

The Aberystwyth University Student Hardship Fund



The Aberystwyth University Student Hardship Fund is a discretionary fund that provides support to students who may be at risk of leaving University due to financial difficulties.

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Am I eligible for the fund?

The Fund is open to all home, EU and international students successfully progressing at a minimum of 50% (60 credits) of a full-time degree course in Aberystwyth. If you are studying less than this you would be expected to have more available time to find employment. If you are a Postgraduate student you are eligible to apply up to 12 months after your registration period. The Fund is not open to you if you are studying on a distance learning course or YES Placement.

Who is not eligible for the fund?

We will not following circumstances are not considered unforeseen/unexpected and may not result in an award:

- If you have insufficient arrangements to fund your studies at point of entry.
- If you are temporary withdrawn.
- If you are repeating a year and you have exhausted your entitlement to extra year of funding.
- If you need financial assistance with your research and/or fieldwork. These are normally part of your projected course costs so may not be considered unexpected;
- If you need assistance towards repaying debts. Although your application will be considered, no awards will be made towards debts.

This list is not exhaustive and all applications will be considered on a case by case basis.

The University reserves the right to request the return of funds if you have been found to make a fraudulent claim, have taken early withdrawal or have used an award for the purposes not intended. Any future instalments after your withdrawal will be cancelled.

Who will process my hardship application?

Your application is processed by The Advice, Information and Money team in Student Support and Career Services on a weekly basis in line with assessment criteria. Various other key departments are involved in setting the fund criteria and process on an annual basis. These departments are the Students' Union, Finance Office, Development and Alumni Office and the International Office.

How will my application be assessed?

Every application is considered on its own merit but the amount of the award is likely to vary between the ranges of £50-£3,500. You will be expected to demonstrate that you have taken steps to minimise your expenditure and maximise your income.

We will also assume that you have made adequate financial provision in determining whether you have a genuine shortfall of funding over the academic year. This assumed income figure will be £5161 across the academic year.

What sort of circumstances does the Fund help with?

You may receive help in the following circumstances:

- Hardship arising from genuine, unforeseen or unexpected circumstances for which you have not been able to plan
- Financial difficulties resulting from a genuine shortfall of income and essential expenditure
- Short term financial hardship. For example, delays with Student Finance. (Please see guidance on Short Term Grants)

Do I need to have an overdraft in order to apply to the fund?

We would expect that you have taken advantage of other areas of funding including having a student overdraft before an award is made. The following is a guide to the level of overdraft we expect you to be eligible to receive from your bank:

1st Year of study - £500

2nd Year of study - £750

3rd Year of study - £1000

4th Year of study/Postgraduate - £1200

We appreciate this may vary from case to case and discretion may be applied in extenuating circumstances such as severe money mismanagement or if you are in your final year.

If you are not eligible for a student overdraft for any reason you will need to provide sufficient evidence of this with your application.

Can I receive help as an international student?

In line with the Fund's general purpose and general eligibility criteria help is available to international students. However, you are expected to have sufficient funding for your course in place and you must be careful that you are not in breach of your visa requirements when applying to the Hardship Fund. For more information on immigration rules and finance please see [here](#)

Can I apply more than once in one Academic year?

If you need to reapply to the fund it will only be considered if there has been a significant change in your circumstances and you will be asked to evidence these changes. When reapplying to the fund you will need to complete the savings module and a budget calculator on [Blackbullion](#). You will also be required to evidence that you have been applying for work.

I found it difficult to budget – can I receive help?

In certain circumstances the Fund is able to provide limited help to you if you have genuinely found it difficult to manage their money. However, you will be required to meet with a Student Adviser for guidance on your financial circumstances. It is also compulsory as part of the application to the fund that you complete the budgeting module and budget calculator on [Blackbullion](#)

Can I receive help with tuition fees?

Unfortunately, no, you are required to make sufficient provision for your tuition fees before your course starts.

How do I apply?

For more general applications to the fund you must complete an application form and submit it to a Student Adviser in Student Support and Career Services along with all the necessary evidence specified on the form in person.

Application forms are available on the following web site <https://faqs.aber.ac.uk/2542> You will need to complete the application form in **full**, and provide supporting evidence. Any incomplete forms will not be accepted. This includes:

1. Your most recent 3 months' bank statements of all UK and EU bank accounts held, including a current balance. Any transactions over £100 will need to be identified and described.
2. Confirmation of your funding e.g. letter from student finance
3. Tenancy agreement if you are living in the private sector.
4. Parental Contribution Statement Form (If applicable)
5. Successful completion of the Budgeting module AND Budget Calculator on [Blackbullion](#).
6. Any other documents that would support your reasons for applying

Please ensure you bring your University ID card to your appointment.

You will need to allow about 15 minutes to submit your form as the Student Adviser will need to check the form and all your documents. The meeting will be informal and will provide an opportunity to discuss your individual circumstances in detail. It may be necessary during the interview to refer to your bank statements, credit history and spending patterns. The discussion may also explore opportunities for part-time working and other funding available. Any questions are not intended to be intrusive, but to allow the Student Adviser to form a complete and comprehensive assessment of your financial situation.

