

University Hardship Fund Policy 2023/24

Background

Hardship Fund Policy Statement

The University Hardship Fund is an emergency fund that exists to provide discretionary additional source of financial support to current students on a degree programme (not those on short courses or language courses) who can demonstrate financial hardship due to an unforeseen change in their circumstances.

It is designed to prevent an unexpected change in the student's financial circumstances interfering with their ability to study and thereby enabling them to continue studying at Brunel University London.

The University Hardship Fund is allocated annually and is a specific and limited amount of money. The University is required to allocate the fund appropriately and to ensure that those who genuinely need it are given access to it.

Students who appear to have provided false or misleading evidence or information on their application may be required to provide further evidence or information, which may be reviewed by the University Hardship Fund Panel. Should the University determine that there is just cause, your application for the fund will be cancelled and you may not be eligible to submit a further application in the same academic year.

Students on a visa should be aware that The University's priority is our commitment as a visa sponsor and any information that appears to compromise our sponsorship obligations will result in the cancellation of the application and may result in a referral to the University's Immigration Sponsorship Review Panel.

The University Hardship Fund should not be considered as a routine supplementary source of funding and cannot be used for the payment of tuition fees.

Overview

The hardship fund will specifically be used:

- To intervene in cases where a student may be forced to consider leaving University because of financial hardship – normally a grant from the fund (Main Hardship Award including the Fast-Track Awards).
- To provide emergency funding for unexpected crises - normally a short-term loan (Emergency Loan).
- To assist those who need financial help to meet particular costs which are not already being met from statutory (or other) sources of funding - normally funding for a diagnostic assessment by the Disability and Dyslexia service (Diagnostic Assessment Testing Award)

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The fund currently offers four different types of financial support:

- **Main Hardship Fund Award.**
 - These are normally available to continuing students from 23 October 2023.
 - These awards are normally available to new students from the start of the second term of their course.
 - Students can usually apply for a main award from the University Hardship Fund once each academic year*.
 - Any student who is awarded will normally be required to undertake financial capability training prior to receiving payment of the award. Students who are not required to undertake this training will be notified.
 - Where necessary the award will be paid directly to a third party to expediate payment of a priority debt.
 - Any student who has received a maximum award from the fund they may not normally submit a further application in the same academic year.

- **Fast-Track Award for referrals from the Student Support and Welfare Team. (Welfare Awards).**
 - These are normally available to continuing students one they are enrolled.
 - These are only available to students referred by the Student Support and Welfare Team. These awards have a shorter application and assessment process to enable a faster payment.
 - The award amount is capped and is a fixed amount.
 - These awards cannot be paid to a third party and will be paid directly to the student by BACS.
 - Students can normally make one application for the Fast-Track Award in an academic year.

- **Emergency Loan**
- These are available from the start of the academic year for all enrolled students.

- **Diagnostic Assessment Testing Award.**
- These are managed by the Wellbeing Team

From time to time, new awards may be introduced in response to national and global requirements and University priorities.

Conditions and Restrictions – Main Hardship Fund Awards.

To be eligible to apply for a main award from the hardship fund a student should:

- Be fully registered/enrolled on their course (at Brunel University London or the Brunel Pathways College (BPC)) for the current academic year.
- Studying full time or if part time be studying at least 50% of a full-time course. 25 % for Disabled students, who due to the nature of their disability are unable to study 50% intensity.
- Not be studying on a part-time programme normally delivered by distance learning or online.

