The Student Financial Assistance Scheme (SFAS) aims to help students in short-term financial hardship. It is expected that the student will have budgeted for ongoing living and study expenses and that requests for financial assistance will have arisen from unanticipated changes in circumstances.

The SFAS is primarily available for basic living and education costs or expenses. It is not available for:
- fees (HECS, Postgraduate Tuition, course fees)
- holiday/leisure items
- gifts
- motor vehicle purchase (except in exceptional circumstances)
- payment of pre-existing debt to other institutions or organisations (except in exceptional circumstances).

The decision to approve a loan is based on the following criteria:
- the student is in genuine financial need which could impact on their effective participation in their course of study
- the financial need has arisen since the commencement of their study at QUT
- the request is need rather than desire based
- the loan is within limits of scope of items, as detailed in 2(1).2
- consideration of the student's previous loan repayment history
- the student can provide a viable plan for repayment
- no other reasonable source of finance is available
- supporting documentation is provided, as required

Loans are given on the basis of information contained on a signed and witnessed application. Approval of a loan requires the signing of a contract with the University, specifying repayment dates and penalties. Repayment is due on the agreed dates as stated on the contract.

The scheme relies on honesty on the part of the student regarding application for and repayment of loans, as replacement funds are limited. Penalties, as approved by University Council, (such as blocking access to QUT Virtual, withholding of results and blocking of graduation) will be applied if a student does not repay their loan as agreed. The debt may also be referred to an external debt recovery agent with possible legal action being taken, if required. A fee of $100 will be charged on all loans referred to a debt collection agency and the student will be responsible for all additional costs incurred in the recovery of the debt.

As an interest-free, welfare-focussed loan, the scheme is exempt from Consumer Credit Code provisions subject to three conditions:

1. The University must provide a statement of all loan costs and terms and conditions to students before they enter into the loan.
2. The University must supply the above information to Guarantors, and guarantees cannot be extended (i.e. the Guarantor's liabilities cannot be increased) unless the Guarantor agrees to the extension. (This condition is not relevant to the SFAS as Guarantors are not required).
3. Loans are subject to the re-opening provisions contained in s.70-74 of the Consumer Credit Code.

The SFAS Committee administers the funds of the SFAS.

Students may apply for a loan from the SFAS through Counselling or International Student Services (for international students) on each campus.

Eligibility for Assistance

Students under the organisational area jurisdiction of the Registrar are eligible to apply for an SFAS loan i.e.:
- Award level students
- International students
- Exchange students
• Study Abroad students
• Non-Award students
• Cross-institutional students.

2(1).10 In order to be eligible for an SFAS loan, a student must be currently enrolled at QUT, or as a QUT student studying an approved programme at another institution.

A currently enrolled student is defined as one whose status on the student information system shows as “enrolled”, except during the Summer School period when “inactive” status is assigned to all students not undertaking courses during this period. Currently enrolled students can then be identified on QUT Virtual through their Academic History which will show the subjects in which the student is enrolled for the following year. If no subjects are listed, the student is assumed to not be enrolled.

Should a student cease to actively pursue their current course, or an equivalent course at QUT to which they transfer, the loan will immediately fall due however a repayment plan may be able to be negotiated with the SFAS Committee.

2(1).11 International and other students who are required to pay up-front fees must show proof of payment of course fees or a repayment plan negotiated with Student Fees before assistance can be provided, except under exceptional circumstances.

2(1).12 Eligibility for loans is not contingent on prior payment of other fees, or course fees for students who are approved for deferred repayment schemes.

2(1).13 In order for a student to apply for a loan, an interview needs to be conducted with a Counsellor/Welfare Officer who will consider the student’s eligibility for assistance based on the information provided in the Application for Financial Assistance form at the interview. If appropriate, the Counsellor/Welfare Officer will approve a loan or refer the application to the SFAS Committee for consideration.

Criteria for Assistance

2(1).14 The SFAS is not a finance scheme – it is a welfare scheme designed to help students who are in short-term financial difficulty where no other reasonable alternative is available. The Committee determines eligibility for a loan on the basis of the following factors being satisfied by information on the application form and through the interview process.

• No reasonable alternative source of finance is available. This includes a capacity, where reasonable, to borrow from banks, credit unions or family or to defer expenses, make alternative arrangements or, in some cases, liquidate assets. The SFAS is to be considered a last resort.

• The loan is for basic living and educational expenditure for the student.

• Reasons for the current financial problem are specifically stated and relate to temporary or unplanned factors that have arisen since the student enrolled in the registered course.

