

Financial Assistance Fund Policy

1. Scope and Purpose

- 1.1. The Financial Assistance Fund (FAF) is provided by Queen Mary University of London to help students who are experiencing financial hardship that might impact on their ability to participate on their course of study. This includes:
 - 1.1.1 assisting those who need extra financial help to meet particular costs which are not being met from statutory (or other) sources of funding.
 - 1.1.2 providing emergency payments for unexpected crises
 - 1.1.3 intervening in cases where a student may be considering leaving Queen Mary because of financial problems.

2 Overview of 2023/24 provision

- 2.1 FAF cannot be used to assist with Tuition Fee costs.
- 2.2 FAF will be reviewed on a regular basis and Queen Mary reserves the right to amend the Fund eligibility criteria or to cease the fund at any time.
- 2.3 Applications for assistance from the Fund will be administered by the Bursaries, Grants and Scholarships Office (BGS). The Fund will be monitored throughout the academic year, however, should it be spent in full before the end of the academic year, further applications will not be considered.
- 2.4 The BGS Team refer to the National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA) Higher Education Support Fund Guidance 23/24 where appropriate to establish consistency in assessing applications and making awards.

3 Eligibility

- 3.1 The Funds are open to students who are currently enrolled and meet the eligibility criteria below.

Who is eligible to apply?

- Current students ordinarily based at our London campuses
- Students studying abroad as part of their course
- QMUL students studying at ULIP

Who is not eligible to apply?

- MBBS Malta students
- Degree apprenticeship students

- 3.2 The Fund cannot be used as a main source of income and awards made are not at the level to replace core living costs.
- 3.3 In order to apply for the fund students must prove that they have made realistic provision to support themselves and any dependents throughout their programme at Queen Mary. If they are eligible they must have taken out full maintenance funding from the UK government and have made use of any other funding available to them. This ensures that our limited funds are allocated to students who have already maximised all sources of funding available to them.
- 3.4 The UK Government Department of Education sets the rules for Fee status

<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Fees-and-Money/Home-or-Overseas-fees-the-basics>

- 3.5 Undergraduate students who are not eligible for full maintenance funding need to demonstrate that they have made realistic provision to cover their core living costs such as rent, travel and food.

4 Application Process

- 4.1 All applications need to come via the Scholarships and Bursaries section of MySIS

4.2 Undergraduate Home Students

- Applications open from 18 September 2023
- Applications for **Standard Awards** should be submitted by **Friday 19 April 2024**
- Applications for **Exceptional Awards** should normally be submitted at least 4 weeks before the end of your academic year but if you are a continuing student you can apply until **Friday 12 July 2024** subject to funds being available.

4.3 Postgraduate and International Students

- Applications open from 18 September 2023
- For students ending their studies before 12 July 2024, applications must be submitted 4 weeks before the end of your course, otherwise you can apply until **Friday 12 July 2024**

- 4.4 Students receive an email to their University email account once your application has been submitted. The Bursaries, Grants and Scholarships team may contact students for further information or evidence to process the application, and students are advised to check their University email account regularly as any delay in submitting this information will cause a delay in the assessment of the application.

- 4.5 You will usually receive a decision on your application within three weeks of our having received all of the documents and information required in support of your application.

5 Assessment process – Undergraduate Home Student

- 5.1 The funds are open to all eligible undergraduate home students, however priority is given to certain groups of students when deciding how to allocate the funding. These include:

- 5.1.1 Students with children (especially lone parents)
- 5.1.2 Disabled students (especially where the Disabled Students' Allowance is unable to meet particular costs)
- 5.1.3 Students who are care experienced or estranged
- 5.1.4 Undergraduates in their final year of their study

- 5.2 Students can apply for standard and exceptional awards.

5.3 Standard awards

- 5.3.1 These awards are intended to help with the general costs of being a student.
- 5.3.2 Applications are assessed using the standard procedure set out by NASMA which takes into account expected income and a sum considered to be a reasonable level of

expenditure.

- 5.3.3 Using the standard assessment BGS staff calculate income for the academic year compared with expenditure. If there is a shortfall, students can be made an award which is a percentage of their shortfall, up to a maximum of £3500. The percentage of contribution is set each year according to funds available, by the FAF Committee. Current contributions are:

Undergraduate student - Non-Priority Group	50%
Undergraduate student – Priority Group	70%
Undergraduate student with children	100%

- 5.3.4 To ensure that all students are treated fairly certain figures are set at the beginning of the academic year by the FAF Committee and in accordance with NASMA guidelines

- 5.3.5 For undergraduate students the following rates of assumed income are used:

First year students	£2168
Non first or final year	£1446
Final year	£724

- 5.3.6 This assumed income is the student's contribution to their costs for the academic year and can come from a number of sources, including part time work, additional support from parents, partner or family, bank overdraft facilities and savings.

