



INFORMATION TOOLKIT

SAAS | Student
Awards
Agency
Scotland
Funding your future

INFORMATION TOOLKIT

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1 | OVERVIEW OF THE STUDENT AWARDS AGENCY SCOTLAND (SAAS)

As Scottish students venture into years of study they need to first apply for their fees, bursaries and loans.

The Student Awards Agency Scotland is an executive agency of the Scottish Government. We provide assessment, funding and support for eligible full and part-time Scottish students studying in higher education courses in the UK.

Our core key functions include:

- Assessing and processing applications for fees and living cost support, including living cost grants for disabled students, lone parents and care leavers
- Providing advice to students and potential students on funding options and financial support
- Providing support to schools, career advisers and higher education institutions (HEIs) to disseminate information about student funding

A key message we need to communicate to full-time students is that if they are eligible we **will pay tuition fees directly to their colleges and universities** but it is absolutely critical they are made aware that both new and continuing students must apply to us **every**

year of their studies to enable us to process the applications and make the payments.

We know that applying for fees and funding support can be daunting for many students which is why we try to make everything as easy as possible. Some of our staff have been SAAS funded students themselves and so completely understand how it feels.

Our helpline provides students with friendly, helpful advice about all aspects of applying for support. They can call us direct on **0300 555 0505** Monday to Thursday 8.30am – 5.00pm and Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm. Our helpline hours are extended to 8.00am – 6.00pm during peak application times (June to October) and 8.00am – midnight on 30 June 2015.

A wealth of advice is also available on our website **www.saas.gov.uk** and via our social media platforms:

Twitter: **@saastweet**

YouTube: **[youtube.com/user/fundingawareness](https://www.youtube.com/user/fundingawareness)**

Facebook: **[facebook.com/saasfb](https://www.facebook.com/saasfb)**

LinkedIn

2 | ELIGIBILITY RULES FOR FULL-TIME STUDENTS

To be eligible for support students must meet the residence conditions and be on a course supported by SAAS.

Generally, in order to qualify for support students must be:

- Ordinarily resident in the UK for three years immediately before the first day of the first academic year of their course.
- Settled in the UK as described by the Immigration Act 1971
- Ordinarily resident in Scotland on the first day of the first academic year of their course

If a student doesn't meet the general residence criteria above, they may still be eligible to apply in certain circumstances.

English, Northern Irish and Welsh domiciled students taking a degree course in one of the Allied Health Professions (AHPs) don't need to meet the third condition and, instead, must be ordinarily resident in their home country at the time they apply for their first year of support.

The first day of the academic year is known as the 'relevant date', for those who start a course in the Autumn term, the relevant date is 1 August.



3 | FEES, BURSARIES AND LOANS

The amount of tuition fees that we pay depends on the course each student is studying.

The tuition rates for courses at Scottish colleges and universities during academic session 2015-16 are:

- £1,285 for HNC, HND or equivalent
- £1,820 for Degree or equivalent
- £1,205 for courses at private colleges

Students who are studying elsewhere in the UK will have to pay their own tuition fees of up to £9,000. They can however apply to us for a loan to help with these tuition fees.

In addition we also process applications for bursaries and loans for living cost support. The amount of bursary and loan that students receive depends on their household income.

Living Costs' grant are also available for certain categories of students such as lone parents, those with dependents or for those leaving care to enter higher education.

For students with disabilities or specific learning difficulties extra help is also available.

Details on all student funding is in our SAAS Funding Guide and can be accessed via our website at http://www.saas.gov.uk/_forms/funding_guide.pdf

4 | PR CAMPAIGN

WHY WE NEED YOUR HELP

Those who work closely with students can help have a positive influence on advising them to apply for their funding.

OUR AIMS

To make it clear to students we are open for business and encourage them to submit their applications as soon as possible to ensure their funding is in place for the start of their first term.

We aim to assure applicants that funding will be in place for their first term if they apply by 30 June. This can only be achieved if the application is completed accurately and all supporting evidence is also submitted to us.

In recent years there has been an increase in students incorrectly filling in applications or forgetting to forward vital financial details or evidence needed to confirm eligibility. Failure to apply on time or to complete the application correctly can lead to delays.

We regularly carry out a wide range of engagement work with prospective students, returning students, schools, higher education institutions and supporting professions throughout the year to raise awareness of the funding application process. Again this year, we want to complement all this good work with a supportive PR campaign to push home to students the necessity of completing their application correctly to ensure their funding is in place for the new term.