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- Not have tuition fee arrears without an active, up to date financial arrangement.
- Not have on-campus accommodation arrears without an active, up to date financial arrangement.
- If undergraduate and assessed as home for the purpose of fees, normally have taken out the full means-tested student loan and grant entitlement (based on household income) and be in receipt of the first instalment.
 - *If the first instalment of maintenance funding is delayed, a short-term loan may be available.*
 - *If maintenance funding has not been means-tested, the normal expectation is that the student applies to their funding authority for means-testing first. A short-term loan may be available in these circumstances.*
 - *If a student has elected not to take their full means-tested entitlement, the normal expectation is that they apply to their funding authority first. A short-term loan may be available in these circumstances.*
- If postgraduate and assessed as EU/Overseas for the purpose of tuition fees, have made full financial provision for all their tuition fees, all living expenses and all course related costs prior to registering on their course.
- If postgraduate, and assessed as home for the purpose of tuition fees, normally have applied for and be in receipt of the first instalment of their student loan from the Student Loans Company (SLC). Where this funding is delayed, a short-term loan may be available.
- Have normally taken their maximum loan entitlement from the US Department of Education, US private loan, or Canadian Government Body, where eligible.
 - *Where a student has not taken their maximum entitlement, the normal expectation is that they do so prior to applying for a main award from the hardship fund. A short-term loan may be available in these circumstances.*
- All students not eligible for funding from the SLC, the US Department of Education / US private loans or Canadian Government Body, must have sufficient financial resources for their full tuition fees, all living expenses and any other course related costs in full, prior to registering for their course.
- Must have adhered to the [Student Code of Conduct](#) throughout their programme.
- Not be registered on Professional Policing Practice Course.
- Not be registered on a Degree Apprenticeship.
- In the first year of their course, not breach their student visa conditions (if applicable) by making an application to the fund that calls into question the funds declared in their visa application.
- Be able to provide 3-months bank statements for [all their bank accounts](#) (UK and non-UK) and any payment cards that you may use (for example, Forex etc).

Conditions and Restrictions – Fast Track Awards.

To be eligible to apply for a fast-track award from the hardship fund a student should:

- Be referred to the fund by the [Student Support and Welfare Team](#).

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- Be fully registered/enrolled on their course (at Brunel University London or the Brunel Pathways College (BPC)) for the current academic year.
- Studying full time or if part time be studying at least 50% of a full-time course.
25 % for Disabled students, who due to the nature of their disability are unable to study 50% intensity.,
- Not have tuition fee arrears without an active, up to date financial arrangement.
- Not have on-campus accommodation arrears without an active, up to date financial arrangement.
- If undergraduate and assessed as home for the purpose of fees, normally have taken out the full means-tested student loan and grant entitlement (based on household income) and be in receipt of the first instalment.
 - *If the first instalment of maintenance funding is delayed, a short-term loan may be available.*
 - *If maintenance funding has not been means-tested, the normal expectation is that the student applies to their funding authority for means-testing first. A short-term loan may be available in these circumstances.*
 - *If a student has elected not to take their full means-tested entitlement, the normal expectation is that they apply to their funding authority first. A short-term loan may be available in these circumstances.*
- If postgraduate and assessed as EU/Overseas for the purpose of tuition fees, have made full financial provision for all their tuition fees, all living expenses and all course related costs prior to registering on their course.
- If postgraduate, and assessed as home for the purpose of tuition fees, normally have applied for and be in receipt of the first instalment of their student loan from the Student Loans Company (SLC). Where this funding is delayed, a short- term loan may be available.
- Have normally taken their maximum loan entitlement from the US Department of Education, US private loan, or Canadian Government Body, where eligible. .
 - *Where a student has not taken their maximum entitlement, the normal expectation is that they do so prior to applying for a main award from the hardship fund. A short-term loan may be available in these circumstances.*
- All students not eligible for funding from the SLC, the US Department of Education / US private loans or Canadian Government Body must have sufficient financial resources for their full tuition fees, all living expenses and any other course related costs in full, prior to registering for their course.
- Must have adhered to the [Student Code of Conduct](#) throughout their programme.
- Not be registered on Professional Policing Practice Course., as the expectation is that these students will have access to support from their employer.
- Not be registered on a Degree Apprenticeship, as the expectation is that these students will have access to support from their employer.
- Be able to provide 2 months bank statements for all their bank accounts (UK and non-UK) and any payment cards that they may use (for example Forex etc).