2(1).15 While the prime purpose of the loan is to assist students to achieve their educational objectives, the student’s history of repaying previous loans may be taken into consideration in arriving at a decision to approve an application.

Loan Categories and Amounts

2(1).16 Students are categorised according to the following criteria:

Category A Students
• Students in the first semester of a course of two semesters or more duration (Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)) eg Bachelor degree, Graduate Diploma, Masters, PhD and International Foundation programmes.

Category B Students
• Students in the second or further semester of a course of two semesters or more duration, as for Category A.
• Students who are progressing, without a break in continuity, from previous related study at QUT eg from an undergraduate to a postgraduate programme
or from a bridging /foundation course to an undergraduate course in a related field of study.

Category C Students
- Students in a non-award course, or in a course of no longer than one semester’s duration (FTE) eg Certificate courses, Study Abroad, Exchange and Cross-Institutional programmes.

2(1).17 Loans are administered under the following schedule:

The maximum total amount which a student can have on loan at any point of time is $1800 (One thousand, Eight Hundred Dollars).

Category A Students
- Loans totalling up to $250 can be granted by a Counsellor/Welfare Officer.
- Loans totalling over $250 (i.e. $250 to a maximum of $1800) can be granted by the Committee in exceptional circumstances. The student will also be required to participate in financial counselling/budget planning.

Category B Students
- Loans totalling up to $500 can be granted by a Counsellor/Welfare Officer.
- Loans totalling from over $500 to the maximum amount of $1800 can be granted by the Committee, as above.

Category C Students
- All applications are to be referred to Committee for consideration. Provision of assistance (i.e. a loan) of up to $1800 will be considered in exceptional circumstances and only if the “home” institution or home support system is unable to respond quickly with financial assistance. Repayment must be immediate upon receipt of funds from the home institution or support system.

2(1) 18 Students commencing a course of study (i.e. Category A or C) will be eligible to apply for assistance from the first day of the relevant Orientation period. Assistance prior to this can only be given under exceptional circumstances and by Committee decision.

2(1).19 Students applying for loans in their final year of study are subject to the following conditions:
- Students must apply for the loan prior to the last date of their exams in the final semester of their course.
- Results of the final semester will be automatically withheld and the student will not be able to graduate until the loan is repaid in full.

2 (1).20 Category C students are to be subject to the same conditions as final semester, final year students.

If an exchange or cross-institutional student defaults on a loan then efforts will be made to also block the crediting of QUT units on return to the student’s home institution.

Duration of Loan

2 (1).21 Repayment Period:
- Loans of between $250 and $500 must have a repayment date set, initially, within 6 months of the loan date.
- Loans of between $500 and $1800 must have a repayment date set within 18 months of the loan date.
- All Category C loans must be repaid in full at the earliest available date, or within one month from the loan date. The SFAS Committee can grant an extension of time to repay, under exceptional circumstances.
- Category A and B loans can be granted an extension of time to repay the loan. While it is expected that loans will be repaid within 18 months, maximum, the Committee can grant a further 6 months extension under exceptional circumstances.
- In the event that a Category A or B loan cannot be repaid in full within the total 24 month period allowable, a request can be made for additional time to repay (i.e. Toleration of additional time to repay) without further action being undertaken to recover the loan (i.e. referral for debt collection). Such requests are to be made to the Chairperson of the SFAS Committee either in writing, or
Method of Payment of Assistance

2(1).22 If a loan is approved, the student will be paid by Electronic Funds Transfer to either their own bank account or to a creditor’s account. Payment (in part or in full) can be made by cash for requests requiring urgent and immediate assistance, at the discretion of the Counsellor/Welfare Officer. A maximum amount of $500 can be provided in the form of cash at any single time.

2(1).23 The student obtains cash payment for an approved loan directly from the relevant Campus Cashier. The SFAS Loans Administrator (Revenue) processes EFT payments.

Repayment Schedules and Conditions

2(1).24 The usual expectation is for loans to be repaid through minimum fortnightly repayments with any residual balance of the loan to be paid by lump sums at a date, or dates, agreed to through negotiation with the Counsellor/Welfare Officer or as set by Committee.

2(1).25 Students can elect to pay a greater amount than required each fortnight and to repay the loan in full prior to the date set out on the contract.

2(1).26 The repayment schedule is to be developed and agreed on as part of the contract.

2(1).27 Students can arrange for automatic periodic deductions or internet transfer of funds from their bank account. This is at the discretion of the student and all fees incurred are to be paid by the student. QUT is not responsible for any fees charged on such transactions nor for the allocation of funds if the transfer documentation does not clearly indicate the student’s identity and that it is for the payment of an SFAS loan.

