

Discretionary Fund Procedures 24-25

Paramedic, Nursing and Midwifery

The Discretionary Fund:

The purpose of the Discretionary Fund is to provide additional financial support to eligible students who can demonstrate a need for this during the current academic session. Support is in the form of a non-repayable bursary and is designed to top up the student support received through Government. Discretionary Funds are intended to help meet basic living costs and assist a student in being able to engage and succeed in their studies.

Please visit [our website](#) for information should you require help meeting the cost of childcare, as this is managed through a separate fund.

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 enrolled for the current session and attending a full-time Paramedic, or Pre- Registration Nursing or Midwifery 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. Students on courses other than Paramedic, Nursing and Midwifery courses are **not** eligible and should not apply.
4. In addition to student support, applicants must have applied for all other sources of funding to which they are entitled, i.e. Tax Credits, Universal Credits, 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.
5. If you are in receipt of Universal Credits, you must declare your student funding so that your Universal Credit claim is calculated correctly. If you submit Universal Credit statements to us which show that your student funding is not being taken into account, then we may not be able to complete your Discretionary Fund application. If your application is assessed prior to the start of the academic year then an award decision may be made, this is subject to receipt of the relevant updated Universal Credit statements in a timely manner. If we do not receive this, your payment will be delayed until it is provided. If the academic year has already begun, no award decision will be made until after you have submitted the relevant updated evidence.
6. 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 for further guidance before applying.
7. Applicants must also meet any further eligibility conditions stipulated in the SAAS guidelines for the current academic year.

8. Students who have studied a course like this previously, and therefore are not eligible for SAAS support (or equivalent), are still eligible to apply to this fund if they satisfy all other eligibility criteria. 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 –

9. The Discretionary Fund can provide support meeting basic living costs such as rent, travel, food etc. that students may struggle to meet as a result of being a student. The purpose of the fund is to assist a student in being able to engage and succeed in their studies.
10. The Discretionary Fund cannot extend to provide support meeting lifestyle expenditure that is not essential.
11. 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 ahead. We also consider applications from students who have faced an unexpected expense that they have not been able to budget for.
12. Funds are limited and are not guaranteed until after an application has been fully assessed.
13. While we will do our best to ensure funds remain available throughout the academic year, 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 becomes 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.

How you apply –

16. We are committed to opening our application process as early as possible, and before term starts, but are often impacted by external factors. Keep an eye on our [website](#) from **early July** where we will publish updates, and our new applications and guidance when ready.
17. Where we are in the position to open funds prior to the start of term, 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.
18. While we encourage early applications, and endeavour to finalise the assessment of applications quickly, funds will only be released after enrolment takes place and classes commence.
19. Applications will be available to download from [our website](#).
20. 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 [the website](#).
21. 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 where we can respond quickly.

22. 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. You can find more details [here](#).
23. Applicants should ensure that the information provided is accurate.
24. 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 –

25. We operate a paper free application process. You should submit your application and supporting evidence by email to fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk. We have a lot of [guidance](#) to help you complete your application electronically, collate your supporting evidence and submit these to us.
26. It is important you read all instructions and complete the form correctly as incomplete applications may be returned and will be subject to delay.
27. If you have read all the guidance and have any concern about completing/submitting the application and supporting evidence as instructed, please do contact us at fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk and we will be happy to help.

How the application is assessed –

28. 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.
29. 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, allowing us time to focus on processing.
30. A uniform method of processing is adopted to ensure continuity and fairness of approach. All applications are income assessed, using the evidence that is required.
31. 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.
32. Increasing numbers of students applying for financial assistance appear to be spending excessively on lifestyle expenses, i.e. non-essential outgoings. This can include gambling, luxury items, paying for frequent leisure activities, disproportionate meals out/deliveries etc. The Funding and Advice Team need to be assured that any awards made will fulfil the purpose of the fund, which is to help the student to 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 in order to do this.
35. Where an award has been withheld pending a change, this cannot be held indefinitely and may be cancelled. Alternatively, we may consider other methods of award payments, such as to third-parties. We may also consider your award to be subject to regular review in order 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 changed when calculating awards.
37. 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.
38. These are currently set at:

TV Licence	£14.12/month
Food/Housekeeping	£175/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	Depends on number of people in the home, and type of fuel used
Mobile Phone	£20/month for each adult and teenage child
TV, Internet and/or Phone	Maximum of £60/month
Dig Money	Maximum £200/month
Car Finance	Maximum £200/month

39. 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.
40. 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.
41. Applicants must tell us about any other income they receive, such as benefits, tax credits, child maintenance etc.
42. Having calculated income and expenditure, a monthly shortfall or excess is determined, allowing us to assess your level of financial need.
43. 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.
44. We would not expect any student showing a monthly excess to be in need of support from the fund. However, we may invite you to meet with an Adviser to discuss your reasons for applying. We fully understand that it can be difficult for some circumstances to be reflected in the application and welcome an opportunity 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. We have a standard approach to identifying the rate of any award to ensure consistency and a fair and equitable approach. An award is likely to be a contribution towards your monthly shortfall and is very unlikely to cover your shortfall in full.

What happens next -

46. 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.

47. All correspondence is sent to your student email address, so you should ensure you check this regularly if you are expecting to hear from us. The only exception to this is new students who do not yet have access to student email accounts. New students should provide an alternative email address within the application, which we will use to contact you until your student account is live.

48. You will receive a response from your application as soon as it is assessed. Please see point 29 for more information on timescales.

49. Our 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.

50. 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.

51. Initial payments 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 -

52. You must notify us as soon as possible if there is any change in circumstances. You should send such notification to fundingadvice@uws.ac.uk.

53. 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, and changes to your financial situation.

54. We may cancel your application and award as a result of such changes. If an overpayment has occurred, we may request a refund.

55. 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. 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 still wishes to formally query the outcome of their application, their 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.