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Priority Categories – All Awards.

The amount of funding available is not inexhaustible and so priority will be given to students who are able to demonstrate most need. However, the following student groups are deemed as having particular needs and so will be considered more urgently:

- Care leavers.
- Students from low income families.
- Students who are homeless.
- Disabled students (in particular where the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) is unable to meet particular costs).
- Mature students with existing financial commitments.
- Students with children (particularly lone parents).
- Students receiving the final year loan rate who are in financial difficulty.
- Estranged students (who are in contact with the [Student Support & Welfare Team](#))
- Students who have been assessed as priority by the Student Support & Welfare Team.

Conditions of Payment – All Awards.

- The deadlines for completed applications (including all evidence) are:
 - 24 May 2024 – for final year Undergraduate students who have no dependent children.
 - For postgraduate students the deadline is 1 calendar month before the recorded course end date.

Final year students who are required to undertake reassessment in the resit period are subject to the deadlines above for all awards including the emergency loan.

Please see the published [Term Dates](#) for more information.

- Assessment requires statements from all UK Bank accounts, non-UK bank accounts and payment cards.
- All awards are paid directly into the student's UK bank account only.
 - *Direct awards cannot be paid into a non-UK bank account or a bank account in another person's name.*
 - *Third party payments, where applicable, can only be made to UK bank accounts.*
- Where an application is successful students may be asked to input their bank details via eVision. *The details entered into eVision must exactly match the details on the bank account (name, account number and sort code).*
The University will never request that a student provides bank details by email for the purpose of a Hardship Fund Application.
- Students with a Tier 4 or Student Visa who are in the first year of their course will be required to refer to the funds declared in their visa application and may be required to provide further information about these funds if applying for a main fund award.
- Where a student has one or more overdue Emergency Loans the University will normally repay one loan from any Main Hardship Fund Award over £999.

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Summer Assessments – Main Fund and Fast-Track Awards.

During the summer assessment* period, the fund is available to non-final year students in the following categories:

- Students with children.
- Students re-taking/re-sitting parts of their course in the following academic year.
- Students who are seriously ill or have a disability and are therefore unable to undertake work, and for whom other benefits are not available.
- Students who have no alternative means of support (those that are homeless or unable to earn enough to cover their costs during the summer – for example, due to an unexpected change in the visa restrictions on the hours that they can work or a sudden unexpected reduction in income – particularly those on zero hours contracts, etc.)
- Welfare referrals for non-final year students.

*The summer assessment period commences after summer examinations and continues until 1 September.

Please see the published [Term Dates](#) for more information.

Appeals.

- Any student who does not receive a main award from the fund has the right of appeal to the University Hardship Fund Panel.
- Appeal Panels are scheduled monthly from October. The schedule of appeal panels will be published [here](#) each academic year.
- Appeals must be received within 10 working days of the date of the notification of the outcome and must be received 7 days prior to the date of the next panel. Appeals received within 7 days of the current panel will be considered at the next scheduled panel.
- Students who receive an award from the fund cannot appeal the amount.
- In the event of an unsuccessful Fast-Track application the student may request an application for an award from the main fund, depending on their circumstances.
- There is no appeal for unsuccessful Fast-Track awards.
- The decision of the Panel is final and there is no right to appeal the outcome of the Panel.

Administration.

The University Hardship Fund is administered on behalf of the University by the University Funding Team. All applications made to the University Hardship Fund are processed according to University policy and guidelines. These have been compared to those across the sector to ensure that students at Brunel University London are not unduly disadvantaged. The University Hardship Fund is administered using the SITS student record database and applications are assessed by a team of Funding Officers.

To find out how to apply for the University Hardship Fund, please visit:

[Financial hardship \(brunel.ac.uk\)](https://brunel.ac.uk)



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General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

All information is processed in accordance with the University's [Data Protection Policy](#).