

Discretionary and Childcare Fund Procedures 25-26

Full-Time Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate

The Discretionary Fund:

The purpose of the Discretionary Fund is to provide additional financial support to eligible students who would otherwise struggle to meet their basic living costs. Funding is intended to better enable students to attend, engage and succeed in their studies by topping up the student support received through government. 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 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. Students must have a Scottish or Rest of UK Tuition Fee Status, be enrolled for the current session and attending an eligible full-time course.
2. International Students, including those from the EU, are **not** eligible and should not apply.
3. Paramedic Sciences, Nursing and Midwifery students are **not** eligible and should not apply.
4. Graduate Apprenticeship students are **not** eligible and should not apply.
5. Eligible full-time courses are those Higher Education courses at undergraduate level and 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.
6. Students studying the MSc in Social Work who receive funding through SSSC can apply for the Discretionary Fund only and cannot apply for any additional Childcare Element. This is because the funding available through SSSC will include support for childcare costs and we cannot replicate this. Those students studying MSc Social Work who do not receive funding through the SSSC and are instead in receipt of the SAAS Postgraduate Funding package can apply for both Discretionary and Childcare Elements.
7. Students must have taken out their full entitlement of all available student support, including any relevant student loans.

8. In addition to student support, students must have applied for all other sources of funding to which they are entitled, i.e. Universal Credit, any other 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. Students in receipt of Universal Credit must declare student funding income to Universal Credit so that the Universal Credit claim is calculated correctly. Where a student submits Universal Credit statements which show that their claim has not been correctly adjusted to reflect student funding, we may not be able to assess the application until this has been resolved. In some circumstances we may assess an application and (where relevant) make an award, subject to submission of updated Universal Credit evidence in a specified timeframe. If this evidence is not received, payment of the award will be delayed.
10. Students who have studied previously at this level and are therefore not eligible for SAAS Tuition Fee Support (or equivalent) are still eligible to apply to this Fund, provided that they are in receipt of their maximum student loan and satisfy all other eligibility criteria. However, budget restrictions may sometimes mean that previous study and funding received may limit the Discretionary funding we can offer.
11. Students must also meet any further eligibility conditions stipulated in the SAAS guidelines for the current academic year.

What can and cannot be applied for:

12. Funds are limited and are not guaranteed until after an application has been fully assessed.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. Awards are in the form of a non-repayable bursary.
16. The Discretionary Fund can provide support meeting basic living costs such as rent, travel, food etc.
17. We accept applications from students who have worked out a budget and are applying for Discretionary Fund support to contribute towards a regular monthly shortfall, i.e. they have planned. We also consider applications from students who have faced an unexpected expense that they have not been able to budget for.
18. The Discretionary Fund is a hardship fund and cannot provide support to meet non-essential lifestyle expenditure. Similarly, the fund cannot provide support to students who are experiencing financial hardship because of poor money management.
19. Students may apply for a contribution towards the study-related childcare costs they will face during the University academic year. The [Childcare Fund Factsheet for Students](#) includes more details on what we can include in our assessment, and how we will assess an application.
20. 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.

21. 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.
22. 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.
23. We will not consider any costs associated with a parent or stepparent providing care for a child.
24. We will usually be able to consider the costs of registered childcare only.
25. Should there be extenuating reasons why a student is unable to use registered care, and is paying for unregistered childcare, such as friends or neighbours, 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 and how an application can be progressed.
26. Students who have studied previously at this level and are therefore not eligible for SAAS Tuition Fee support (or equivalent), are likely to have any childcare award capped for the academic year. The level at which an award is capped is dependent on our budget position and demand on the fund and may vary each year. In 2025-26, this cap is £6,000. While we will endeavour to maintain this, it is subject to change depending on our budget position.

How the application is assessed:

27. All applications are income assessed, also known as means tested, to determine financial hardship, as this forms the basis of any award. This means we compare income to expenditure. This is the approach whether students are applying only to the Discretionary Fund or applying for both Discretionary Funding and the Childcare Element.
28. Applications are assessed based on the household. This means the assessment will consider where students have dependents, and where students have a spouse or partner. However, if students are living with parents, the parents are not included as part of the household.
29. A uniform method of processing is adopted to ensure consistency and fairness of approach across all applications.
30. An evidence-based approach is used, with students responsible for providing the necessary evidence.
31. We will check that students 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.
32. Increasing numbers of students applying for financial assistance show evidence of excessive spending on lifestyle expenses i.e. non-essential outgoings. This can include gambling, buying luxury items, paying for frequent leisure activities, disproportionate meals out/deliveries etc. The Funding and Advice Team must ensure that any awards made fulfil the purpose of the Fund, which is to help students meet essential living costs and remain on their course.

