Access to Learning Fund for full-time postgraduate students 2016-17
including MBChB, MA Social Work and PGCE (unsalaried) students

1. What is the Access to Learning Fund?

Access to Learning Funds are allocated to the University by the government to provide selective help to students who have serious financial difficulties. Grants from the Access to Learning Fund are needs related and are non-repayable. They are intended to help with day-to-day expenses and course related costs, such as the cost of accommodation, childcare, transport, books and utilities.

2. Can Access to Learning Funds be awarded to assist with the payment of academic fees?

No. Funds cannot be awarded to assist with the payment of academic fees.

3. Am I eligible to apply?

Registered full-time postgraduate students paying UK home fees and who have settled status and have been ordinarily resident in the British Islands for the three years immediately before the start of their studies are eligible to apply.

You will need to show genuine financial hardship and that you have explored and exhausted all other ways of supporting yourself. You will be expected to have made realistic provision at the start of your course to fund both your tuition fees and living costs. Before applying to the Access to Learning Fund you should have applied for and taken out the maximum Postgraduate Loan and/or a Professional and Career Development or other Loan available, as well as any supplementary grants you are entitled to.

- Medical students will need to supply evidence that they have taken out their full entitlement of Student Maintenance Loan (years 1-4), NHS Bursary (years 2-4) and Tuition Fee Loan (years 1-4).
- Social Work students will need to supply evidence that they have taken out their full entitlement of NHS Bursary.
- PGCE students will need to supply evidence of their Maintenance Loan, Tuition Fee Loan and training bursary if applicable.
- Masters and PhD students will need to supply evidence of any funding, scholarships or awards they are entitled to as well as evidence of any earnings or savings they have had access to from the start of the academic year.

Priority for funding is given to students with dependants and students with disabilities. Applications cannot be considered from students who have completed, permanently withdrawn from or abandoned their course or whose eligibility to statutory support has been terminated by their funding body e.g. Student Finance England.
4. I am temporarily withdrawn from my studies. Can I apply?

If you are a Home student and unable to attend your course due to ill health, caring responsibilities or other exceptional circumstances, you can apply for help from the Fund. Awards can be paid if you have not permanently withdrawn from, or abandoned your course and intend to return to your studies.

5. I am in a period of extension. Can I apply?

If you are in a period of extension you can apply to the Fund. Social Work students will need to have applied to the NHS Grants Unit for an extension to their bursary if eligible and supply evidence of any further funding with their application. PhD students are not eligible for help from the Fund if their registration status is shown as ‘limbo’.

6. I am an EU/International student. Can I apply to the Access to Learning Fund?

EU students cannot apply to the Access to Learning Fund, but PGCE students may be eligible for tuition fee support from Student Finance England. For further information visit www.gov.uk/studentfinance. In an emergency, EU and international students may be considered for an award from the International Students’ Emergency Fund. EU and international students with pre-school age dependants may be eligible for means-tested help with Ofsted registered nursery and childcare fees and should apply to the International Students’ Childcare Fees Remission Scheme.

7. What help can I expect to receive?

Grants from the fund are needs-related and 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.

8. How do I apply?

Application forms for University Hardship Funds can be downloaded from www.warwick.ac.uk/hardshipfunds. Alternatively you can request an application form from the Student Funding Office, Senate House. Once you have completed the form, you will need to return it to the Student Funding team along with the supporting documentation detailed within the form. Any receipts or invoices associated with the application must be dated and on headed paper please.

9. I have completed the application form. What happens next?

Once we have received your form, the Student Funding team will contact you to arrange a short confidential interview with a specialist Student Funding Adviser which will take approximately 30 minutes. The interview will be informal and will give you the opportunity to discuss your individual needs and circumstances in detail.

Please be assured that the Funding Adviser will consider your best interests at all stages of the assessment process. However, you should be aware that the Funding Adviser works within guidelines set by the National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA), National Union of Students (NUS) and university for the assessment of awards and distribution of funds. 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 to you. Any questions are not intended to be intrusive,
but to allow the Funding Adviser to form a complete and comprehensive assessment of your financial situation and, if possible, to recommend a successful outcome to your application. Please ensure you bring your university ID card to your appointment.

10. What happens after the interview?

After your interview a short confidential report summarising your discussions will be prepared and your application will be assessed against the guidelines for the allocation of funds.

11. How will my application be assessed?

Your application will be considered either as a ‘standard’ or ‘non-standard’ claim. We will assess ‘standard’ applications under an additional need method that looks at the difference between accepted essential expenditure and income. If you have unforeseen circumstances your application can then be considered under a ‘non-standard’ assessment. The majority of applicants require standard assessments in the first instance.

In certain circumstances students may be advised to seek specialist individual money advice in addition to any financial help awarded from the Fund.

Applications will be assessed against NASMA and NUS guidelines for the allocation of funds. It is expected that students will be able to supplement their income from a variety of routes, for example, part-time or vacation work. The standard assessment procedure for full-time postgraduate students, including Social Work students, uses a notional postgraduate income which is applied at a figure set annually by NASMA and the NUS. This figure is set at £176 a week for students studying outside London. For students with children, or who are unable to work due to a disability, the amount is £140 a week.

Medical and PGCE students are assessed for the Access to Learning Fund in the same way as undergraduate students using an assumed income figure set annually by NASMA and the NUS. This process is explained in the Guidance Notes for full-time undergraduate students.

The agreed guidelines also set an expenditure level for core living costs for essential living expenses such as food, clothes and utility bills etc. The relevant amount will depend on your circumstances, for example if you have a partner and/or children living with you. Variable expenditure on items such as rent, travel and childcare costs will also be taken into account. A figure for general course related costs is pre-set at the start of the academic year and applied to the assessments.

A cap of £137 a week is applied to include the cost of rent or mortgage, utilities and travel to and from the university. This is applied to students living on or off campus or in their parental home. All students, including those living at home, should provide evidence of an accommodation contract or regular rent payments. This cap does not apply to students with dependants or disability.

For the majority of single students local travel is included at the bus pass rate. For students living further away from the university, for example, in their parental or family home, travel is capped at the cost of a weekly travel card or a reduced fare using a student travel card which is available to full-time students of all ages. Evidence of travel costs should be provided. In some cases, for example for students with dependants or a disability, PGCE and Social Work students, car costs may be considered. In these cases a standard mileage rate to include tax, insurance and maintenance, of 28 pence a mile is applied. PGCE and Social Work students should include details of their placements including the name of the institution, post code and dates of attendance. Placement travel costs for Medical students are reimbursed by the NHS.
**Non-standard awards** can help to meet exceptional costs, such as repairs to essential household equipment and assistance with priority debts. Emergency situations (such as travel costs for family illness or bereavement) can also be considered under the non-standard award assessment. In addition to these examples, costs for disabled students not met by Disabled Students’ Allowances (DSAs) can be considered.

If you are unclear how your application will be assessed, the Student Funding Adviser will be happy to discuss this further with you at your interview.

12. **How and when will I find out if my application has been successful?**

If your application form is completed accurately and the appropriate documentary evidence is supplied, an assessment and decision should be made within 10 working days of your interview. You will be notified of the outcome by email. You should normally expect to receive a payment in a further 10 working days if your application is successful (providing you have submitted your bank details on receipt of your email, if applicable). Please note payments may be made in instalments.

However, in some cases we may need to defer your initial assessment or payment beyond 10 days to deal with a particular circumstance, for example additional evidence or bank statements may be required. If this applies to your application, we will let you know the reason for the delay.

13. **Will I get my original documents back?**

Any original documentation you supplied as part of your application will be returned to the address given on your application form following your appointment. However, should you prefer to submit legible photocopies of your documents, this is acceptable and these documents will not be returned to you unless requested. Please note that spreadsheets of bank transactions will not be accepted.

14. **Can I reapply to the Access to Learning Fund?**

You can reapply to the Access to Learning Fund during the same academic year providing you are still fully registered on your course.

If your circumstances have changed since your original application please complete a new application form and provide documentary evidence for the change in circumstances. A change in circumstances may include marital status, number of dependants or a change in household income/ expenditure. Please also provide bank statements for the last 3 months.

If you are reapplying to the Fund for reasons other than a change in circumstances, please complete a Student Hardship Funds Re-application form and provide bank statements for the last 3 months and any other relevant documentary evidence.

In both cases you will be asked to attend another brief appointment with a Student Funding Adviser and you will be notified of the outcome of your re-application as above.

15. **Can I apply in the summer vacation?**

Access to Learning Fund assessments for postgraduate students including Social Work students are made for a period of 52 weeks which includes the summer vacation.
PGCE students are assessed over 39 weeks excluding the summer vacation.

Medical students can apply to the Access to Learning Fund during the summer vacation if they are experiencing financial difficulties.

16. **Will an award from the Fund affect my entitlement to benefits?**

Payments from the Access to Learning Fund may have implications for your entitlement to benefits. If you receive help from the Fund you can request a document to present to the Jobcentre Plus/Housing Benefit office to explain the circumstances of your award.

17. **Can I apply for the cost of a diagnostic test in order to claim Disabled Students’ Allowances?**

Home, Postgraduate Students who have been resident in the UK for three years prior to the start of their course can apply for a non-repayable award of up to £250 towards the cost of a diagnostic test for a specific learning difficulty. Medical, Social work and PGCE students are also eligible to apply if they have taken their full entitlement to student financial support from the UK government. **All claims must be submitted within three months of the date of the assessment appointment and will only be considered following initial screening by the University Disability Service.**

Please complete the [online form](#) within three months of the date of your test. Ensure that you upload a scanned copy of your invoice or receipt which clearly shows the date of your diagnostic test appointment. Please enter your bank details using the secure link provided.

Please note that applications cannot be considered from students who have completed, permanently withdrawn from, or abandoned their course.

18. **Can I apply for an emergency loan?**

Yes. If you are requesting an emergency loan or other short-term help, applications should be processed and paid within 2 working days and depending on your situation may be processed and paid within 24 hours. In order to obtain a short-term loan, you will need to show your student ID card and bring evidence of your current bank balance. You may also be asked to complete a Declaration of Eligibility questionnaire and provide evidence of your residency status. Please note that you will be limited to a maximum of 3 emergency loans in any 12 month period.

19. **Evaluation**

As part of our ongoing commitment to improving our service to students, you may be requested to complete an online evaluation of your application and assessment experience.

20. **Appeals Procedure**

Download the [Hardship Funds Appeals Procedure](#)
21. **Who should I contact if I have any questions?**

If you have any questions related to the Access to Learning Fund, the application process or Student Funding in general, please do not hesitate to contact the Student Funding team on studentfunding@warwick.ac.uk, or by telephone on 024 7615 0096.