2(1).28 A student who defaults on their repayment plan to the value of three repayments, or does not meet agreed lump-sum repayments, and who does not renegotiate an acceptable repayment plan, will have a sanction imposed.

The sanction is to take the form of the withholding of all services on QUT Virtual. It will be lifted once the first payment on a renegotiated repayment plan is received. Re-application of the sanction will occur immediately if the student does not maintain repayments.

2(1).29 Monthly reports are to be generated with parameters for extracting loans where the initial repayment has not been met. The SFAS Loans Administrator will arrange for an e-mail message or a letter to be sent to the student notifying them that they have not made a repayment. After defaulting on three consecutive repayments, or on lump-sum repayments, a further e-mail message or a letter will be sent to the student advising them of their breach of contract and stating that a sanction has been applied.

2(1).30 Interest and Charges

a) There are no interest or penalty charges on loans taken out after November 1, 2002, except in the event that an outstanding loan is referred to a debt collection agency or for legal proceedings for recovery.

b) Loans taken out prior to November 1, 2002, will continue to have interest charged as per the contract until such time as the loan has been re-contracted to the current scheme or has been referred to a debt collection agency. Loans for which an extension is required may be re-contracted to be in line with the current policy. Outstanding interest charges may be waived, at the discretion of the Committee, however a fee of $100 will then be added to loans which have been referred to a debt collection agency, in line with condition (c).

c) Outstanding debts on loans taken out from November 1, 2002, which are referred to the University’s debt collection agency for recovery, will automatically incur a fee of $100 to cover administrative costs and
Loan Extensions

2(1).31 Extension of time to repay the loan will be considered if applied for on or prior to the contracted due date. A request submitted within a brief period after the due date can be considered if reasonable grounds exist for the late submission.

2(1).32 The student’s repayment history or record of contact with the Counsellor/Welfare Officer/Welfare Officer or SFAS Administrator to advise of on-going difficulties may be taken into account when approving a request for an extension of time to repay.

2(1).33 In exceptional circumstances, loans will be extended for final year students but a sanction on the release of results and eligibility to graduate will remain in place until the loan is repaid in full.

2(1).34 Loans will not be extended beyond a period of more than 18 months from the initial date of the loan except under exceptional circumstances, as defined by the Committee.

2(1).35 Requests for loan extensions that take a loan to over 18 months will require submission to the Committee for consideration, prior to the due date of the loan. An application for a loan extension that takes a loan to over 18 months in duration will not be approved unless a reasonable attempt has been made to repay the loan (eg regular repayments or a repayment of 2/3 of the amount) at the time of application, except under exceptional circumstances.

2(1).36 Requests for extensions should be made in writing, preferably on the Extension form provided on the SFAS web site. The application should state why the original repayment date cannot be achieved, refer to the means by which the loan was to be originally repaid, and propose a new repayment plan and date. The means by which the new repayment date will be met must also be carefully explained by the student.

The application is to be sent to the SFAS Loans Administrator either by email or through the Counselling/ISS offices.

2(1).37 The Director, Financial Services (or nominee), Chairperson, or other designated member of the SFAS Committee is able to sign for loan extensions that take a loan up to 18 months in duration. The SFAS Committee will be advised of such approvals.

2(1).38 A request for a loan extension can also be referred to the SFAS Committee for consideration.

Penalties for Non-Repayment of Loan in Full by the Due Date

2(1).39 If a student defaults on a loan of any length, a penalty shall apply.

2(1).40 Interest and charges will be incurred in accordance with Policy as stated in 2(1).30.

2(1).41 Failure to repay the SFAS loan by the due date will result in a sanction being applied. Such sanctions may include the blocking of; access to QUT Virtual, graduation and access to, and the provision of an official transcript of, results, until the loan is repaid in full. Adjustment can be made to the penalties imposed depending on the arrangements being made to repay the loan and the maintenance of this repayment plan. The SFAS Committee will also agree to the block on QUT Virtual being lifted for a brief duration, where appropriate, in order to facilitate course and personal details adjustments. The Student can obtain information about their course results from the Counselling or International Student Services.

2(1).42 Students experiencing difficulty in repaying their loan should maintain contact with the Committee via their Counsellor/Welfare Officer, the Chairperson or the SFAS Administrator. This may help them to avoid or reduce some penalties.

2(1).43 A loan which has not been repaid in full by the due date cannot be re-contracted or granted an extension of time to repay after the due date, except under exceptional circumstances, however, the student can apply to the SFAS Committee for toleration of repayment (2(1).49-50) in order to minimize the penalties incurred.

