

AUSTUDY, AND YOUTH ALLOWANCE AN OVERVIEW FOR POSTGRADUATES

BACKGROUND

Youth Allowance and Austudy are two of the main social security income support benefits for local university students. Though there are variations in their operation, Youth Allowance being for students who commenced a particular course when aged 16 – 24 years and Austudy for students who were 25 years or over when they commenced, they are similar insofar as they provide regular payments that help to cover living costs for full time students or for those who have been allowed a concessional study load for one of a number of special circumstances.

In the past, Austudy and Youth Allowance was not available to students who were enrolled in masters or doctoral degrees (which excluded most of our postgraduate coursework constituents and all of our research constituents). The only postgraduate students who may have been eligible for Austudy or Youth Allowance were those who were doing qualifying study in respect of a masters program (eg. a graduate diploma or graduate certificate) or those who were enrolled in the undergraduate component of integrated undergraduate/postgraduate degrees such as the Masters of Teaching program.

The eligibility for Austudy and Youth Allowance for students in masters qualifying study and integrated programs will continue in 2008, however as of 1 January 2008 there is a new list of approved Masters courses that have become eligible for payments. The list of approved courses at the University of Sydney is provided below. Youth Allowance & Austudy benefits for full time students living away from home currently begin at \$355.40 per fortnight for singles, and can then increase depending on circumstances.

FROM SUPRA

SUPRA recommends that if you are a local coursework postgraduate you should check out the possibility of receiving one of these payments. In most cases you would need to be studying full time and fulfill a range of other eligibility criteria. For those who are enrolled in a Masters program that is not on the approved list you might consider enrolling in a graduate certificate or graduate diploma. In some cases you can receive Austudy or Youth Allowance payments whilst completing these degrees and it is often possible to later upgrade into a Masters program so long as you meet relevant academic requirements. Those enrolled in 'integrated' undergraduate/postgraduate degrees such as the Masters of Teaching can also be eligible to receive a benefit whilst in the undergraduate part of the degree.

CONTACT DETAILS

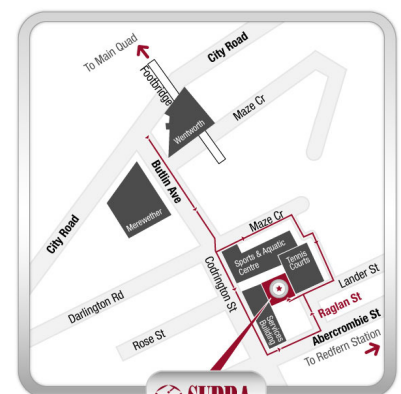
You can contact a SUPRA SAO via:

- Email: help@supra.usyd.edu.au
- Telephone: (02) 9351 3715 or free call number: 1800 249 950 if you are outside the Sydney Metropolitan area.
- In writing: Send a fax to (02) 9351 6400 or post your letter to:
SUPRA
Bld G10, Raglan St
Darlington Campus
University of Sydney NSW
2006 Australia
- Complete a web form:
http://www.supra.usyd.edu.au/Adv/Contact_a_SAAO.html
- Or just come into the office during normal business hours

Disclaimer:

This information does not constitute legal advice. Despite our best efforts there may be errors in the information we give you. Seek a range of advice and up to date information on your particular circumstances before you act on the information provided.

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RESOURCES AND READING

We are pleased that some Masters courses have now been approved for the purposes of eligibility for Austudy and Youth Allowance. For many years SUPRA and the Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (CAPA) lobbied for better income support. In 2006 we questioned the University Senate on what was being done by the University to advocate for more income support, we wrote to the Federal Minister for education, Science and Training, and together with the SRC we collected hundreds of signatures on a petition for Anti-Poverty week activities in October of that year. It was later tabled in the Federal parliament.

In the 2007/08 Federal Budget it was announced that from 1 January 2008 students undertaking approved commonwealth funded masters courses that are an entry requirement to a profession or are part of a restructure of existing course requirements would be eligible for Youth Allowance and Austudy. The University of Sydney got access to a complete list of approved courses very recently and that list was provided to SUPRA on 2 January 2008. The list is as follows:

- Master of Architecture
- Master of Dental Science (Oral Medicine and Oral Pathology)
- Master of Dental Science (Orthodontics)
- Master of Dental Science (Paediatric Dentistry)
- Master of Dental Science (Periodontics)
- Master of Dental Science (Prosthodontics)
- Master of Diagnostic Radiography
- Master of Health Informatics
- Master of Nuclear Medicine
- Master of Nursing
- Master of Nursing (combined degree)
- Master of Nutrition and Dietetics
- Master of Occupational Therapy
- Master of Orthoptics
- Master of Pharmacy
- Master of Physiotherapy
- Master of Professional Accounting
- Master of Radiation Therapy
- Master of Rehabilitation Counselling
- Master of Speech Language Pathology
- Master of Urban and Regional Planning

If you were enrolled in these courses in 2007 and are continuing in 2008 then it will be important that you notify Centrelink of your intent to claim immediately so that you can be paid benefits from the earliest possible date. It takes only a couple of minutes via the below Centrelink phone number or their website and you then have 14 days to complete and submit your application. Successful applicants will be back paid to the date of notification. For those students who are new to these courses in 2008 then it

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still makes sense to notify your intent to claim and complete an application as soon as possible, however in many cases you won't begin getting payments until the commencement date of your course. The exception is for students who were receiving benefits in 2007 on the basis of being enrolled in another approved program (e.g. a bachelor degree). These students should have had their payments from last year extended all the way to 31 December 2007, and if they turn out to be eligible for further payments in 2008 then they should continue to receive benefits from 1 January 2008.

RESOURCES AND READING

SUPRA Student Advice and Advocacy officer's (SAAO's) (see contact details on this fact sheet)

Centrelink's web site and phone numbers:

<http://www.centrelink.gov.au/>

Youth and Student Services: 13 2490

ABSTUDY: 13 2317

Welfare Right's Centre, Sydney:

<http://www.welfarerights.org.au/offices/sydney.aspx>

Phone: 02 9211 5300 or 1800 226 028 outside the Sydney metropolitan area

SUMMARY

If you are in any doubt as to whether you might or might not be eligible to receive one of the types of payments mentioned we suggest you lodge an application anyway. If your application is rejected in circumstances where you wish to challenge a decision then you do have review rights, and some good quality resources can be found on these rights via the Welfare Rights' Centre website and via Centrelink itself. We also encourage you to consult with a SUPRA SAAO, who may be able to help you work through your application and, in some circumstances, assist you in subsequent appeals.

SUPRA is concerned about a couple of issues with the implementation of changes to Austudy and Youth Allowance. The late notice of the list of approved courses to universities and students has the potential to disadvantage some applicants. We had been hopeful that Centrelink would back pay eligible applicants who are continuing the same course in 2008 all the way to 1 January 2008, though at the moment the advice SUPRA has received from the Youth and Youth Services help line is that payments can only be back paid for these students to the date of notifying intention to claim.

We've been advised that students could appeal the decision not to provide back pay though at this stage SUPRA cannot advise as to whether such an appeal would be successful. The best advice we are able to give at the moment is if you haven't already done so notify your intent to claim and put your application in as soon as you can!