Can I submit my application by Email?

If you have extenuating circumstances which mean you are unable to come in person to the Student Welcome Centre please let us know. We will then contact you directly by telephone or email to discuss whether or not alternative arrangements for submitting your application may be possible.

Please note that, unless there are extenuating circumstances your application cannot be accepted without this brief consultation meeting.

I have submitted my application form. What happens next?

After your interview your application will be assessed against the fund's guidelines. Awards from the funds are means-tested. We calculate your income and compare it to your **essential** expenditure to see if there is a shortfall. A set amount is applied for general living costs to cover food, gas, electricity, water bills, contents insurance, TV license, clothes and telephone. This amount may increase if you have children or a disability. We also consider your housing and travel costs.

If you wish further information on how your application has been assessed please make an appointment to discuss this with a Student Adviser.

You will be notified of the outcome by email within 10 working days and any award will be paid within a further 5 working days.

How will payments be made?

Most payments will be made directly into a your UK bank account.

Once a decision has been made we will endeavour to make payments as soon as possible. Awards should take no longer than 15 working days to be processed. In very exceptional cases emergency payments may be considered. During times where the University is closed or heavy demand there may be delays.

Please note, payments may be made in instalments.

When is best to apply to the fund?

New section

Are some students more of a priority than others?

While each case will be assessed on its own merit certain groups of students are likely to receive greater priority for the Fund than others. These students are: final year undergraduates; disabled students with additional costs connected to their disability; students with childcare costs; care leavers or students genuinely estranged from their family; students who have exceptional circumstances (such as chronic health issues) which mean they are not able to work to supplement their income or students who could be at risk of withdrawing from University for financial reasons.

Do you take other factors into account?

Yes, where appropriate we may look at your academic performance; attendance on your course; availability of other means of support such as part time work and/or whether an award will be sufficient to make you financially sustainable to enable you to remain on course.

However, account may also be taken of the impact the financial difficulties may have had on your attainment/attendance e.g. where you have not been able to attend regularly as a result of working long hours to cover your shortfall.

In certain situations compulsory expenditure may be included in your assessment such as compulsory course costs. Please see [here](#) for further details about additional course costs.

Do you take into account assumed income/earnings when making awards?

Yes. We will take into account all income available to you including any parental/assessed contribution you should be receiving. We will also consider income from bursaries and scholarships as well as any savings accounts which you may have. If you are earning from employment we will disregard the first £1000 per year that you earn.

Can I apply for help from the Fund over the summer vacation?

If you are a returning student you are expected to financially support yourself during the summer. However, subject to sufficient Hardship Funds remaining the fund will continue throughout the summer vacation.

If you are applying for the fund during the summer vacation you will need to supply evidence that you are seeking employment or that you are unable to work.

Can you help if I have not paid my rent?

Each case will be considered on its own merits but you must be able to demonstrate that your difficulties are as a result of hardship arising from genuine, unforeseen or unexpected circumstances for which you have not been able to plan and also that you may be at risk of leaving your course. Advice on negotiating payments with landlords is available from our Student Advisers or the Students' Union.

What help can I expect to receive?

Grants from the fund are assessed on an individual basis. As a result, we are unable to give a clear indication of the likely value of any possible award until an application has been submitted and the assessment process completed. There is no guarantee that funds will be awarded in every case and consequently some applications will be unsuccessful. If your application is assessed as having a shortfall over the academic year you may receive a proportion of this shortfall figure. If your application is assessed as having no shortfall over the academic year we may award an emergency short term award for basic living costs. If you have dependants you may expect to receive a slightly higher living cost figure.

Can you help with the cost of a dyslexia diagnostic test?

Help with this will depend on individual circumstances and you will still need to meet the general eligibility criteria of the Fund.

What can I do if I am not happy with the decision?

You can request representation and advice from the Students Union if required. If you are unhappy with the award decision then an initial appointment should be made with a Student Adviser to discuss the outcome. In this meeting the Student Adviser will explain to you how the application was assessed and how the decision was determined. Guidelines for assessing applications may be explained to you and if you have further evidence your application may be reviewed. If you remain unhappy with the decision after this review then you are still able to make an appeal.

How can I appeal the decision?

If you wish to appeal against the award decision after meeting with the Student Adviser, you may do so only on the following grounds:

- Evidence, not available at the time of your application.
- Evidence of procedural irregularities.

Appeals should be made in writing to Student Support and Careers Services. We will aim to give a decision in writing within 14 working days. If an appeal is submitted, all parties will be notified in writing of the date, time, location etc. of the appeal hearing.

The appeals panel will be independent from the original process and will be made up of the following panel members:

- A Senior Manager from Student Support and Careers Services
- Assistant Director of the Finance Department
- An elected representative from the Students' Union

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