2(1).44 A loan which has been overdue for two months and for which toleration of repayment has not been negotiated will be referred to a debt collection agency. A
fee of $100 will be incurred on all loans referred for debt collection. Additional costs associated with the recovery of the debt will be the responsibility of the student.

2(1).45 A loan which has been referred for debt collection can not be re-contracted or be granted an extension of time to repay under any circumstances. All negotiations with regards to repayment of such loans are to be managed through the debt collection agency. A full sanction on access to QUT Virtual, release of results and eligibility to graduate will be imposed until the loan is repaid in full, unless a Toleration of Repayment is granted by the SFAS committee.

2(1).46 The amount to be repaid or re-contracted will include the outstanding capital and other charges incurred plus all interest fees (for loans contracted prior to November 1, 2002). A request to waive previously incurred interest fees can be considered by the SFAS Committee if, in doing so, the outstanding capital amount of the loan will be repaid in full.

2(1).47 When a student makes a final payment on a loan the cashier will contact the SFAS Loans Administrator to ascertain the amount of the final payment, including interest on loans taken out prior to November 1, 2002. The SFAS Loans Administrator will advise the cashier of the amount required to be paid and will then adjust the invoice accordingly in the Finance System. The cashier is then able to apply the full amount received to the invoice.

2(1).48 A student who has defaulted on the repayment of a loan by the due date and has not negotiated for additional time to repay the loan is not eligible for further assistance from the Scheme, except under exceptional circumstances. Under no circumstances will further assistance be provided once a loan has been referred for debt collection.

Further assistance can be provided once the outstanding loan is repaid in full.

Toleration of Repayment

2(1).49 Current, Former or Graduated Students who have breached the repayment conditions and are no longer eligible for an extension of time to repay the loan may apply to make payments by instalments. A request is to be made in writing or by email to the SFAS Committee, setting out a repayment plan and commencement date and requesting that the Committee accept this arrangement. Keeping to an agreed schedule of repayment may allow the Committee to forestall debt collection action, however a sanction blocking graduation and access to an official transcript of results will be applied.

2(1).50 A currently enrolled student who has breached the conditions for toleration, but who is not eligible for referral for debt collection, will also have a sanction on access to QUT Virtual imposed until such time as the loan is repaid in full. The student can apply to have the sanction lifted for sufficient time to undertake essential actions such as enrolment for the next semester or change of details on QUT Virtual. If approved, the sanction will be lifted for approximately one week before being re-instated. Such applications are to be sent in writing to the Chairperson of the SFAS Committee or via e-mail to the Loans Administrator for consideration at the next Committee meeting. The Committee reserves the right to decide what constitutes an essential action.

Re-entry to QUT after a period of discontinuation of study for students who have outstanding SFAS loans

2(1).51 Students who have discontinued their studies cannot re-enrol at QUT until their outstanding SFAS loans are repaid in full. However, the SFAS Committee reserves the right to consider an application from these students and the following factors, individually or collectively, will be taken into account in the Committee’s consideration of the lifting of the sanction on their re-enrolment:

- exceptional circumstances
- previous repayment history, with a minimum repayment of at least 50% of the outstanding debt
- the maintaining of a regular repayment plan for at least 6 months immediately prior to re-enrolment.
The Committee can request that the sanction is lifted and the student allowed to re-enrol once a regular repayment plan is agreed to and the repayments have commenced, with the following provisions:

a. On re-enrolment, a sanction will immediately be placed on the release of results and eligibility to graduate until the loan is repaid in full.

b. Compliance with the repayment schedule will be monitored by the Loans Administrator and a sanction on access to QUT Virtual will be applied if the student defaults on a repayment.

c. Enrolment may be revoked if the student does not meet the agreed repayment plan on more than one occasion or comply with an alternative plan which has been negotiated with a nominated case-manager and agreed to by the SFAS Committee. Such cases are to be referred to the SFAS Committee for consideration.

Procedures

Student Financial Assistance Scheme Committee

2(1).53 Student Financial Assistance Scheme Committee is a Vice-Chancellor’s committee established in accordance with Council Procedure 1 - Committees. Student Financial Assistance Scheme Committee is accountable to the Registrar. The SFAS Committee administers the scheme and its funds.

The terms of reference and membership of the Committee are set out in MOPP E/7.3.3 Student Financial Assistance Scheme Committee

The Chair of the Committee is held by the Director, Student Support Services, or by a nominee who may be an existing committee member. This position is to be held for a period of at least one year, except under exceptional circumstances.

