

# Discretionary Fund Procedures 20-21

## Pre. Reg. Nursing/Midwifery

The purpose of the Discretionary Fund is to provide additional financial support to eligible students where something unexpected has impacted their finances and is causing financial hardship that might prevent a student in being able to engage and succeed in their studies.

There is an expectation that students will plan ahead and budget appropriately for essential day to day expenses, so this fund cannot be used to provide support meeting these expected day to day living costs, or longer term financial commitments.

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

### Who can apply –

1. Applicants must be a UK home student studying a full-time Pre. Registration programme. In addition, applicants must have taken out their full entitlement of all available student support.
2. International or EU students are **not** eligible and should not apply.
3. In addition to 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.
4. Applicants must also meet any further eligibility conditions stipulated in the SAAS guidelines for the current academic year.
5. Students who are currently on a period of interruption from their studies are not normally eligible to apply, but there may be circumstances in which an application can be considered. Students in this position should contact [fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk](mailto:fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk) for further guidance before applying.
6. Applicants should only apply once in each academic year. However, should new unexpected circumstances arise in the same academic year, we may be able to consider these and you should contact us at [fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk](mailto:fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk) for further guidance before submitting any further application.

### What you can apply for –

7. The Discretionary Fund can provide additional financial support where something unexpected has impacted your finances and is causing short-term financial hardship. The intent of the fund is to assist a student in being able to engage and succeed in their studies.

8. Unexpected or unforeseen financial hardship is when a situation has arisen that is causing you financial hardship but for which you could not reasonably have planned for.
9. Examples of scenarios where you might be eligible to apply are noted in Appendix 1. This is not an exhaustive list. We will endeavour to support as many scenarios as possible within the constraints of the budget so if you are unsure your circumstances meet the criteria, we would encourage you to apply. The worst that can happen is that we say no.
10. While we understand that students may struggle to meet their cost of living throughout their studies, the fund is unable to contribute towards regular monthly shortfalls.
11. Funds are limited and are not guaranteed until after an application has been fully assessed.
12. While we will do our best to ensure funds remain available throughout the academic year, funds are ultimately awarded on a first come, first served basis. The fund will close when the budget becomes exhausted, often with little or no notice.
13. Any award is in the form of a non-repayable bursary, and will likely only provide a contribution to the financial issues being experienced.

### How you apply –

14. The fund for each academic session opens as early in the year as possible. We will endeavour to keep this open throughout the academic session.
15. New students cannot apply before their academic year begins, and cannot apply where the unforeseen circumstances occurred before the course begins.
16. Applications will be available to download from [our website](#).
17. Applicants should complete all relevant sections of the application and enclose the required supporting evidence. Guidance notes for completing the application can be obtained via [our website](#).
18. If applicants 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](mailto:fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk) where we can respond quickly.
19. If applicants 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](#).
20. Applicants should ensure that the information provided is accurate.
21. 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 your application –

22. Due to the continued coronavirus situation, you should submit your application and supporting evidence by email to [fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk](mailto:fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk) We have a lot of guidance to help you complete your application electronically, collate your application and supporting evidence and submit this to us.
23. 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 –

24. 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.
25. 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.
26. A uniform method of processing is adopted to ensure continuity and fairness of approach. While the application assessment will consider the unexpected circumstances that have led to financial hardship, all applications are fully income assessed, using the evidence that is required.
27. 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.
28. Increasing numbers of students that are applying for financial assistance appear to be spending excessively on gambling or other lifestyle spending. The Funding and Advice Team need to be reassured that any awards made will fulfil the purpose of the fund, which is to ensure the student is able to meet essential living costs and remain on their course.
29. Where problems with gambling, lifestyle spending, debt etc. are identified, the student may be invited to attend an appointment with an Adviser prior to any award being made. The appointment will offer an opportunity to discuss any areas of concern, and agree any actions that could take place to improve these problem areas.
30. If the Funding and Advice Team are not satisfied that any award made will meet the purpose and scope of the fund, we may withhold the award until the student has sought help or changed their spending patterns. However, such an award may not be held indefinitely and may be cancelled.
31. Alternatively, we may consider alternative methods of award payments, such as to third-parties, and may consider your award to be subject to regular review in order to monitor progress.
32. Reasonable household income and expenditure assessments will be used to calculate any monthly excess or shortfall. Any unreasonable expenditure amounts will be queried and changed when calculating awards.
33. In order to assess whether figures are reasonable, a set of standard expenditure rates 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 and a fair and equitable approach.

