



Discretionary Fund Procedures 18-19

Full-Time Postgraduate (exc. PGDE)

The purpose of the Discretionary Fund is to provide additional financial support to eligible students who can demonstrate a need for this throughout their studies. Support is in the form of a non-repayable bursary and is designed top up the student support received through Government, in order to assist a student in being able to engage and succeed in their studies.

This guidance covers who can apply, what you can apply for, how you apply and how the application is assessed.

Applying for childcare?

If you also wish to apply for help meeting the costs of study related childcare, we simply include that in your application to the Discretionary Fund. This means you only need to complete one application and we will assess you for both elements. You should also read our regulations for the childcare costs we can consider and can find these online [here](#). These detail any limitations to what we can consider and will be adhered to at all times.

Who can apply –

1. Applicants must be a UK home student enrolled for the current session and attending a full-time, taught postgraduate course. In addition, applicants must have taken out their full entitlement of all available student support, including student loans.
2. International or EU students are **not** eligible and should not apply.
3. Nursing/Midwifery students are **not** eligible and should not apply.
4. Research postgraduate students are **not** eligible and should not apply.
5. Students studying the MSc in Social Work, which falls under the purview of the SSSC, are **not** eligible and should not apply.
6. As PGDE students are funded by SAAS as undergraduate students, they apply to the full-time undergraduate discretionary fund.
7. Students undertaking only their Master level of study should apply to this fund and not the part-time postgraduate fund. This means we can offer more flexible support.
8. In addition to any student support, applicants must have applied for all other sources of funding to which they are entitled, i.e. Tax credits, any relevant Benefits, Free Early Education place from Local Authority, etc. The Funding and Advice Team will assist students who are unsure if they are in receipt of all funding they are entitled to.

9. Applicants must also meet any further eligibility conditions stipulated in the SAAS guidelines for the current academic year.
10. Students who have studied previously at this level, and therefore are not eligible for SAAS Tuition Fee Loan (or equivalent), are still eligible to apply to this fund. However, should there be times when the budget is limited, we may have to consider any previous study, and support received for this.

What you can apply for –

11. Funds are limited and are not guaranteed until after an application has been fully assessed.
12. Funds are awarded on a first come, first served basis and we encourage all students to apply early to avoid disappointment.
13. Late applications may be subject to a lesser award than those received early in the academic year. The fund will close when the budget becomes exhausted.
14. This fund can provide support meeting general living costs such as rent, travel, debt repayments etc. that you may struggle to meet as a result of being a student.
15. Any award is unlikely to cover any shortfall in full and is in the form of a non-repayable bursary.
16. We accept applications from students who have worked out a budget and are applying for support to cover a regular monthly shortfall, as well as students who have faced an unexpected expense that they have not been able to budget for.
17. Applicants may apply for a contribution towards their study related childcare costs in any University academic year. You should also read our regulations for the childcare costs we can consider and can find these online [here](#). These detail any limitations to what we can consider and will be adhered to at all times. Any award in respect of study related childcare costs is made directly to your childcare provider.
18. We will consider the costs of registered childcare only.
19. Should there be extenuating reasons why a student is unable to use registered care, and are paying for unregistered childcare, such as relatives or friends, we may be able to contribute towards the costs of this. In these circumstances a student must book an appointment with an Adviser to discuss their application and these extenuating circumstances. Where we feel the use of this care is justified, we will explain how we calculate any contributions.
20. Students who have studied previously at this level, and therefore are not eligible for SAAS Tuition Fee Loan (or equivalent), will have any childcare award capped at £4k for the academic year. NB: This is not an indication that £4k will be awarded as our normal assessment criteria will apply.

How you apply –

21. The fund reopens each year on 1st August, but we are committed to opening our application process as early as possible, allowing you to apply and receive an early decision, and to plan ahead and budget more effectively. You should keep an eye on our website at www.uws.ac.uk/money-fees-funding/other-financial-support/discretionary-childcare-funds/ from **1st July** as we will publish our new applications and guidance from that date.

22. New students are encouraged to apply early. Students can only take advantage of this if they apply early for their statutory student support, as we are unable to finalise applications without this information.
23. Funds will only be released after enrolment takes place and classes commence.
24. Applications will be available to download from www.uws.ac.uk/money-fees-funding/other-financial-support/discretionary-childcare-funds/ Paper applications will be available from The Hub or Student Link on your campus.
25. Applicants should complete all relevant sections of the application and enclose photocopies of all the necessary documentation. Guidance notes for completing the application can be obtained via the website, www.uws.ac.uk/money-fees-funding/other-financial-support/discretionary-childcare-funds/
26. If you have a quick question about any aspect of the fund procedures or the application, the best way to contact us is via fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk where we can respond quickly.
27. If you would rather discuss an application with an Adviser, or any aspect of the fund in more detail, please book an appointment through The Hub or Student Link on your campus. You can find more details [here](#).
28. When also applying for support with childcare costs, the additional Childcare Form should be completed by your childcare provider and submitted with the main application. This is also available via the website, www.uws.ac.uk/money-fees-funding/other-financial-support/discretionary-childcare-funds/ or from The Hub or Student Link on your campus.
29. Applicants should ensure that the information provided is accurate, and return the application to The Hub or Student Link on your campus. You should do this in person. In the event that you cannot submit this to us in person, you can send it to us by post and can find out more [here](#). Please note: We cannot accept applications via email.
30. It is important you read all instructions and complete the form correctly as incomplete applications may be returned and will be subject to delay.