In the event that the Director, Student Support Services, assigns a nominee as Chair, then the Chairperson will report to the Director on the operation of the scheme on a bi-annual basis.

The SFAS Loans Administrator, Financial Services, is Secretary to the Committee but may not vote.

Duties and Powers of the Committee (MOPP E/7.3.3)

2(1).54 The Committee has the following duties and powers:

- to maintain the fund, make loans subject to fund availability, ratify Counsellor/Welfare Officer approved loans, approve extensions to loans, determine interest rates and impose penalties
- to make recommendations to the Registrar on matters of policy relating to the SFAS
- to examine, organise and comment in respect to any facet of the day-to-day operation of the scheme
- to recommend to the Director, Financial Services, that loans identified as non-recoverable be written off
- to consider loan applications that fall outside the SFAS Loan categories and criteria in exceptional circumstances.

Duties of Committee Chair, Director (Financial Services), Committee and Secretary

2(1).55 The Director, Student Support Services, or the nominated Chairperson, chairs meetings of the SFAS Committee and ensures that policy is reviewed as necessary, that adequate information is available for potential applicants and an annual report is made available to the Registrar.

2(1).56 The Chairperson can initiate appropriate action to maintain and improve the service and viability of the SFAS. This may include investigation of systems and making representation to QUT and outside bodies or organisations. Any executive action is to be reported at the next Committee meeting.

2(1).57 The Chairperson arranges Annual General Meetings in July to consider matters relating to policy and procedures. Special General Meetings may be called at other times to deal with urgent matters. An agenda is circulated to Committee members and Counsellor/Welfare Officers two weeks before a Special General Meeting.
Counsellor/Welfare Officers are invited to contact a Committee member regarding matters on which they wish to comment or to have considered at the special meetings.

2(1).58 The Director, Financial Services, (or nominee) will present an annual financial report covering:
- Balance of funds
- Value of loans approved
- Monies repaid
- Interest earned
- Legal costs incurred
- Number and amount of loans written off
- Number of loans processed.

2(1).59 The Director, Financial Services, (or nominee), Chairperson or other designated Committee member, shall consider applications for loan extensions and approve, if the application meets the conditions outlined.

2(1).60 Members shall attend scheduled meetings of the Committee. Members shall consider loan applications. They may also raise matters of concern for discussion and/or decision at any meeting of the Committee and bring information or comment from other interested parties.

2(1).61 The Secretary to the Committee will:
- Prepare materials for the Committee’s consideration including loan applications and list of loans approved by Counsellors/Welfare Officers.
- Bring all appropriate files and materials to assist the Committee make its determinations.
- Take minutes of each meeting and present them for confirmation at the next Committee meeting.
- Circulate copies of unconfirmed minutes to all members by electronic mail shortly after each meeting.
- Present loan extensions approved by the Chairperson or the Director, Financial Services (or nominee) for information at each Committee meeting.

Quorum

2(1).62 As stated in the MOPP, Appendix 2, Council Procedure No1, Committees, Section 4.7-4.9:- A quorum is one half of the current membership, or if one half is not a whole number, the figure is rounded up to the next whole number. Vacant positions are not counted in calculating the quorum.

Determining Questions before a Committee

2(1).63 As stated in the MOPP, Appendix 2, Council Procedure No1, Committees, Section 4.10-4.11:- Questions before the Committee are determined by a majority vote. The Chair has a vote and, in the case of an equality of votes, a second or casting vote.

Order of Business

2(1).64 The Order of Business at Committee meetings shall be:
- Apologies for absence and declarations of interest
- Confirmation of previous minutes
- Business arising from the minutes
- New applications
- Tabling of applications for extension of loan repayment for information
- Other business

The Role of Counselling Service and International Student Service Counsellors/Welfare Officers.

2(1).65 The SFAS is a tool for supporting students. A student’s financial difficulties often reflect or exacerbate other concerns. Students requesting a loan may actually be seeking or requiring other counselling on family, personal, career or learning matters. Budgeting, financial management or representation to Centrelink or banks/credit unions may also be appropriate issues for discussion prior to considering a SFAS loan application.
2(1).66 Students obtain an application form to complete before meeting with the Counsellor/Welfare Officer. The Counsellor/Welfare Officer should discuss the form with the student, in an interview, reviewing details and making appropriate notes and comments. The information obtained in the interview process can assist the Counsellor/Welfare Officer to provide alternative forms of intervention for the student, if indicated.