33. 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 be taken by the student to improve their finances.
34. If the Funding and Advice Team are not satisfied that an award 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. We will signpost the student to appropriate sources of help to do this.
35. We may also make an award, subject to regular review, to monitor progress.
36. Reasonable household income and expenditure assessments will be used to calculate any monthly excess or shortfall. Any unreasonable expenditure amounts will be queried and excluded from the assessment.
37. To ensure figures are reasonable and maintain a fair and consistent approach, a set of standard expenditure allowances/caps are used in assessments. This also reduces the amount of supporting evidence that a student needs to submit.
38. These allowances are currently set at:

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| TV Licence | £14.54/month applied to every assessment |
| Food/Housekeeping | £200/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 |
| Travel/fuel | Minimum £100/month applied to every assessment |
| Mobile Phone | £20/month for each adult in the household |
| Internet/Home TV/Phone | £60/month applied to every assessment |
| Dig Money | Capped at £200/month |
| Car Finance | Capped at £200/month |

39. Students should use the application to provide details of household expenditure requested and must provide evidence of these costs.
40. Students also have an opportunity to tell us about any debt repayments they make, and that they wish to be included in the assessment. The application includes a section for these to be itemised separately. Evidence must be provided.
41. Debt repayments that result from spending on non-essential items that are outwith the scope of the fund will not be included in the assessment.
42. For students in undergraduate years 1-3, no matter how student funding is received, we divide all student support income by 12 to get a monthly student income figure for our assessment. We assess student finances across the whole year, on the basis that these are continuing students.
43. For students in undergraduate year 4, we divide all student support income by 10 to get a monthly student income figure for our assessment.
44. For postgraduate students, we divide all student support income by the duration of the course to get a monthly student income figure for our assessment.

45. Students are expected to supplement their income through part time work. We will assume a level of income of £200/month. This will be disregarded for lone parents, or those who are unable to work due to ill health or a disability that would entitle them to receive PIP.
46. While we will assume a level of income as detailed in point 45, we will also consider applications from students who might be struggling to secure part time work, or where a part time job is unexpectedly lost.
47. While we do expect most students to supplement their income through employment, some students feel compelled to take on significant levels of part-time work to meet their financial commitments. This can reduce their ability to consistently attend and engage with their studies. Where student earnings exceed the levels detailed at point 45. only a portion will be considered in our assessment. Where our assessment results in an award, the intention is that the student will be able to reduce their working hours in order to better attend, engage, and succeed in their studies.
48. Students must tell us about any other income received in the household, such as partner/spouse wages, benefits, child maintenance etc.
49. Students in receipt of Universal Credit must declare student funding income to Universal Credit so that the Universal Credit claim is calculated correctly. Where a student submits Universal Credit statements which show that their claim has not been correctly adjusted to reflect student funding, we may not be able to assess the application until this has been resolved. In some circumstances we may assess an application and (where relevant) make an award, subject to submission of updated Universal Credit evidence in a specified timeframe. If this evidence is not received, payment of the award will be delayed.
50. Where we can see from Universal Credit evidence that a student has been receiving an overpayment of Universal Credit for a significant portion of the academic year, an award may not be possible. Overpayments are not deemed to be intention of the student, and are most commonly due to Universal Credit miscalculation, or misunderstanding of eligibility. However, the Discretionary Fund is – like Universal Credit – a source of Government support and where Universal Credit has already been received it cannot be duplicated by an award from the Discretionary Fund in the same academic year.
51. Having calculated income and expenditure, a monthly shortfall or excess is determined, allowing us to assess the level of financial need demonstrated within each application.
52. Where appropriate, we may focus our assessment on any extenuating financial circumstances that may be one-off, and therefore not form part of a monthly budget.
53. We would not expect any student showing a monthly excess to need support from the fund. However, we may invite students to meet with an Adviser to discuss their reasons for applying. We understand that it can be difficult for some circumstances to be easily explained in the application and welcome an opportunity to discuss this in person. This is an additional opportunity for students to provide relevant details that may lead to an award.
54. If no additional information is forthcoming, students with a monthly excess will not receive an award.
55. Students showing a monthly shortfall may receive an award to assist with general living costs. The level of an award will depend on personal circumstances and is not guaranteed. We apply a standardised process to identify the rate of an award, ensuring a consistent, fair and equitable approach. Awards are intended as a contribution to a student's essential living costs and are unlikely to cover the shortfall in full.

How the application is assessed if childcare is included:

56. If a student is applying for the Childcare Element, we consider the cost of childcare separately to general living costs but will ultimately still base any award on your monthly excess or shortfall, calculated as detailed above.
57. We will expect a request for childcare to be reasonable. Full detail of the childcare costs we can consider are available in our [Childcare Factsheet for Students](#).
58. Where we calculate a monthly shortfall, we will interpret this to mean that a student does not have the funds available to meet their childcare costs independently. We will contribute towards the cost of study-related childcare and will also make an award from the Discretionary Fund towards general living costs.
59. Where we calculate a monthly excess, we will interpret this to mean that a student has funds available to contribute towards their childcare costs and we will expect them to do this. Where the total childcare costs for the academic year exceed the calculated excess, we may contribute towards the balance.

How to apply:

60. 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.
61. We are unable to finalise an application without a current student funding award notice, so students should prioritise applying for SAAS (or equivalent).
62. 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.
63. Applications will be available to download from the [Discretionary and Childcare Funding section of the UWS website](#). These should be completed digitally.
64. 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.
65. 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.
66. 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

67. [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.
68. Students should ensure that the information provided is accurate.
69. A percentage of random checks will 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:

70. 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.
71. 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.
72. 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:

73. 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.
74. 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.
75. 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.
76. All correspondence is sent to student UWS email addresses. It is the responsibility of the student to regularly check their UWS email account. The only exception to this is new students who do not yet have access to their UWS email account. New students should provide a personal email address which we will use to contact them until their UWS email account is live.
77. 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.
78. 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.
79. 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.

80. 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).
81. Initial payments will be made as soon as possible after processing the application, but not before enrolment is confirmed and classes commence.

What happens after an award has been made:

82. 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.
83. 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.
84. Where student circumstances have changed, we may need to cancel an application and award. If any overpayment has occurred, we may request a refund.
85. 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.

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.