How the application is assessed –

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 it can take around 4 weeks, and sometimes a little longer due to the volume we receive at peak times. We ask that applicants refrain from enquiring about the progress of their application until 4 weeks has passed as this will give us the time to focus on processing.
33. A uniform method of processing is adopted to ensure continuity and fairness of approach. All applications are income assessed.
34. We will first ensure that applicants are eligible to apply, have all other funding in place, have completed the application accurately and correctly, have provided evidence and information to substantiate any

claim made on the application, have shown appropriate money management and have included reasonable figures for expenditure.

35. Where problems with money management or debt are identified, the student may be invited to attend an appointment prior to any award being made. The appointment will offer an opportunity to discuss healthy money management. This allows us to ensure that any funds awarded are used effectively. The final stage of processing the application may take place after this appointment and be subject to review.
36. Reasonable household income and expenditure assessments will be used to calculate any monthly excess or shortfall. It is important for us to ensure the funding is being used appropriately, so any unreasonable expenditure amounts will be queried and changed when calculating awards.
37. We agree a set of standard expenditure rates each year that are used in all calculations. While we understand applicants may not adhere to these figures in reality, we apply these to all applications in order to ensure consistency. These are currently set at:

TV Licence	£13/month
Food/Housekeeping	£150/month for each person in the household
Course Materials	£30/month
Personal Costs, such as entertainment, clothing etc.	£75/month for each person in the household
Gas/Electricity	£70-£200/month depending on number of people in the home
Mobile Phone	£15/month for each adult and teenage child
TV, Internet and/or Phone	Maximum of £60/month

38. You will have an opportunity to tell us about all of your household expenditure in the application. If you have outgoings that are not listed on the application, you can include these in the 'Other' section.
39. You also have an opportunity to tell us about any debt repayments you make. The application includes a section for you itemise these.
40. Any student support should be divided by 8 (or length of your course if not a standard academic year) to get a monthly figure. If a partner is also a student and receiving a student loan and/or bursary, they should divide this by 12 if they are in years 1-3, and by 8 if in their final year, to get their monthly income figure.
41. Students are expected to supplement their income, e.g. through part time work. We will assume a level of income of £150/month for years 1-3 and £50/month for final year or postgraduate students. No assumed income is included for lone parents and those unable to work due to ill health or a disability that would entitle them to receive PIP. Students who earn more than this will not be disadvantaged in their application, as we will cap their income at the above levels. This should allow you to consider reducing your part-time work to focus more on studies.
42. You must tell us about any other income you receive, such as benefits, tax credits etc.
43. Having calculated income and expenditure, a monthly shortfall or excess is determined, allowing us to assess the level of financial need.

44. All students showing a monthly excess will be invited to meet with an Adviser to discuss their reasons for applying. We fully understand that it can be difficult for some circumstances to be reflected in the application and welcome these students to discuss this in person. If no additional information is forthcoming, students with a monthly excess will not receive an award.
45. Students showing a monthly shortfall may receive an award towards general living costs. The level of any award can depend on personal circumstances and is not guaranteed.

How the application is assessed if childcare is included -

46. If an applicant is applying for support meeting the costs of childcare and general living costs, the childcare takes precedence.
47. Where an applicant shows a monthly shortfall, we will contribute towards the cost of study related childcare and may also be able to make an award towards general living costs.
48. Where an applicant shows a monthly excess, this will be taken into account when determining any childcare award. I.e. the monthly excess is what we expect a student to be able to contribute towards childcare costs and we will contribute towards the outstanding balance.
49. Benefit rules prevent us from contributing to any work related childcare costs you may have, without this directly reducing the benefit you may be eligible to receive (i.e. Childcare Element of Working Tax Credit or Universal Credit). While we are unable to contribute to this cost, we will need information on these costs to assess an application.

Communication –

50. Applicants will receive a response from their application as soon as it is assessed. Please see 32 for more information on timescales.
51. All correspondence is sent to the students University email address.
52. This response may be an award notification, a request for further information if the application was incomplete or an email advising that an award is not being made and the reason for this.
53. Award notifications will state the award amount and payment pattern, which is usually monthly. Awards will usually be paid via BACS. If students have difficulty with this method of payment they should tell us about this at the point of application.
54. Award notifications will also be emailed to childcare providers stating the award amount and payment pattern in respect of childcare costs. Awards will be paid via BACS directly to the childcare provider.
55. Initial payments will be made as soon as possible after processing the application, but not before enrolment is confirmed and classes commence.
56. The student must notify us in writing, as soon as possible, if there is any change in circumstances, including withdrawal from the course. A refund of any unused portion may be requested.

57. 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.

Confidentiality

The University retains all documents pertaining to the financial award. These will be kept in a locked, secure location as audit checks are performed annually to ensure awards are made appropriately.

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 I disagree with the decision about my application?

Applicants 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 applicants to present information that was not included in the original application and which could make a difference.

If, after speaking with an Adviser, an applicant still wishes to formally query their award, their reasons for disagreeing with the decision should be submitted in writing to the Head of Student Services within 28 days of notification of the final decision from the Adviser. The Head of Student Services will make an initial response within 5 working days of receiving correspondence. Such correspondence can be submitted via fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk where it will be forwarded.