Loans Process and Procedures

2(1).67 Students are required to complete a Loan Application form and a Banking Details form prior to meeting with a Counsellor/Welfare Officer. Relevant supporting documentation is to be brought to the interview. Information on the terms and conditions of an SFAS loan must be provided to students before an application is made. Application forms are available online at: http//www.counselling.qut.edu/money/loans or from the reception area of Counselling Services or International Student Services on each campus.

2(1).68 The student is to give the Loan Application and supporting documentation to the Counselling Service /International Student Services receptionist. Normally, the receptionist will ensure that the appropriate forms have been completed and supporting information is provided. Specific checks will occur to ascertain the enrolment status of the student and loan history. The relevant section of the SFAS Procedures Checklist form will then be completed before the student’s application is considered further.

2(1).69 The receptionist will then arrange a consultation with a Counsellor/Welfare Officer.

2(1).70 The Counsellor/Welfare Officer will discuss the Application with the student, reviewing details and making appropriate notes and comments. The application can then be considered for approval by the Counsellor/Welfare Officer, if it meets the criteria for this, or referred to the SFAS Committee for consideration. Loan applications referred to Committee will be returned to the originating Counsellor/Welfare Officer for further action arising from the Committee’s decision.

2(1).71 On approval of the loan, the Counsellor/Welfare Officer or Administration Officer will complete a contract and Payment Claim forms (if required) with the student. The contract must be signed by the student in the presence of the Counsellor/Welfare Officer or Administration Officer.

2(1).72 The original of the contract plus application form, supporting documents, Banking Details and Payment Claim forms are sent to the SFAS Administrator. The pink copy of the contract is retained by the student and the white copy by Counselling/International Student Services. The blue copy is taken by the student to the QUT Cashier if a cash payment is required (refer to 2(1).76) or, otherwise, destroyed by the Counsellor/Welfare Officer or Administration Officer.

2(1).73 Loans are referred to Committee if:
- The total of loans held by the student exceeds $250 (Category A students) or $500 (Category B students) and all applications for Category C students.
- The purpose for which the loan is required appears to fall outside the usual provisions of the SFAS.
- The Counsellor/Welfare Officer is unsure of the eligibility of the student for a loan, or of the appropriateness of the item for which assistance has been requested.
- The Committee has indicated that all applications from a particular student must be referred to Committee for consideration.

Applications are forwarded to the SFAS Loans Administrator for inclusion at the next meeting.

2(1).74 Applications referred to the SFAS Committee which require urgent attention and which must be addressed before the next meeting can be assessed and approved
by the Committee’s Executive. The Executive is comprised of the Chairperson of the Committee and the representative to the Committee from Financial Services.

In the event that the representative from Financial Services is the Chairperson of the committee, then the committee will nominate a second member from the committee to act on the Executive.

The members of the Executive will nominate another Committee member to act in their position if they are to be unavailable for contact for one day or more.

2(1).75 An Emergency Loan of up to $100, to be repaid within a one month period, can be approved through an abbreviated procedure. The student is not required to complete a Loan Application form, only the Contract is required to be completed with the student. Counselling Service, International Student Service Administration staff, and designated Caboolture Campus Student Centre staff are authorized to approve an Emergency Loan, in addition to Counsellor/Welfare Officers.

2(1).76 If the loan is to be given as cash, the student takes a copy of the contract, with the Cash Loans Detail section completed, to the Cashier on the relevant campus for payment. Each Cashier operates a Student Loan Float specifically for these payments. The float is reimbursed in the normal manner.

2(1).77 If the loan, or part thereof, is to be given in the form of an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), the Counsellor/Welfare Officer or Administration Officer will complete a Payment Claim form payable to the appropriate authority or person and forward this and the Banking Details form with the other documentation to the SFAS Loans Administrator (Revenue) for processing. The Banking Details form must be completed by the student. No other person can complete sections of this form or sign on behalf of the Applicant.

2(1).78 The Committee may contact the applicant for clarification, or request the Counsellor/Welfare Officer to do so, if it detects ambiguous, conflicting or incomplete information on an approved loan application.

Referees

2(1).79 Referees are required as part of the application for loan process.

2(1).80 Two referees are required, except under exceptional circumstances. One referee must be a close family member other than the student’s partner. The second referee should be a person who does not reside with the student (if the application is from an international student who is sponsored then this referee will preferably be the AusAid contact or sponsor).

2(1).81 Notification to the student that referees will be contacted if the loan is not repaid will be included in the reminder notice.

2(1).82 If a loan becomes overdue, or the student is otherwise in breach of their contract, they lose their right to confidentiality and referees may be contacted and advised of the amount owing.

