

Discretionary Fund Procedures 26-27

Part-Time Undergraduate and Postgraduate

The purpose of the Discretionary Fund is to provide additional financial support to eligible students who will face expenses as a direct result of their studies that might cause financial hardship and prevent engagement in studies. Relevant expenses include books/course materials, travel, and childcare. The fund is unable to support the general living expenses of students.

This guidance covers who can apply, what can be applied for, how to apply, and how applications are assessed.

Who can apply –

1. Students must be UK domiciled, enrolled for the current session, and attending a part-time undergraduate or taught* postgraduate course/module.
2. Students must evidence that their annual personal income is below £30k, or that they are in receipt of Universal Credit.
3. Students must also meet any further eligibility conditions stipulated in the SAAS guidelines for the current academic year.
4. International or EU students are **not** eligible and should not apply.
5. Students who wish to apply for the childcare element of the Fund must provide evidence of the children for whom they wish to receive a contribution towards childcare costs. Evidence includes most recent Universal Credit notice, bank statement showing child benefit being paid, or birth certificate(s).

*Taught refers to there being teaching time, which can be in person or online. Assessment Only modules, research-based modules, or those which are self-led are not eligible to be considered for this funding. Resits/repeat modules are also not eligible to be considered for this funding.

What can be applied for –

6. Awards are in the form of a non-repayable bursary.
7. Students can apply for support meeting the costs of books/course materials, travel, and childcare. Any award will be a contribution only.
8. A flat rate is applied for the contribution towards books/course materials and travel. Students are free to use this contribution flexibly to best support individual circumstances. Some students may prefer to use more of the contribution to purchase books/course materials, while others may prefer to use the majority to cover travel expenses.

9. We encourage students to interpret the definition of books/course materials broadly. Students may choose to put the award towards the purchase of textbooks, stationary, a printer, ink cartridges, IT equipment, etc.
10. There is no requirement for students to provide evidence showing how they spend their award.
11. A flat rate of £250 per 20 credit module will be awarded for books/course materials and travel. This will be adjusted proportionally for modules that are not 20 credits.
12. Awards for childcare costs will be considered for all taught aspects of the module, which can include on-campus teaching and virtual engagement. Reasonable registered childcare costs and some unregistered childcare costs will be considered, at the discretion of the Funding and Advice Team.
13. We will not consider any costs associated with a parent or step-parent providing care for a child.
14. Students can receive a contribution towards the cost of reasonable registered childcare for 1 day per week per 20 credit module, for a maximum of 15 weeks per term.
15. Students using unregistered childcare can receive a maximum contribution of up to £20 per week per 20 credit module, for a maximum of 15 weeks per term.
16. Benefit rules prevent us from contributing towards general living expenses, childcare costs that are not directly related to studies, and childcare costs that are being/should be met through an alternative source, such as funded childcare hours through the Scottish Government's scheme.
17. Students cannot apply retrospectively for funding relating to any module that has ended.
18. Students cannot apply for funding relating to any module that is a resit or repeat.

How to apply –

19. The fund opens at the start of the new academic session each year. Applications and guidance will be available to download from the [Discretionary and Childcare Funding webpage](#).
20. Students should complete one application in respect of their studies for the full academic year. Students choosing to enrol on a further module after an application has been processed do not need to submit a further application form. Students should email the Funding & Advice team at fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk with details of the additional module(s) and attendance requirements. This should be done before the module(s) commence, or as soon as possible after study begins.
21. Students should complete all relevant sections of the application and collate the required supporting evidence. [Guidance notes for completing the application can be found on the Discretionary and Childcare webpage](#).
22. When applying for support with childcare costs, the additional Childcare Form must be completed by a student's childcare provider(s). [The childcare provider form is available on the Discretionary and Childcare webpage](#) and is needed for both registered and unregistered childcare arrangements.
23. If students have a quick question about any aspect of the fund procedures or application, the best way to contact us is via email at fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk.
24. Students should ensure that the information provided is accurate.

25. A percentage of random checks may be carried out on awards for audit purposes. Any fraudulent claims will be reported to the relevant authorities and may result in disciplinary proceedings in accordance with the University Code of Discipline.

Submitting the application –

26. We operate a paper-free application process. Applications and evidence can only be submitted by email to fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk. Detailed guidance on how to complete an application electronically, collate supporting evidence, and submit this to us can be found on the [Discretionary and Childcare Funds website](#).
27. Students should use their UWS student email account to submit their application and evidence.
28. It is important that students read all instructions and complete the form correctly. Incomplete applications may be returned to students, delaying their assessment.
29. Where students have read all guidance and have any queries or concerns about completing/submitting the application and supporting evidence as instructed, they should contact us via email at fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk.

