutor, WG7, Aston Webb Building

Regina Santos

Tel: 0121 414 7452 or Email: ust@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Careers & Employability Centre, First Floor, University Centre

Tel: 0121 414 6120 or Email: careers-centre@bham.ac.uk

Finance Office, Aston Webb Building

Tel: 0121 414 6074 or Email: Studentfees@bham.ac.uk

Living Accommodation Services, University Centre

Tel: 0121 414 8000 or Email: living@contacts.bham.ac.uk

International Student Advisors, International Office, Aston Webb Building

Tel: 0121 414 8464 or Visit: www.studenthelp.bham.ac.uk

Student Finance England

Tel: 0845 300 50 90 or Visit: <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance>

Counselling & Wellbeing Service

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm (term-time)

Website: <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/as/studentservices/counselling/index.aspx>

Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS)

General Enquires Tel: 01242 222 444 or Visit: www.ucas.com

Disclaimer: The information on this leaflet only provides general guidance on academic support and University policy. The leaflet should not be regarded or relied upon as a complete or authoritative statement of University policy or procedures. Guild Advice will not accept any liability for any claims or inconvenience as a result of the use of information on this leaflet.

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Published By Guild Advice,

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