(See also Follow-Up Procedures for Overdue Loans).

Creating Debtors for Student Loans

2(1).83 All loans are paid from the Special Students Loans account (000000 0000 0433 00 001). Invoices must be raised in the Special Students Loans Debtors Ledger to record the debt but the invoices are not printed.

2(1).84 Before raising an invoice, the SFAS Loans Administrator checks the Finance System to see if the student exists as a Customer and, if not, creates a new Customer record.

2(1).85 The SFAS Loans Administrator raises an invoice in the Special Student Loans ledger (Invoice number series 300000). The invoice is credited to the Student Loan Clearing Account (000000 0000 0433 00 001) and debited to the debtors control account (000000 0000 0122 00 0001). The SFAS Loans Administrator records details of each loan in a separate database used to facilitate the prompt handling of loan enquiries.

2(1).86 The SFAS Loans Administrator also creates manual files for each loan. These files are kept in alphabetical order and contain copies of the loan application, contract and other related information. All loan details are recorded for ratification in the minutes of the SFAS Committee.
Repayments

2(1).87 Students may make repayments by cash or EFTPOS to the cashier on all campuses. The Cashier should contact the SFAS Loans Administrator to obtain the relevant invoice number for correct crediting of the payment.

2(1).88 Students may also pay by post using a bank cheque or money order made payable to QUT. Such payments should be addressed to the SFAS Loans Administrator. Periodic Payments from the student’s bank or Internet transfer can be arranged by the student. All costs and responsibilities associated with this lie with the student. The Committee cannot accept responsibility for funds sent by transfer which do not clearly identify the Student and purpose for which they are sent (i.e. SFAS loan payment).

2(1).89 Loans may be paid in part or in full prior to the agreed repayment date/s. The total amount of the loan must be paid on or before the due date. Late payments normally incur a penalty as stated in 2(1).39-2(1).48

2(1).90 Receipts will be issued for payments received by the Cashier on campus. Students paying by other means are responsible for keeping a record of the transaction. Repayments received via the University’s debt collection agency will be receipted by the agency.

2(1).91 The SFAS Loans Administrator runs a Debtors Report each morning to ensure that all payments are correctly recorded. This is checked for amounts that have been receipted to the Debtors Control accounts for Special Students (0122). These payments are then recorded in the Student Loan manual files and database.

2(1).92 Once a loan is fully repaid the loan status is changed to “CLOSED” A backup of these files is done daily. The manual files are marked “Paid In Full” and are then filed and retained for 5 years.

2(1).93 The University can apply student refunds to outstanding loan amounts as per the relevant Clause of the loan contract. The SFAS Loans Administrator cancels any relevant refund cheques and has them re-drawn payable to QUT. These are then applied to the invoice in the usual manner. The student is advised in writing that this has happened and is also provided with the current outstanding balance.

Follow Up Procedures for Overdue Loans

2(1).94 If a student breaches their loan agreements by laggard payment, default or other lapse, they are liable to penalties. These penalties are necessary to protect SFAS funds and ensure that other students have access to them in time of need.

2(1).95 In the notice sent out one month prior to the due date of the loan, the student is advised of the amount owing and date for repayment. If students anticipate being unable to repay in full by the due date they are advised:

- to request an extension of time to repay by emailing a Request for Extension form from the SFAS web site to the SFAS Administrator, or emailing the SFAS Administrator with their request, or to speak with a Counsellor/Welfare Officer before submitting a Request for Extension, if they are experiencing difficulties,
- that Referees may be contacted if the debt is not addressed.

2(1).96 If a student has not acted on the reminder notice and the loan is not paid by the end of the month in which it is due, then a notice is sent to the student including:

- the total amount due
- the date specified for commencement of debt collection by debt collection agency
- notification that sanctioning on the release of student grades and access to other University services has been implemented.

2(1).97 If a student does not respond to the second notice then:

- The outstanding loan is forwarded to the Director, Financial Services (or nominee) who decides if it is worthwhile referring the account to the University’s debt collection agency or if it should be written off. This officer also authorises the agency to take further legal action if recommended. All loans recommended for such actions are referred to the SFAS Committee for consideration before action is undertaken.
- A lodgement for debt collection of loan is placed with the debt collection agency.
- The student is liable for legal fees incurred in the debt recovery process.
- The student automatically incurs a fee of $100 on all loans referred to the debt collection agency.

2(1).98 Advice is received from the debt collection agency upon receipt of each instalment payment made and a cheque is forwarded monthly from the agency of all money received into their trust account.