With this mindset we need to think creatively about targeting this audience and meet them in their world. It will be important to work with student bodies and involve them in the campaign, using them as a conduit to cut through the 'noise' in the student world and get to the heart of the matter – incorrect or incomplete applications means delayed payment.

Students are physically connected to their college or university and targeting busier campus recreational and social areas will add another dimension for communications.

Students, particularly those aged 17-25, are avid social media users. Using social media where appropriate to remind and prompt them will be important to nudge them into action. Tapping into existing student pages and encouraging them to pass the message on will provide an additional push.

For younger students, parental influence is still prominent, particularly with new students making their first leap into adulthood. Targeting parents or carers to play their part will ensure not only that students get a push but also that parents are aware of the need to hand over the required supporting information and evidence such as P60s, evidence of separation, etc.

With widening participation at college and university, students from disadvantaged backgrounds or with disabilities may lack support and yet potentially will have to provide the most evidence to access the vital funding they need. Working with groups, charities and bodies that support these students will add another layer of support alongside SAAS.

The campaign this year is split into raising awareness with students that we are open for business from April and the importance to apply for fees and

funding by 30 June 2015. Following last year's PR activity, we received 122,000 applications by 30 June compared to 120,000 for the same period in 2013.

The key objectives of the campaign are:

- Raise awareness with students and their support networks that we are open for business and students can submit funding applications now
- Raise awareness with students and their support networks that funding applications for tuition fees, loans and bursaries should be in by 30th June
- Inform students that they must submit a correctly-completed application and all supporting information by this date to ensure funding is in place for the first term
- Inform students and parents that they must use our document uploader to submit evidence
- Signpost people to sources of advice for help with applications
- Prevent a huge surge of applications on 30 June and spread the submission of applications over April, May and June 2015.
- Raise awareness that Award letters and messages are now available to view online

Signposting students to our helpline is key and we know it works. In recent years we've extended the opening hours of the call centre over the last weekend in June, last year this culminated in over 4,000 calls from students in those 3 days alone. We will continue to do this with our call centre opening until midnight on 30 June 2015.

Supporting students via our helpline is proven to be the best way to deal directly with queries and problems and enables us to talk them through the application process.

Although we do provide helpful hints and information on social media channels, we can't answer direct queries via Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn as this would require applicants to reveal personal information that can be seen by a wider audience. We actively remind students not to post personal details on these forums and to keep safe on line.

Our key audiences are:

- New and returning students
- Parents
- Supporting professions ie. educators, student support services, HEI administrators and staff, key charities and support groups.

This will be a multi-channel campaign including various media, outdoor ads, buzzfeeds, infographics, posters, postcards, radio programming, student media, social media and PR activity running from April to September 2015.

The PR campaign will start from April 2015 with activity running up to the 30 June guarantee date and beyond. The PR team will look to carry out activity in all regions across Scotland, involving local colleges and universities and will include case studies of students who have applied to SAAS before.

This activity will be in the form of photocalls, press releases and on the ground activity to spread the messages by word of mouth. The PR team may therefore be in touch to seek support for case studies and relevant spokespeople.

PR activity will include:

- Photocalls to promote the 30 June deadline date
- A call to action to phone for help ahead of the final weekend prior to 30 June as the helpline will have extended hours
- Features in financial sections of newspapers
- Features and interviews in student media
- Social media content creation
- Outdoor advertising in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen

In addition, we have booked paid-for slots with Bauer radio group, which includes eight commercial radio stations across the country such as Radio Clyde, Radio Forth, Northsound and Radio Tay. These will take place at the beginning and again at the end of May and the format will be a short, information-led feature to address the need for correct applications to be in by 30 June. Again the PR team may be in touch to ask for case studies and relevant spokespeople that represent your organisation.

Key messages for this year's campaign include:

- We are open for business from April 2015
- Full-time students must submit correctly-completed funding forms by the 30 June to ensure their money is in place for the start of their course
- As well as tuition fees being paid, an income of £7,500 will be available to those from the lowest income households and eligible students will be eligible for a student loan of £4,750
- New and returning students need to fully complete the online application correctly and supply all supporting documents, such as proof of parents' or partner's income or lone parent status. 2015-16 students can supply these documents using our online document uploader service
- The SAAS helpline is open Monday to Thursday from 8.30am – 5pm on **0300 555 0505** and 8.30am – 4.30pm on Fridays, when helpline advisors can talk through applications
- The SAAS helpline has extended opening hours from 8.00am – 6.00pm during peak application times June to October and is open until midnight on 30 June 2015
- If you are a lone parent, have a disability or if you are leaving care, you may be eligible for other financial assistance
- Visit **www.saas.gov.uk** for more information on the range of financial support

What are we trying to achieve?

