

# Student Support Fund – Guidance for students

## What is the Student Support Fund?

The Student Support Fund (SSF) is discretionary funding to help relieve financial hardship that might affect a student's participation in Higher Education. The fund is to help with unexpected costs and cannot be expected to fully resolve a student's situation. We are unable to provide large sums for those who have not made realistic provision for their studies.

## What can it help with?

Help may be given for unexpected costs (through an unforeseen change in circumstances) or serious financial problems for other reasons.

It is worth considering that your student finance is to help with living costs whilst at university. If you choose to use this for something other than this, the fund cannot be expected to make up for this.

## Is there anything it can't help with?

There are some things that the fund isn't designed to help with as you are expected to have made realistic provision for your study before choosing University such as foreseeable and preventable circumstances. This includes but is not limited to:

- Costs associated with Christmas, birthdays etc.
- Car finance or insurance
- Mobile phone bills
- Tuition fees/course equipment
- Store or credit card payments
- Regular monthly outgoings
- Paying off overdrafts
- Negotiable debts and pre-existing debts

## Who can apply?

Full time 'home' students can apply to the Fund, for example, those students who satisfy the residency criteria to receive Student Maintenance Loan Support from the UK Government's Student Finance system. All available student funding must have been taken out and any eligible student overdraft used.

## I am an international student, am I eligible to apply?

International students need to show they have enough money to support themselves for both their tuition fees and living costs whilst studying in the UK. Your partner or child must also each have a certain amount of money available to them (if living with you in the UK).

However, if something unexpected occurs that affects your income you can apply to the fund. Evidence will need to be provided and we cannot help with tuition fee costs.

## How often can I apply?

You can apply once per academic year. Any subsequent applications during the same academic year will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the Head of Welfare & Advice, Student & Library Services.

## How long do I have to pay it back?

Any award that a successful applicant receives will be paid in the form of a grant, NOT a loan, which means that it does not have to be paid back to the University.

## How do I apply?

You will need to register for an account at [www.blackbullion.com](http://www.blackbullion.com) where you will find the application and guidance notes in the funding section.

Should you experience any problems registering, please contact [studentlife@tees.ac.uk](mailto:studentlife@tees.ac.uk).

## What evidence do I need to provide in support of my application?

A student must be able to substantiate their evidence at the time of submission. This evidence must be in English. As you are uploading the documents electronically, this will be kept securely and only be seen by persons relevant to the case.

Things that apply to everyone:

- SFE assessment
- Rent agreement/ mortgage statement
- The most recent 3 months of bank statements for ALL accounts – these must be downloaded from online banking and submitted as PDFs.

**WE DO NOT ACCEPT PHOTOS OR SCREENSHOTS AS EVIDENCE**

If applicable:

- NHS training grant assessment
- Benefits evidence (for applicant and partner)
- Bank statements for partner (as outlined above)
- Payslips (for partner)
- Childcare invoices or letter
- Council tax evidence (if there is a partner living with the applicant)

A student must be able to support their application with evidence at the time of submission. This evidence must be in English. Any evidence related to your specific request, for example, receipts, letters, invoices or quotes. These must be provided on letter headed paper.

## What happens after I have applied and supplied my evidence?

Once we have received your application and supporting evidence, you will receive confirmation of receipt via email. A member of the team will then assess it to check eligibility and ensure that all evidence is received.

At this point, we may request more evidence via email. If this evidence is not received within 7 days, your application will be automatically deemed unsuccessful and will not proceed to a panel for consideration. Any delay in receiving this evidence will delay your application going to panel.

The application will then go to a panel of 4 staff members; this will include a university staff member outside of Student & Library Services and a member of Students' Union staff to provide impartiality and the panel will come to a joint decision.

### How is a decision made?

The panel look at the application form provided so it is important that you add as much detail as possible. It is also essential that you are clear in stating exactly what you are requesting and why. The panel also look at the evidence provided to get a picture of overall spending patterns and income.

### What could adversely affect my application?

- Excessive leisure or non-essential spending
- Evidence of excessive gambling – *in this case we can still help if appropriate via the use of targeted vouchers and possible referrals*
- If realistic provision for studies has not been made
- If you apply for something we can't help with
- If you live with a partner who earns more than £25k per annum

### How long does the process take?

On receipt of the final piece of evidence, you will have an outcome via Blackbullion within 7 days. Please note that these days exclude the University's Christmas closure period and statutory bank holidays.

If for any reason there is a delay, you will be notified via your student email account.

### When will I receive payment?

Providing your bank details are on e-Vision and are up to date, you will receive payment within 3 working days of receiving a decision and this will be paid directly into your bank account.

**If your details are not on e-Vision this will delay payment.**

## What if I don't agree with the decision?

In the first instance you should submit this in writing detailing the reason you don't agree with the decision and any supporting/additional evidence to [ssfappeals@tees.ac.uk](mailto:ssfappeals@tees.ac.uk) within 7 days of receiving the decision.

Your application will be reviewed by a different panel and you will be informed of the decision in due course.

You may wish to speak to a Finance Adviser within the Student Life building before submitting your appeal and you can arrange this by emailing [studentlife@tees.ac.uk](mailto:studentlife@tees.ac.uk) and requesting an appointment or by calling 01642 342277.

Should you still remain dissatisfied, you may submit a Stage 2 Complaint to the Office of Student Complaints, Appeals and Regulations (OSCAR). This should be submitted within 7 days of the written outcome from the panel. A Stage 2 Complaint Pack is available from the University's website or by emailing [oscar@tees.ac.uk](mailto:oscar@tees.ac.uk). Any queries with the complaints process, please contact OSCAR at the above email address.

If you need help and advice regarding submitting a complaint you can speak to an Academic Adviser in the Students' Union. This can be arranged by emailing [suss@tees-su.org.uk](mailto:suss@tees-su.org.uk) or by calling 01642 342247.