The Open University Open Futures Bursary for Black Students

The Open University is a leading distance learning provider. We are committed to driving change and ensuring that academic institutions remain inclusive and accessible for all members of society. The Open Futures Bursary for Black Students, part of the Black Students’ Support Fund, will generously provide 50 bursaries in academic year 2022/23, giving new, UK-resident students who identify as Black support towards their study costs.

There are 50 bursaries available for students for the first two academic years of their Open University study. Each bursary is for the value of £500 and is designed to help with study costs such as internet access, computing equipment, or study materials. The bursary is intended as a contribution towards study costs and is not a tuition fee payment method.

Terms & conditions

These conditions contain the terms of the Open Futures Bursary for Black Students. They set out the rights and responsibilities of each party which will apply in relation to your application for the scheme and, for successful applicants only, whilst you are a registered student. Please read these conditions carefully before you apply and make sure that you understand them.

A. Eligibility

1. In order to qualify for a bursary, you must meet all the following criteria:

   - Identify as being from a Black background (see Appendix 1 for full details)
   - Have a personal annual income of not more than £25,000 or be in receipt of a qualifying benefit (see Appendix 3 for a list of qualifying benefits)
   - Be ordinarily resident in the UK and eligible for a UK fee
   - Hold no existing higher education qualification(s)
   - Be a new student to The Open University in academic year 2022/23
   - Be studying your first Open University module which starts in September or October 2022
   - Be studying towards an eligible undergraduate OU qualification (see Appendix 4 for a list of eligible qualifications)
   - Be studying at a minimum intensity of 25% (30 credits) per academic year
B. Supporting evidence

2. You will need to provide evidence of your annual gross personal income or a qualifying benefit (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 for further information) to support your application.

C. Bursary payments

3. Successful applicants will receive their bursary by BACS directly into their bank account.

4. £250 will be payable in each of the two eligible academic years. The first payment will be made in January of your first academic year. The second payment will be made in January of your second academic year, unless your module starts later in the academic year, e.g., February/April, in this instance you will receive your second payment in May of your second academic year.

5. All payments will be subject to the University verifying that you are actively participating in study.

6. Bursaries do not normally have to be paid back, as they are a grant not a loan.

7. Study breaks may be permitted up to a total of 12 months in aggregate. Study breaks of longer than 12 months will terminate your eligibility for bursary funding, after which a request for exceptional reinstatement will be required. Requests for reinstatement should be submitted directly to studentfees@open.ac.uk.

8. Any bursary payment made by The Open University as a result of inaccurate or false information submitted by the applicant will be recovered from the applicant.

D. Applications

9. Applications should be submitted by email to studentfees@open.ac.uk or by post to:

   Student Fees
   The Open University
   PO Box 6055
   Milton Keynes
   MK10 1NH
10. The deadline for applications is midnight on 23rd November 2022. No further applications will be accepted after this date.

11. It is your responsibility to provide all supporting evidence for your application by the advertised deadline. We reserve the right to request additional evidence from you. Failure to submit all required evidence may cause a processing delay and could lead to your application being declined.

12. Applications on behalf of another person will not be accepted. Only one application per person. In the instance that more eligible applications are received than bursaries available, a randomised draw will take place to allocate the 50 bursaries. The draw will be open to all eligible applications received.

13. Successful applicants will be notified by email on or before 9th December 2022.

14. The applications drawn will each receive a bursary award of £500 payable as detailed in these terms and conditions.

15. Any applicants who are already in receipt of an Open University scholarship (an Open Futures Scholarship for Black Students, a Carers’ Scholarship, a Disabled Veterans’ Scholarship, or a Sanctuary Scholarship) are not eligible to apply for an Open Futures Bursary for Black Students. Students who have previously applied for one of the above listed Open University scholarships but were unsuccessful in the selection process, can apply for an Open Futures Bursary for Black Students if they meet the eligibility criteria.

16. The Open University accepts no responsibility for applications that are lost, delayed, misdirected, incomplete or cannot be delivered.

17. For you to be certain your application has been received you should send it using a signed for delivery service such as special or recorded delivery. Proof of postage using an unrecorded delivery service cannot be considered proof of delivery to The Open University. Applications must be received by midnight on 23rd November 2022. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered.
18. If an applicant rejects the bursary or the applicant is in breach of these terms and conditions the award will be forfeited, and The Open University shall be entitled to select another recipient.