- We want new and returning students to know that they need to apply to SAAS for tuition fees and living cost support each year
- We want applications to be in for 30 June
- We want students to phone the helpline if they need advice on applying
- We want coverage in student and news media about the SAAS application process
- We want a presence in social media so students know where to go for help
- We want other interested groups, organisations or individuals to help inform students and parents about applying for fees and living cost support through SAAS

The PR activity will be augmented by the work carried out by our Funding Awareness team which helps to communicate funding information to a wide range of customers and stakeholders. The main roles and activity carried out by the Funding Awareness team include:

- Attending Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) events across Scotland delivering presentations and providing information on student funding
- Designing and developing external literature and publications

- Providing editorial content and updating our external website: www.saas.gov.uk
- Working with external groups such as the National Association of Student Money Advisors (NASMA)
- Running online workshops for HEI staff
- Co-ordinating and running any visits to SAAS requested by external stakeholders
- Work with partners such as Lothians Equal Access Programmes for Schools (LEAPs), Focus West, Aspire North and Lift Off to promote the Scottish Government's widening access programme

If you're a teacher, student advisor or a careers advisor, or if you work within student administration at an HEI, and are responsible for passing on information to pupils and students about applying for college or university, our team can attend information events or open days to talk about applying to SAAS for tuition fees, loans and bursaries.

If you're interested in finding out more about how the Funding Awareness team can help, please contact them on saasevents@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.

Alternatively, take a look at the range of information/tools that the team makes available online at **www.saas.gov.uk**

- Presentations for pupils/parents
- YouTube tutorials including our 2 new videos

5 | BRAND

We've listened to feedback and students told us they wanted a brand that was more up to date and professional, so we took the decision to refresh our corporate image and develop a new brand that represented SAAS in 2015. We tested a series of design concepts, proposals, colours and straplines with various student, stakeholder and staff focus groups.

We also worked with our Student Representative Forum to gain feedback on our new graphics and the illustrative style which will be developed and introduced over the next few weeks.

Findings told us that our new identity needed to be trustworthy, positive, corporate and with a clear description of the SAAS acronym.

We also decided to drop the 'for' in our title and become Student Awards Agency Scotland.

Full brand guidelines will be made available shortly. Should you have any questions please contact:

Julie Sinclair, Communications on **0131 244 5877** or **SAASComms@scotland.gsi.gov.uk**



6 | HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you're a teacher, career guidance advisor or if you work in student administration or services we want you to tell students and pupils:

- They need to apply to SAAS for their tuition fees to be paid as well as living cost support
- Apply from April 2015
- We've got a bank of over 70 advisers ready to take calls – it's the best way to talk through any application worries
- Other living cost grants may be available to them if for example, they're a lone parent, coming out of care or have a disability
- They can use our document uploader to submit supporting evidence
- They can find out more by signposting them to www.saas.gov.uk for more information

You can help extend the SAAS messaging to potential applicants by:

- Linking to SAAS through your social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook or LinkedIn. You can comment on our posts or share them and retweet information. We can also provide you with images and quotes that you can post or tweet on your own social media channels – just get in touch with our PR team
- Including an article on how to apply for student fees and living cost in your internal newsletter or intranet, or for any other publications to raise awareness among your staff of our role, including a reference to the video produced by us that demonstrates how to fill in an application. We've provided an example further down
- Include some of our messaging outlined above when hosting information and career days – and remember that the Funding Awareness Team can help with this

- Encouraging staff to look out for people who may need to apply to us for student funding – whether for tuition fees to be paid or for living costs' support. Remember there is funding for a range of people including people with disabilities, young people leaving care to go into full-time education and lone parents
- Putting up our posters in public areas and distributing our postcards. We can supply these to you
- Telling our PR team about any case studies you have where we've helped a student to complete their application form to access the funding to which they are entitled. Students like this can help with media activity as they demonstrate to others in similar situations how it can be done
- Award letters and messages are now available to view online through their SAAS accounts

A note about case studies:

Case studies from students can help bring a story to life, as the students demonstrate their own experiences, which can be understood by readers, listeners and viewers.