An invoice for commission and legal charges is forwarded to QUT and paid from the nominated account after authorisation by the Director, Financial Services.

2(1).99 All overdue loans that the Director, Financial Services (or nominee) decides are not worthwhile following up, or that the University’s debt collection agency has been unable to collect, are referred to the Director, Financial Services, for approval to write off. A recommendation to write-off a loan is then made to the SFAS Committee for agreement.

2(1).100 Once approval is given to write off an outstanding debt, the SFAS Loans Administrator records the invoice in the Finance System as a bad debt by choosing the option ‘Bad Debts – Special’ from the adjustment menu. The system allocates an adjustment number that is recorded in the student loans database against the relevant loan. The status is then changed to “WRITE OFF” in the student loans database. The student’s manual file is also noted and then kept in a write-off file for 10 years.

2(1).101 If a student wishes to repay a debt that has been written off the cashier will contact the SFAS Loans Administrator who will provide a final payment figure which is entered on the original invoice under the adjustment “Recovery – Bad Debt-Special”. The SFAS Loans Administrator will then retrieve the file from the write-off file, note it with the relevant receipt details and file it in the normal manner. The record in the student loans database will also be changed from “Write Off” to “CLOSED” and any sanctions lifted.

Reconciliation

2(1).102 The SFAS Loans Administrator runs end of month reports from the student loans database when all invoices and payments for the month have been recorded.

2(1).103 The Revenue Officer runs an Aged Trial Balance Report for the month in the Finance System. Once this report has been run, the payments and invoices for the next month can be entered.

2(1).104 The SFAS Loans Administrator reconciles the end of month reports from the student loans database to the Aged Trial Balance Report.

2(1).105 The Student Loan Clearing Account (0433) is reconciled to ensure that an invoice has been raised for each loan given. So that all information required to reconcile this account is available, the SFAS Loans Administrator runs Account Analysis Reports in the General Ledger with Payables, Receivables and General Ledger details. Any balances in the account at the end of the month should be adjusted.

Application of Sanctions

2(1).106 At the end of each month the SFAS Loans Administrator will run a report of all students with overdue loans and apply an SFAS full sanction.

2(1).107 An SFAS full sanction results in the withholding of all QUT Services and will remain in place until either the first repayment on an amended repayment plan is received, or, in the event that the loan is overdue and an extension of time to repay cannot be granted, until the loan is repaid in full. In the latter case, an SFAS full sanction can be converted to a Final Semester sanction (SFAS_FSEM) blocking access to the release of an official transcript of results and Graduation. If a Toleration of Repayment plan is accepted by the SFAS Committee and the student maintains their commitment to this agreement.

2(1).108 A sanction blocking, Graduation and release of an official transcript of results (SFAS_FSEM) is applied to final year students prior to release of results. The sanction is lifted once the loan has been repaid in full.

2(1).109 A student who has been placed on a loans related sanction can request the Committee to arrange for:

- a statement of results to be faxed to outside bodies
the sanction on access to QUT Virtual to be lifted for a brief period (e.g., one week) in order to make adjustments on QUT Virtual.

**Provision for the waiving of Debt to the SFAS under Special Circumstances**

2(1).110 Provision exists for the waiving of debt to the SFAS where exceptional hardship has prevented the repayment of the loan.

An annual grant for this purpose is provided through the QUT Equity Section

2(1).111 The SFAS Committee will consider applications for such assistance on a quarterly basis. Immediate assistance can be provided outside of these scheduled disbursements if warranted due to extremely special circumstances, as identified by the SFAS Committee.

2(1).112 Current, Inactive and Discontinued students with existing SFAS loans can receive assistance.

2(1) 113 Nominations for assistance can be made from the SFAS Committee, Counselling and ISS Services and the Equity Section.

2(1).114 Consideration for full or partial writing-off of an existing loan will be based on the difficulty being experienced by the student in repaying the loan due to extenuating personal circumstances. The SFAS Committee reserves the right to decide on what constitutes “exceptional circumstances” on a case by case basis.

**Confidentiality**

2(1).115 The minutes, records, files and completed forms of the SFAS Committee relating to individual applicants or loan holders are confidential. Information on individuals will only be released to appropriate Counsellor/Welfare Officers or to others with the consent of the student.

2(1).116 General information that does not identify individuals will be disseminated as required for good management and reporting requirements.

2(1).117 Students who breach their contracts, obligations or agreements will lose their right to confidentiality with respect to those commissioned by QUT to seek collection of the debt.

2(1).118 Once a loan is overdue and no arrangements have been made for repayment or extension, referees may be advised of the outstanding amount.