

## STANDARD 12.6 STUDENT DEBT

The institution provides information and guidance to help student borrowers understand how to manage their debt and repay their loans.

### Institutional Response

The University of South Carolina Aiken takes its obligation to assist students in managing debt seriously. The USC Aiken Financial Aid office allows borrowing only within the cost of attendance. Further, each student borrower is provided an award notification link, where he/she can review a summary of the total loans borrowed at the University. Students are also able to review his/her federal student loan history through the National Student Loan Data System.

The University of South Carolina Aiken provides information to help student borrowers understand how to manage their debt and their obligation to repay their loans. This information is conveyed to students through several means including:

1. **Online entrance loan counseling.** As mandated by federal regulations, entrance loan counseling is provided for first-time borrowers at which time a Master Promissory Note is completed that outlines the rights and responsibilities of the borrower. Entrance loan counseling is required to ensure that students understand the responsibilities and obligations they are assuming when taking on a student loan.
2. **Financial aid sessions during orientation.** Information sessions regarding financial aid services and student loan debt management are available to incoming students and parents during mandatory orientation sessions for new students.
3. **First year seminar course.** The first year seminar course AFYS A101 has included a [module on financial management](#).<sup>[S1]</sup> The presentation includes information on loan borrowing, repayment options, and repayment rates. Information related to personal debt management, credit cards, credit scores,

and other financial management details such as savings and checking accounts, and balancing a budget are also shared.

4. **Annual student loan acknowledgment.** Beginning with the 2021-22 academic year, the university will be instituting an [Annual Student Loan Acknowledgment](#) <sup>[S2]</sup> that every student borrower will have to complete each year that they accept a new federal student loan. The goal of this acknowledgement is to help our students understand how their loans affect their financial future.
5. **Experienced financial aid counselors.** Students considering loans are provided with borrowing advice by experienced and credentialed financial aid counselors. The University has six counselors available to provide guidance to students, prospective students, and parents in such areas as financial aid opportunities, the financial aid application process, and financial planning as it pertains to appropriate management of financial aid funds. Specific guidance is tailored to each individual's unique circumstances.
6. **Financial literacy and default prevention website.** The Financial Aid office has created a [financial literacy and default prevention website](#) <sup>[S3]</sup> for all enrolled and prospective students and their family members. Students are directed to the site by financial aid counsellors before they make borrowing decisions. The site includes information on:
  - [Consumer Protection](#) <sup>[S4]</sup>
  - [Credit and Debt Management](#) <sup>[S5]</sup>
  - [Loan Default Prevention](#) <sup>[S6]</sup>
  - [Saving](#) <sup>[S7]</sup>
  - [Student Loan Debt Management](#) <sup>[S8]</sup>
  - [Types of Loans](#) <sup>[S9]</sup>
7. **Exit loan counseling.** Exit loan counseling provides important information to prepare students to repay federal student loans. Students who have received a subsidized, unsubsidized or PLUS loan must complete exit counseling upon graduation, withdrawal, or dropping below a half-time registration status.

**Additional Supporting Documentation**

- S1. [AFYS 101 - First Year Seminar Syllabus with Money Management Module](#)
- S2. [Annual Student Loan Acknowledgment](#)
- S3. [Financial Literacy and Default Prevention Website](#)
- S4. [Consumer Protection Website](#)
- S5. [Credit and Debt Management Website](#)
- S6. [Loan Default Prevention Website](#)
- S7. [Saving Website](#)
- S8. [Student Loan Debt Management Website](#)
- S9. [Types of Loans Website](#)