It's helpful to us if we can find students who are willing to talk to the media, be photographed and provide quotes about their experience of applying for funding. Good case studies include for example, a student that is a lone parent or who has applied for a disability grant, or who had to submit supportive information such as proof of parents' divorce or household income. By talking about how it worked for them, other people can identify with their story – and this all helps get the message across about submitting correctly completed applications by 30 June.

7 | MATERIALS FOR YOUR USE

We have developed some marketing materials that you can use to help promote our messaging that SAAS applications need to be submitted by 30 June.

POSTERS AND POSTCARDS

An A3 poster has been developed which you can put up in workplaces, public venues or places where potential applicants will be, such as reception areas, student venues and libraries.

A3 poster



Postcards

In addition, two postcards have been developed; one aimed at prospective students and the other aimed at teachers and HEI staff. Both postcards outline the need to apply to SAAS for funding. The postcard aimed specifically at teachers and HEI staff also explains how our Funding Awareness team can help provide information and speakers for events aimed at new students.

Please distribute these postcards to anyone applying for college or university and to current students or to people that have contact with prospective and current students.

You can also give postcards to parents/carers who may be interested in how to support their child to apply for SAAS funding.

In addition, we update our Funding Guide annually. Please click here to see this: https://www.saas.gov.uk/_forms/funding_guide.pdf

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

You can help to promote the campaign by using your own communication channels.

The material below can be adapted for use across a variety of communication channels.

Suggested article for staff/internal channels

OPEN FOR BUSINESS FOR STUDENT FUNDING APPLICATIONS

The Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) is open for business now ahead of the new student year – calling for all students to complete and submit applications for the next academic year (2015-2016) to ensure their needs for funding, including tuition fees, are met.

SAAS is responsible for giving financial support to over 160,000 Scottish students studying in higher education throughout the UK. Students must visit www.saas.gov.uk and complete their online application or call the helpline on 0300 555 0505 if they have any questions or are having difficulties filling out their form.

David Wallace, Chief Executive commented: "From April 2015, all new and returning students can apply to SAAS to receive financial support for the next academic year, including payment of their tuition fees. Even if students don't yet know where they will be studying they can still apply.

"I urge all students to take some time now to complete their applications accurately to ensure their funding package is agreed. We recommend students visit our website and complete their online applications or call our helpline for further support."

Applications for 2015-2016 are now open – visit **www.saas.gov.uk** to complete applications online.

CASE STUDY

Last year Leanne was entering her first year of higher education and needed to apply to Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) for the first time. Like so many students, Leanne left her form until the last minute and risked missing out on vital funding.

Everyone going to college or university this year – including new and returning students – must apply to SAAS for fees, loans or bursaries and do so before 30th June to ensure funds are in place for the start of the academic year. It's important that you don't leave it to the last minute, as Leanne found out:

"It wasn't tricky as such... I did make a few mistakes and I had to contact them, I wish I'd taken a wee bit more time over it – you just think that it's a click-click type and you'll get your money through."

Leanne contacted SAAS to help her sort out the problem:

"I called them, they were really friendly, really helpful. They also have clips on YouTube. It's like tutorials... it will say this form is for this, make sure you have this document. It's really handy"

Many students who leave it to the last minute often fail to submit the correct details or supporting information in time which could result in delayed payments.

Guidance and support to fill out the form is available online at saas.gov.uk – including tutorial videos, information and guides. Or speak to one of the friendly advisors at the SAAS helpline – the number is **0300 555 0505**.

DIGITAL ASSETS

We've developed a number of digital assets that you can use on your own website, intranet or any social media channels and forums. These will link through to the SAAS website.

Get in touch with the PR team if you would like these digital assets for your own communication channels.



**FEES
LOANS
BURSARIES**

Apply now to make sure your money is in place for the new academic year.

0300 555 0505
www.saas.gov.uk

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SOCIAL MEDIA

Suggested Facebook Posts

- Good news for students! SAAS funding applications for 2015-2016 are now open. Submit your application at www.saas.gov.uk or call SAAS for help on **0300 555 0505**
- You don't have to wait on exam results, you can apply for funding now with your first choice for 2015-2016. Submit your application at www.saas.gov.uk or call SAAS for help on **0300 555 0505**
- You can now apply to SAAS for the 2015-2016 academic year, even if you're waiting on confirmation of your offer – they just need the details of the course you applied for. Visit www.saas.gov.uk for more information or call SAAS on **0300 555 0505**
- Are you ready? Before you plan your summer holiday, make sure you submit your tuition fees and living cost support application for the 2015-2016 academic year. The window is now open and you can submit your application at www.saas.gov.uk or call SAAS with any queries on **0300 555 0505**
- Don't miss out on receiving tuition fees and living cost support for 2015-2016. The window is now open and you can submit your application at www.saas.gov.uk or call SAAS for help on **0300 555 0505**