- 5.3.7 The assessment uses a Reasonable Living Costs (RLC) figure to cover expenditure on basic costs such as foods, household bills, clothes, entertainment, etc., which ensures that all applicants are treated fairly regardless of where they study and regardless of their individual lifestyle choices. The relevant amounts vary based on circumstances, and for students studying in London they are as follows:

Single student	£167 per week
Student with partner	£227 per week
Single parent	£167 per week plus £98 per child

- 5.3.8 In recognition of the current cost of living crisis the RLC figures have been uplifted by 10.5% this year

- 5.3.9 The ceiling for combined rent and travel is £235 per week

5.4 Exceptional Awards

- 5.4.1 Open to all eligible students.

- 5.4.2 These awards are for students experiencing unforeseen, exceptional circumstances that have resulted in an impact on their planned funding after the start of their course. The fund can assist with one-off, short-term or urgent situations only. The fund cannot provide support for core living costs where students have not made realistic provision to fund their studies or the change in their financial circumstances is not short-term.

- 5.4.3 Applications for exceptional awards are considered by the FAF Committee, which

meets weekly during term time. The FAF Committee members are:

- Assistant Academic Registrar from the BGS Office
- Team Members from the BGS Office
- Welfare Advisers from the Advice and Counselling Service
- VP for Welfare from the Students' Union

5.5 Other Exceptional Awards

- 5.5.1 DSA Assessment - Students can apply for £200 assistance towards the cost of a laptop, as recommended on their DSA2 letter. Information on how to apply is available at: <https://dds.qmul.ac.uk/disability/200-award-towards-dsa-funded-computer>
- 5.5.2 Student Parents - Students with children can apply for an award of up to £500 to help with their additional costs.
- 5.5.3 Students interrupting study or re-sitting out of attendance - These students are expected to make provision to support themselves, however if a student has not permanently withdrawn from their studies and intends to return after a period of time out they may get limited help if their circumstances are exceptional

6 Assessment process – Postgraduate and International Students

6.1 Exceptional Awards

- 6.1.1 Open to all eligible Postgraduate and International students.
- 6.1.2 These awards are for students experiencing unforeseen, exceptional circumstances that have resulted in an impact on their planned funding after the start of their course. The fund can assist with one-off, short-term or urgent situations only. The fund cannot provide support for core living costs where students have not made realistic provision to fund their studies or the change in their financial circumstances is not short-term.
- 6.1.3 Applications for exceptional awards are considered by the FAF Committee, which meets weekly during term time. The FAF Committee members are:
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7 Evidence Requirements

- 7.1 All applications must be supported by evidence of circumstances, although this should be kept to the minimum necessary to verify the information provided.
- 7.2 When assessing an application for the Fund, it is expected that the student will provide evidence listed in the application to enable an assessment to be undertaken. The Bursaries, Grants and Scholarships Team may also request further evidence in order to complete an assessment for support.

7.3 If a student declares, or demonstrates through bank transactions, that there is regular and substantial non-essential spend, the Bursaries, Grants and Scholarships Team may refer students to relevant services prior to making an award. Examples of this may be a student with regular gambling activity or excessive spending on entertainment, shopping or other non-essentials. Awards from FAF are to assist with essential outgoings, therefore it is important that students seek support with issues leading to excessive non-essential expenditure and evidence may be required that the student has accessed relevant support, prior to an award being made.

8 Amounts available

Awards range from £250 to a maximum £3500, however a student cannot receive more than £3500 in any academic year.

9 Payment of FAF award

9.1 Once an award has been assessed, students will receive confirmation of the amount and payment dates by email. Payments are made by bank transfer. As part of the application process, students provide their bank account name, sort code and account number.

9.2 The BGS Team provide details to Queen Mary's Finance Department on a weekly basis of any awards from the Fund that have been approved.

10 Appeals and re-assessments

10.1 If students are not satisfied with the decision and would like their application to be reconsidered on the basis that they have further information which they did not disclose with their original application, they may do so by submitting their documentation to bursaries@qmul.ac.uk within fourteen days of the date of the decision.

10.2 If they have no further information to disclose and wish to appeal against the decision, they must submit an appeal to the Appeals, Complaints and Conduct Office within fourteen days of the date of the decision <http://www.arcs.qmul.ac.uk/students/student-appeals/>

10.3 Applications are assessed to cover the whole academic year. If a student experiences a change in circumstances they can contact BGS Office and ask for a re-assessment

11 Short-Term Loans

11.1 Short-term loans can only be issued to undergraduate home students where their SLC or NHS funding has been delayed. No Short-term loans can be made before the start of the academic year.

11.2 Students must have made an application for the correct SLC or NHS funding and be able to evidence this funding is delayed due to factors outside of their control.

11.3 Students should complete a Short-term Loan Form and agree the amount (no more than £350) which they are requesting, and the terms of repayment for this.

11.4 Students should make prompt repayment of this loan when their SLC or NHS funding is approved and paid. Failure to do so may lead Queen Mary to seek repayment from any subsequent funding awarded, or to limit a student's eligibility for future financial support.