

Discretionary and Childcare Fund Procedures 26-27

Asylum Seekers

The Discretionary Fund:

The purpose of the Asylum Seeker Discretionary Fund is to provide additional financial support to eligible students with the costs of studying, where these costs might cause financial hardship and prevent engagement in studies. The purpose of the fund is limited to the cost of books/course materials, travel and childcare. This fund cannot help with general living expenses, as this may negatively affect the support students receive from the Home Office. Discretionary Support is in the form of a non-repayable bursary.

The Childcare Element:

The purpose of the Childcare Element of the Fund is to provide eligible students with a contribution towards childcare costs, where students are unable to meet these costs independently. Support is in the form of a non-repayable bursary. The Childcare Element is an add-on to the Asylum Seeker Discretionary Fund and cannot be applied for separately.

These procedures apply to students applying for the Discretionary Fund, and students applying for both the Discretionary Fund and the Childcare Element. These procedures cover who can apply, what can be applied for, how to apply, and how the application is assessed.

Who can apply:

1. To be eligible to apply to the Asylum Seeker Discretionary Fund, students must meet **all three** of the following conditions:
 - Have the status of Asylum Seeker, having claimed asylum but not yet been legally recognised as a refugee, and therefore waiting to receive a decision on an asylum claim.
 - Have held this status at the point of applying for the course at UWS.
 - Must be receiving financial support from the Home Office.
2. Students must be enrolled for the current session and attending a course/module at undergraduate or taught postgraduate level up to and including Masters. Research postgraduate students, such as those on a DBA or PhD, are not eligible and should not apply.
3. International or EU students are **not** eligible and should not apply. This includes students who applied for their studies through a student visa route, and have claimed asylum on/after entering the UK.
4. Students who have held a status of Asylum Seeker, but who have received a decision on their asylum claim and are now recognised as a refugee, are **not** eligible and should not apply. These students may be eligible for funds available to home students, and can contact fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk for further advice.
5. Students must also meet any further eligibility conditions stipulated in the SAAS guidelines for the current academic year.

What can and cannot be apply for:

6. Funds are limited and are not guaranteed until after an application has been fully assessed.
7. Funds are awarded on a first come, first served basis and we encourage all students to apply early to avoid disappointment. The fund will close when the budget has been exhausted, often with little or no notice.
8. Late applications may be subject to a lesser award than those received early in the academic year. We consider an early application to be one submitted as soon as the application process opens, which may be in advance of the academic year starting.
9. Awards are in the form of a non-repayable bursary.
10. Students can apply for this funding to help pay for study-related expenses only, including books/course materials, travel and childcare. Funding is likely to be only a contribution and will not cover costs in full.
11. The payment method may be in the form of vouchers, to be used by the student to contribute towards these study-related costs. Individual applicants' circumstances will be considered when determining the type of vouchers awarded. Alternatively, the payment method may involve the University purchasing items on behalf of a successful student, such as travel tickets.
12. Were a payment method is in the form of a voucher, we will make recommendations as to what the award vouchers should be used for, based on the information provided in your application. Uses might include the purchase of textbooks, stationery, IT equipment etc.
13. There will be no requirement for students to provide evidence showing how they spend their award. However, students may wish to retain evidence should they be asked to show this to the Home Office.
14. Students may apply for a contribution towards their study-related childcare costs in any University academic year. The [Childcare Fund Fact Sheet for Students](#) includes more details on what we can include in our assessment, and how we will assess an application.
15. We consider childcare for all types of learning, not just scheduled classes. This includes on-campus teaching, placements, virtual learning, group work, independent study etc. This could be as much as 5 full days childcare per week, but students should consider their needs carefully before arranging childcare.
16. Most courses will have term breaks, during which childcare funding is not applicable. We are also unable to consider summer retainers or childcare costs during the summer vacation. We advise students to negotiate any retainer fees in advance of signing contracts.
17. We will query any childcare costs that appear excessive or unreasonable. Regional averages will be used to determine whether costs are excessive or within the regional norm.
18. We will not consider any costs associated with a parent or stepparent providing care for a child.
19. We can consider the costs of registered childcare only.
20. Any award is unlikely to cover study-related expenses in full and is designed to be a contribution towards these costs only.

How the application is assessed:

21. 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.
22. We assess applications as quickly as we can, but it can take around 6 weeks to get back to you, and longer at peak times or where your application was incomplete. We ask that applicants refrain from enquiring about the progress of their application until 6 weeks has passed, as this will give us the time to focus on processing.
23. A uniform method of processing is adopted across all campuses to ensure continuity and fairness of approach.
24. Your university record will be checked to confirm your enrolment status.
25. When assessing an award, we will use the evidence you submit to confirm eligibility.
26. When assessing an award for childcare we will limit any award for childcare as per point 14.

How to apply:

27. We are committed to opening our application process as early as possible, and before term starts, but this can be impacted by external factors as the source of this funding is the Scottish Government. Updates on Funds will be published on the [Discretionary and Childcare Funding section of the UWS website](#) from July each year.
28. While we encourage early applications, and endeavour to finalise the assessment of applications quickly, funds will only be released after enrolment takes place, classes commence, and attendance can be confirmed.
29. Applications will be available to download from the [Discretionary and Childcare Funding section of the UWS website](#). These should be completed digitally.
30. Students should complete all relevant sections of the application and include the required supporting evidence. Guidance notes for completing the application can be obtained via the [Discretionary and Childcare Funding section of the UWS website](#). It is recommended that all students use the guidance notes as this will help ensure applications are completed correctly, which means they can be assessed more quickly.
31. When also applying for support with childcare costs, the additional Childcare Provider Form should be completed by the childcare provider and returned to the student for submission with the main application. The childcare form is also available to download from the [Discretionary and Childcare Funding section of the UWS website](#). Students should ask their childcare provider(s) to complete the form digitally and return it to them, ready for the student to submit it with their application and evidence to Funding & Advice.
32. Students can contact the Funding & Advice team with questions about any aspect of the fund procedures or the application process. The best way to contact us is via email at fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk
33. [Students can make an appointment to speak with a Funding Advisor by contacting the Student Hub](#) where they would prefer to discuss their application or any aspect of the fund with an Adviser.
34. Students should ensure that the information provided is accurate.
35. 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 an application:

36. We operate a paper free application process. Students should submit their application and supporting evidence by email to fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk. A range of guidance is available to help students to complete their application electronically, collate all relevant supporting evidence, and submit this to us.
37. It is important that students read all instructions and complete the form correctly as incomplete applications may be returned and will be subject to delay.
38. Where students have read all guidance and have any queries or concerns about submitting their application and evidence as instructed, they should contact us at fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk

What happens next:

39. Applications join a queue based on the date they are received. We work through this queue in order, ensuring those who have applied first are assessed first.
40. We assess applications as quickly as we can, but it can take around 6 weeks to get back to students, 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, allowing us time to focus on processing.
41. 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 submitted 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.
42. All correspondence is sent to student UWS email addresses. It is the responsibility of the student to regularly check their UWS email account.
43. Students will receive a response to their application as soon as it is assessed. Our response may be an award notification, a request for further information if the application or evidence was incomplete, an invitation to attend an appointment with an Adviser, or an email advising that an award is not being made and the reason for the this.
44. Award emails will state the award amount and payment method. Due to your status as an Asylum Seeker we are unable to pay funds directly to you in the form of cash or bank transfer. Instead, we will issue vouchers, or purchase items directly.
45. Where an award has been made in respect of childcare costs, award notifications are emailed to childcare providers stating the award amount and payment pattern, with the student copied in for information. Awards will be paid via BACS directly to the childcare provider.
46. We do not contact childcare providers where applications are incomplete or unsuccessful. It is the student's responsibility to liaise with their childcare provider(s) regarding the progress of their application. Students remain responsible for their own childcare costs while an application is pending. Where the outcome of an application is that an award cannot be made, or the award is insufficient to cover the total childcare costs, it is the student's responsibility to arrange a payment plan for the balance with their childcare provider(s).
47. Awards will be made as soon as possible after processing the application, but not before enrolment is confirmed and classes commence.

What you need to do after an award has been made:

48. Students must notify us as soon as possible if there is any change in 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, changes to personal or financial situation and changes to immigration status.
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. 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.

The privacy and confidentiality of students will be respected at all stages of the process. Anonymous statistical information is collected about expenditure of 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** from 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 so that a full review can be conducted. A conversation like this allows the Adviser to explain how the decision was reached. In most cases students will then present information that was not included in the original application, and which can make a difference to the outcome.

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.

The UWS Aspire Payments Platform:

For 26-27, the University has introduced a new platform to more efficiently provide Discretionary Fund awards to students. It is not yet known if this platform can be used to provide support through the Asylum Seeker Discretionary Fund, due to the restrictions in place on providing funds to Asylum Seekers, but this is an area we will continue to explore.

If we are able to improve the student experience through the use of the new 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.

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 access and use the funds. Full support and guidance will be provided to individual students.