Suggested Tweets

- Good news for students! SAAS funding applications for 2015/16 are open. Submit your application at www.saas.gov.uk or call **0300 555 0505**
- You can now apply to SAAS for 2015/16 even if you don't have confirmation of your offer. Visit www.saas.gov.uk or call **0300 555 0505**
- Before you start making summer plans, submit your SAAS application for 2015/16 at www.saas.gov.uk or call **0300 555 0505** for help
- Don't miss out on tuition fee & living costs' support for 2015/16. submit your SAAS application at www.saas.gov.uk or call **0300 555 0505**
- "Money can't buy me love" Money may not buy you love but living cost support can pay your rent! Apply www.saas.gov.uk or call **0300 555 0505**

TOP TIPS AND CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS

Below are a couple of lists that you can also share on your Facebook page. They include the SAAS message along with engaging tips and a checklist for students.

Top tips for students

1. Apply to SAAS now to ensure your funding is in place for the new term
2. Invest in some vitamins – your body will thank you
3. Make extra food on the nights you're going out to ensure you have leftovers – saves a late night trip to the chippy
4. If you flat share - always log out of Facebook
5. Budget! This might mean setting up a separate account to drip feed your student loan across the term
6. If it's your first year, head to Fresher's Week – you'll make some lifelong friends there
7. Buddy up with some mates who can cook!
8. If you flat share, split the costs and responsibilities for cleaning so it doesn't always fall to one person
9. Always back up your work
10. Get a 'colour catcher' for the giant weekly clothes wash

Checklist for new students

1. Apply to SAAS now to ensure your funding is in place for the new term
2. Sort living accommodation and pay deposit if required
3. Check matriculation details
4. Identify reading materials you need to source
5. Identify part-time jobs that fit with your studies
6. Set up a student bank account
7. Identify student clubs you'd like to join
8. Find out if you need to select your subjects ahead of the academic year
9. Invest in a laptop. You can get new ones for less than £200 but second hand are much cheaper
10. Remember lots of retailers offer student discount for everything from stationery to clothes and food

8 | USEFUL CONTACTS

Student Awards Agency Scotland

Julie Sinclair, Communications:
0131 244 5877
julie.sinclair@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Higher Education Institutions

Visit the HEI area on www.saas.gov.uk
Username: **fese_admin**
Password: **saasadmin**

PR Agency

Please get in touch if you require campaign materials or need press liaison by contacting The BIG Partnership on **0131 557 5252** or saas@bigpartnership.co.uk

9 | APPENDICES

A video presentation aimed at S5 and S6 high school pupils to explain the funding available can be accessed at:

www.saas.gov.uk/forms_and_guides/index.htm

We have also launched two new videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l_QQ7dkBBfc

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yAtVV11q6iE>

Here are some of the events that the Funding Awareness Team will be attending from April – September 2015.

Some events are by invitation only.

May	
13 th	Abertay University application day
27 th	Inverness College
June	
4 th	Robert Gordon's College HE Fair
8 th	McLaren High senior talk
8 th	Morrison's Academy information evening
10 th	Huthcesons' Grammar School
15 th	Johnstone High School HE Fair
15 th	George Watson College UCAS evening
18 th	Glasgow University open day
19 th	Edinburgh University open day
23 rd	Focus West Accelerate programme, Strathclyde University

July	
28 th	Focus West Accelerate programme, Strathclyde University
August	
19 th	Inverness College
26 th	Woodfarm High School UCAS parents' evening
27 th	Forfar Academy UCAS parents' evening
31 st	Dundee University open day
September	
1 st	Aberdeen University open day
2 nd	Glasgow University open day
2 nd	Glasgow Caledonian University open day
3 rd	Woodmill High Careers Convention
3 rd	St Augustines High
7 th	Edinburgh University open day
8 th	North Ayrshire UCAS convention

9 th	UWS Open Day
15 th	Calderglen parents evening
16 th	UWS open day
19 th	Stirling University open day
26 th	Edinburgh University open day
26 th	Dundee University open day
28 th	Jedburgh Grammar School
30 th	UWS open day
October	
3 rd	Glasgow Caledonian University open day
7 th	UWS open day
21 st	Glasgow Caledonian University open day
24 th	Glasgow University open day
29 th	Glasgow School of Art
31 st	Stirling University open day