34. These are currently set at:

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

35. Applicants will have an opportunity to tell us about all of their household expenditure in the application. If applicants have outgoings that are not listed on the application, these can be included in the 'Other' section.

36. Applicants also have an opportunity to tell us about any debt repayments they make. The application includes a section for these to be itemised separately, and to provide any other information that might be relevant.

37. Applicants must tell us about any other income they receive, such as benefits, tax credits, child maintenance etc.

38. Having calculated income and expenditure, a monthly shortfall or excess is determined, allowing us to assess your level of financial need.

39. We would consider that a student showing a monthly excess would be in the position to contribute towards any unforeseen financial issues themselves.

40. If an award is being made, the level will depend on personal circumstances and is not guaranteed. An award is likely to be a contribution towards the financial issues being experienced.

### What happens next -

41. Applicants can expect to receive an email receipt confirming that we have received the application, and that this has joined our processing queue. You may receive this up to several working days after you submitted your application, but rest assured that your place in our queue will be based on when you submitted your application and not the date of your receipt.

42. All correspondence is sent to your University email address, so you should ensure you check this regularly if you are expecting to hear from us.

43. You will receive a response from your application as soon as it is assessed. Please see point 25 for more information on timescales.

44. This response may be an award notification, a request for further information if the application was incomplete, a request to attend an appointment with an adviser, or an email advising that an award is not being made and the reason for this.

45. Award notifications will state the award amount and payment pattern, which is usually a single payment. 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.

46. Payments will be made as soon as possible after processing the application, after enrolment is confirmed.

## What you need to do after an award has been made -

47. You must notify us as soon as possible if there is any change in circumstances that might impact your eligibility for the fund. You should send such notification to [fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk](mailto:fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk)
48. This includes, but is not limited to, changes in your student status, including withdrawal from the course or the commencement of a period of interruption, changes to your childcare usage, and changes to your financial situation.
49. We may cancel your application and award as a result of such changes. A refund of any unused portion may also be requested.
50. You must also update us of any change in your bank details at least 10 working days before we are due to make a payment.

## Confidentiality

The University retains all documents pertaining to the financial award as audit checks are performed annually to ensure awards are made appropriately. Where you have submitted paper copies of documents, these will be kept in a locked, secure location. Similarly, 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 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 disagreeing with the decision should be submit a notification of the final decision from the applicant's response within 5 working days of receiving [fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk](mailto:fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk) where it will be forwarded



## Appendix 1

### EXAMPLES OF SCENARIOS WHERE YOU MIGHT BE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY:

You may be able to apply to these funds where something unexpected has impacted your finances, and has resulted in you facing unforeseen financial hardship. The following are examples of scenarios that we would consider, but this is not an exhaustive list, so please do not restrict yourself to this.

*If you are unsure that your situation fits the criteria, we would advise you to submit an application and allow us to make a decision.*

- You have a shortfall in bursary entitlement as a result of extenuating circumstances, i.e. illness. You should have applied for any extensions that may be available, and should note that we might only be able to contribute where the shortfall is small as the fund cannot extend to replicate the standard bursary.
- You have no warranty, insurance or savings, and an essential household item needs to be replaced, i.e. washing machine, fridge, cooker etc.
- A vehicle you rely on has not passed an MOT and/or requires repairs to make it road worthy
- You have received an unexpected bill
- Your spouse/partners earnings have unexpectedly reduced
- Other household income has unexpectedly reduced, i.e. benefits or tax credits income
- Your circumstances have changed, impacting your household income, i.e. separation from spouse/partner
- You unexpectedly need to move home and face the costs associated with doing so

### EXAMPLES OF SCENARIOS WHERE YOU WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE TO APPLY:

- The costs associated with attending placement, i.e. travel  
*This should be claimed through the appropriate placement expenses system*
- Where you face a reduction in income from employment as you are unable to work during placement  
*As your placement commitment is not unforeseen, any reduction in income as a result of this should be expected and planned for.*
- Where you are experiencing a regular or long-term financial shortfall as opposed to an unforeseen or unexpected crisis that has led to financial hardship