



STUDENT FINANCE ENGLAND WARNS OF SCAM EMAILS TARGETING VULNERABLE STUDENTS

STUDENTS: BE AWARE OF SCAM EMAILS NEAR THE START OF TERM

Students across England are at an increased risk of being targeted by scammers using 'phishing' emails at the start of term.

Student Finance England, the organisation that administers and processes England-based students' loans and grants, urges students to remain vigilant and not disclose any personal or bank details in response to email requests that look like they are from either Student Finance England or its parent company, the Student Loans Company.

Student Finance England expects to pay its biggest payments of loans and grants to over 600,000 students at the start of term - between 20-27 September.

The Company's Fraud Manager Heather Laing, said:

"Students are likely to receive a great deal of correspondence from Student Finance England at this time, with payment schedule letters or letters requesting further information coming through the door.

"Scammers exploit this increased contact from the Company, and some students may fall victim to an email request that looks to be from Student Finance England or the Student Loans Company asking for confirmation of bank details.

"However, we will **never** ask students to confirm their bank details via email. If they do receive such a request, they should forward it on to us to investigate.

"We monitor these emails very closely. When a student alerts us about phishing sites we shut them down as quickly as we can to protect other students. In the last year, we have closed down around 50 phishing sites - double the number we closed down in 2008.

"Anyone who has already given their details should let us know and also change their account password as soon as possible."

"Students need to work with us to ensure their identity and financial details are not compromised."

The National Union of Students is supporting Student Finance England's campaign to alert students about scam emails.

Aaron Porter, NUS President added:

"We're working with Student Finance England to help spread the word about scam emails as it's important that students are protected.

"One of the best ways to protect yourself is to remove your email address if it's online or hide it on social networking sites, if you use them."

Student Finance England's five top 'scam email' tips:

- 1. Be aware:** Phishing scams are common at the three main instalment payment dates in September, January and April. Remember: Student Loans Company/Student Finance England will never ask you to confirm your bank details via email and remember: you won't get paid until you register and attend university and allow 2-3 working days for your payment through the BACS system.
- 2. Contact us:** If you receive an email which you believe to be a phishing email from the Student Loans Company or Student Finance England, email: security@slc.co.uk. Note that we won't respond to emails sent to this address.
- 3. Prevention:** Your email details may have been taken from a social networking site so avoid disclosing your email address or hide them on your page.
- 4. Stay calm:** Anyone who has already given their details should stay calm but should change their account password as soon as possible and contact our security team.
- 5. Further info:** Students requiring further advice on using online services safely should visit the online security page at: www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance or www.getsafeonline.org.

'Start of term' finance tips from NUS:

1. Visit your students' union and the NUS website regularly for handy advice on money matters, whether it involves problems with your landlord, or working for worthy causes whilst studying. Remember to get an NUS Extra card to receive handy discounts.
2. If your application has been received and processed, enrolling on your course unlocks your student finance, including any grant or loan to which you are entitled. The first lump sum will reach your account within two to three working days. Contact Student Finance England or log onto your account if you're not sure of the status of your application.
3. You will get your student loan in three instalments, typically in September, January and April (these dates vary depending on course start dates). Budget to make your loan last, but if you are facing any difficulties contact the advice centre at your students' union or the university/college for advice.

For further information visit: www.nus.org.uk/

Finally, students who have applied for finance must sign and return their online declaration form as quickly as possible to ensure their funds are released.

Those with a university place who have not applied for student finance yet should apply online without delay at www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance.

Student Finance England has put in place a process to ensure that even students applying just before the start of term may get the majority of their money. These students must apply online, prove their eligibility with their passport number, return their signed declaration form, and then register at university.

If students need to change their loan amount or university course you can do so online by logging onto online account at www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance