OUSET

THE STUDENT CHARITY
WHAT IS OUSET?

In 1982, OUSA established the Open University Students Educational Trust (OUSET) to help those students who were in financial need but did not qualify for assistance from elsewhere. It is a registered charity, Charity Commission Registration Number 285189.

Both OUSA and the Open University have been very gratified that after many years of campaigning, some of the worst forms of discrimination against part-time students have at last begun to be addressed. However, despite all these advances, there are still those students in financial need who fall through the net and this is where OUSET comes into its own.

Given the size and complexity of the larger Government/OU schemes, they are governed by very rigid qualifications and requirements and there is little scope for flexibility. Whilst OUSET’s funds are small in comparison, because it is a charity, there is far greater scope for discretion and the Trustees can look at each individual case on its merits.

This brief guide includes information on:-

THE TRUSTEES

MAKING AN APPLICATION

THE CURRENT CRITERIA

FUNDRAISING FOR OUSET

HOW YOU CAN HELP
THE TRUSTEES

The trustees are appointed by virtue of their position within OUSA plus one nominated by the Vice Chancellor of the Open University. In addition, the trustees can co-opt up to two additional trustees. The Chair is elected from the Trustees shortly after OUSA Conference. The trustees are made up as follows:-

President
General Manager
Vice President Administration
Vice President Student Support
Vice Chancellor’s Nominee
Immediate Past President
+ up to 2 Co-option

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES’ RESPONSIBILITIES

Charity and trust law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the trust and of the surplus or deficit of the trust for that period. In preparing these financial statements the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.
- Prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 1993. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

REPORTS

The Chair of the Trust issues an annual report, including the accounts, which is presented at OUSA Conference. The Chair is also present at OUSA Conference to respond to any questions raised in the report.
WHO CAN APPLY?

Any student registered with the Open University is eligible to apply to the Trust, including students studying outside the UK and postgraduate students. However, as the Trust can only hope to assist between one or two hundred students per year, the Trustees base their decisions on a set of criteria, which are reviewed annually. The criteria in force as at December 2012 are included on the next page to demonstrate the likely considerations. However, any student wishing to apply to the Trust should obtain the current criteria along with the application form. All cases are decided on their individual merit.
CURRENT CRITERIA DECEMBER 2012

The Trust will consider applications:-

✓ from students who have already successfully completed 30 credits of study with the Open University

✓ on the basis of prioritising those from students who have already commenced their OU studies but through changed financial circumstances now find it difficult to complete their study for the chosen qualification

✓ normally for a maximum grant toward fees of 90% of the applicable rate

✓ from post-graduate students who are graduates of The Open University and who will normally have completed their first (Bachelors) degree within the last 5 years

✓ in respect of modules which form a component of a specific qualification which the student is intending to achieve

✓ for assistance with costs which relate directly to OU study e.g. module fees, travel and child or dependant care costs associated with tutorials/residential schools, set books, toward the purchase, repair or maintenance of essential IT equipment

The Trust will not consider applications:-

✗ from students new to the Open University

✗ from any student who is eligible for a loan from the Student Loan Company and has chosen not to take this option

✗ from any student who has not first checked whether or not they have an entitlement to financial assistance from the University

✗ for grants in respect of completed modules and never to clear a debt when the student has finished the modules concerned

✗ for general cost of living expenses e.g. heating, lighting, rent

✗ for purchase of a PC or similar equipment by students in their first or final year of study for a qualification unless there are exceptional circumstances

✗ from students who already have a first (Bachelors) degree and wish to continue studying at undergraduate level other than those continuing for honours or whose degree is more than 10 years old

✗ from post-graduate students who already have a higher degree

✗ from students already studying at higher education level with another institution.

✗ from students who are in full time education below their statutory school leaving age

✗ from students who have failed on two consecutive occasions

✗ from students who have withdrawn on two consecutive occasions after OUSET has committed money for these modules

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for stand alone residential school modules unless they are part of a named degree for which the student is registered.
FUNDRAISING FOR OUSET

OUSA raises all the funds for OUSET and every year has reason to be grateful for the ingenuity of its student fundraisers and the generosity of those across the OU Community who support those efforts. As a small charity, every donation (no matter how small) is important to us. The OUSA Vice Present Student Support has specific responsibility for leading and co-ordinating OUSA’s fund raising efforts and will always be pleased to hear from those interested in getting involved.

HOW YOU CAN HELP?

- Get involved!
- Organise an activity. Things that have been done in the past include:- raffles, bottle stalls, book sales, car boot sales, car washes, parachute jumps and sponsored events of all descriptions.
- Support any event organised whether locally, regionally or centrally. (Giving your time and talents can be as valuable as giving money)
- Got an idea for raising money, then let us know. We always welcome new ideas.