How the application is assessed –

30. Funding is awarded on a first come, first served basis and we encourage students to apply early to avoid disappointment. The fund will close, often with little or no notice, when the budget has been exhausted.
31. Applications join a queue based on the date they were received. We work through this queue in order, ensuring those who have applied first are assessed first.
32. We assess applications as quickly as we can, but this can take around 6 weeks, and longer at peak times or where an application is incomplete. We ask that students refrain from enquiring about the progress of their application until 6 weeks has passed, as this gives us time to focus on processing.
33. A uniform method of processing is adopted across all campuses to ensure continuity and fairness of approach.
34. Students' university records will be checked to confirm the modules on which they are enrolled; Discretionary Fund awards will be based on those enrolments. Where a student is concerned that their enrolments are incorrect, they should discuss this with their School before applying.
35. When calculating an award we will consider only those modules on which a student is enrolled, excluding any modules with a status of Assessment Only or where the module is a resit/repeat.
36. When assessing an award for childcare we will limit any award as per points 14 and 15.

What happens next -

37. Students can expect to receive an email receipt confirming that we have received the application, and that this has joined our processing queue. Students may receive this up to several working days after they submit the application but their place in the queue is based on the date the application was received, and not the date of the email receipt.
38. All correspondence is sent to student UWS email addresses. It is the responsibility of the student to regularly check their UWS email account.

39. Students will receive a response to their application as soon as it is assessed, in line with the timescales detailed at point 32.
40. Our response may be either an award notification, a request for further information if the application was incomplete, a request for the student to attend an appointment with an adviser, or an email advising that an award is not being made and the reason for this.
41. Award notifications will state the award amount and payment pattern, which is usually termly.
42. Awards to students are paid through our UWS Aspire Payments platform. Funding and Advice will share student details (name, Banner ID, course, study type, and award value) to the UWS Aspire Payments platform, which creates an account for the student to access and manage their award.
43. Students will receive an email from the UWS Aspire Payments platform when funds become available. Students can then log into the platform using their UWS single sign on credentials and draw down available funds to their preferred bank account.
44. Initial award payments are available within 48 hours of a decision being made. Subsequent payments (where relevant) are made available as detailed in the award notification email sent from Funding and Advice.
45. Changes in student circumstances may lead to an award or payments being cancelled. If funds remain available in a student's UWS Aspire Payment account once an award is cancelled, then these will be returned to UWS.
46. Where an award has been made in respect of childcare costs, award notifications will be emailed to childcare providers stating the award amount and payment pattern for the childcare element only. Students will be copied into this email for information. Awards will be paid via BACS directly to the childcare provider.
47. Initial payments for all elements of funding will be made as soon as possible after the application is processed, but not before enrolment is confirmed and classes commence.

What happens after an award has been made -

48. Students must notify us as soon as possible if there is any change to their circumstances. Notifications should be sent to fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk.
49. Relevant changes in circumstances include, but are not limited to, changes to student status – including withdrawal from the course or the commencement of a period of interruption – changes to childcare usage, and changes to personal or financial situation.
50. Where student circumstances have changed, we may need to cancel an application and award. If any overpayment has occurred, we may request a refund.
51. Students and/or their childcare providers must update us of any changes to bank details at least 10 working days before the next funding payment is due to be made.

Confidentiality

The University retains all documents pertaining to the financial award as audit checks are performed annually to ensure awards are made appropriately. Digital records are stored in a secure system.

Where a Discretionary Fund award is being made to a student, limited data is shared in order to facilitate payment(s) through the UWS Aspire Payment platform. This includes name, student email address and Banner ID number.

The privacy and confidentiality of students will be respected at all stages of the process. Anonymous statistical information is collected about expenditure of University and Student Awards Agency Funds for reporting purposes and budgetary management. Application forms and related confidential documents are destroyed as per Data Protection guidelines and will be retained for **7 years** after the current academic year.

What if a student disagrees with the decision about their application?

Students are encouraged to discuss the outcome of their application with an Adviser before making any formal request for reconsideration of the decision. In most cases a conversation like this will allow students to present information that was not included in the original application, and which could make a difference.

If, after speaking with an Adviser, a student still wishes to appeal the outcome of their application, this can be progressed where the student feels the procedures have not been followed. It is not possible to appeal where the procedures have been applied correctly, in line with other students' applications, but where a student disagrees with the approach.

To progress an appeal, the reasons for disagreeing with the decision should be submitted in writing to the Student Advice and Development Manager within 28 days of notification of the final decision from the Adviser. This correspondence can be submitted via fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk where it will be forwarded to the Student Advice and Development Manager, who will make an initial response within 5 working days of receiving correspondence.