19. The successful applicants may be offered the opportunity to take part in promotional activity related to the Open Futures Bursary for Black Students, such as attending fundraising events or taking part in forums.

20. By submitting your application, you agree to the collection, retention, usage and distribution of your personal information in order to process your application and contact you.

21. The Open University shall use and take care of any personal information supplied to it as described in its Privacy Notice, a copy of which is available on request, in accordance with data protection legislation.

22. The Open University accepts no responsibility for any disappointment incurred by the applicant as a result of entering the application process. The bursary is discretionary, and the outcome of the draw is final.

23. The Open University will take all reasonable steps to continue the services offered as part of this scheme. There may be circumstances outside of our control where we are unable to provide those services in full or in part for reasons such as fire, flood, pandemic, terrorist acts or industrial disputes. Where those, or similar, circumstances arise we will minimise disruption so far as we are reasonably able to.

24. Promoter: The Open University, Walton Hall, Kents Hill, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.
E. Frequently asked questions

How were the eligibility criteria decided?

The aim of the bursary is to open up higher education to underrepresented groups and ensure that these students receive the support they need to succeed in their studies. The eligibility criteria were designed to encourage individuals from specific target groups to study with The Open University.

Why do the entry criteria positively discriminate when The Open University claims to be "open to all"?

We value all our students and we want to do our best to ensure that The Open University reflects the whole of our society. Our analysis indicates that currently we have a shortfall in the numbers of students we would like to attract from some groups of UK society. Widening access to and success in higher education is at the heart of the OU’s mission. We aim to support students whatever their backgrounds, to reach their potential and fulfil their ambitions.

Why isn’t the bursary open to all students?

Bursary funds are limited, it is therefore not possible to open the scheme up to all students. This limit on funds was considered when determining who the bursary would be available to. The eligibility criteria are in place to maximise the benefits of the scheme and ensure it reaches those who will benefit from it most.

What happens if I withdraw from my qualification?

Bursaries do not normally have to be paid back, as they are a grant not a loan. However, if you withdraw from your module or qualification, or take a study break, you will not receive further instalments until you return to study.

What can the bursary money be spent on?

There are no restrictions on what you can spend the money on, however the bursary is intended to support you with costs related to your study.
Appendix 1 – Ethnicity

Applicants must have one of the following ethnicities:

- Black African
- Black Caribbean
- Black Other
- Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed – White and Black African
- Other mixed background (to include Black African, Black Caribbean or Black Other)

Appendix 2 – Personal income

Types of income and evidence

Types of income and supporting evidence required for yourself.

Employment income

One of:

- Copy of P60 or P45.
- Copy of pay slip from tax month 12 or tax week 52 showing ‘total paid to date’.

Self-employment income

(Estimate for 2021/22 if you are not sure, you must provide evidence of 2020/21 income)

One of:

- Copy of letter from accountant confirming income from self-employment.
- Copy of HMRC tax calculation.
- Copy of your P60, P11D or confirmation of earnings from chartered or certified accountant.

Retirement or disability pension

Copy of proof of amount and how often it is paid.

Benefits income

Copy of letter from Jobcentre Plus confirming amount and type of benefit (see the sections below on benefits to include/not to include as income).

Unearned investment income

(e.g. interest from bank or building society accounts, ISAs, shares)

Copy of letter or statement from bank, building society or investment company.
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Unearned income from property rental or lodgers
- Rental income: Copy of tax calculation showing total property rental income.
- Lodger income: Copy of signed letter from lodger confirming total amount of rent paid.

Other income
(e.g. loans, bursaries, maintenance payments, redundancy payments)
Copy of proof of other income including amount and date received.

Benefits to include as part of personal income
- Contribution-based JSA/ESA
- Incapacity Benefit
- Maternity Allowance
- Statutory Sick Pay
- Carer’s Allowance
- Retirement Pension

Benefits NOT to include as part of personal income
- Disability Living Allowance
- Attendance Allowance
- Industrial Injuries Benefit
- Child Benefit
- Guardian’s Allowance
- Working or Child Tax Credits
- Higher Education Bursary paid to care leavers
- Personal Independence Payments
- Armed Forces Independence Payments
Appendix 3 – Qualifying benefits

Qualifying benefits

- Income Support
- Housing Benefit (including Local Housing Allowance)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA)
- Universal Credit
- A reduction under the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (students in Wales only)

Appendix 4 – Eligible qualifications

Eligible qualifications

- Honours Degree
- Foundation Degree
- Diploma of Higher Education
- Certificate of Higher Education