The Open University Care Experienced Scholarship

The Open University is a leading distance learning higher education provider. We have helped over 2 million people fulfil their potential and open up their future through education. Young people who have spent time in care can face many significant barriers to entering and succeeding in higher education. Our latest scholarship has been designed in collaboration with The John Lewis Partnership as part of the Building Happier Futures initiative, to offer young people with experience of being in care an opportunity to study an undergraduate qualification for free.

The Open University Care Experienced Scholarship is launching for the first time in 2023/24, offering four full undergraduate scholarships to care experienced young people, aged 25 and under.

Terms & Conditions

These conditions contain the terms of the Care Experienced Scholarship. They set out the rights and responsibilities of each party which will apply to your application for the scheme and, for successful applicants only, whilst you are a registered student. Please read these conditions carefully, ensuring that you understand them before applying.

A. Eligibility

1. A care experienced student is defined as anyone who has been, or is currently, in the care of a Local Authority at any stage in their life, no matter how short, including adopted young people who were previously in care. This care may have been provided in one of many different settings such
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as in residential care, foster care, kinship care, or through being looked after at home under the supervision of a Social Worker.

2. To qualify for the scheme, you must meet all the following criteria:
   - Be starting OU study for the first time in the 2023/24 academic year
   - Be 25 years of age or under on 1 September 2023
   - Be ordinarily resident in the UK and eligible for a UK fee
   - Hold no existing higher education qualification(s)
   - Be able to demonstrate proof of your experience of being in care
   - Have a gross personal income of not more than £25,000 per year or be in receipt of a qualifying benefit
   - Be studying a minimum of 30 credits of study per year, towards an Open University undergraduate qualification

B. Supporting Evidence

3. You will need to provide evidence of your care experience. This could be a letter from your Local Authority confirming your care leaver status, or a letter from a GP, social worker, care experienced support service or other professional person from the local authority in which you were looked after (see Appendix 1 for examples).

4. You will also need to provide evidence of your personal income or a qualifying benefit (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 for further information).
C. Scholarship Awards

5. Full fee waivers up to a maximum of 120 credits per seasonal academic year and 360 credits in total will be available.

6. Fee waiver amounts will be calculated based on the fee amounts for which you are directly liable.

7. Study breaks of up to 12 months are permitted. Study breaks of longer than 12 months will terminate your eligibility for the scholarship, after which a request for exceptional reinstatement will be required. Requests for reinstatement should be submitted directly to fees-fs-bursaries-scholarships@open.ac.uk.

8. In circumstances where you are required to repeat, defer or withdraw from a module, consideration will be given to the circumstances which led to the repeat, deferral or withdrawal and an exceptional award of additional waivers or a fee credit may be approved.

9. Decisions on exceptional awards will be made by the Chair, Bursary & Scholarships Management Group or their delegated authority in line with the eligibility criteria for Discretionary Fee Credits defined by the University Senate and detailed in the Fee Rules 2023/24.

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

11. Cash alternatives will not be available.
D. Applications

12. Applications may be submitted by email to fees-fs-bursaries-scholarships@open.ac.uk or by post to:

Student Fees
The Open University
PO Box 6055
Milton Keynes
MK10 1NH

13. The deadline for applications is midnight on 26 July 2023. No further applications will be accepted after this date. This applies to all study which begins during the 2023/24 academic year (1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024).

14. 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.

15. Only one application per person. In the instance that more eligible applications are received than scholarships available, a panel of Open University experts will review the application and supporting evidence accompanying each of the selected applications to determine which applicants are awarded a scholarship.
16. Successful applicants will be notified by email on or before 11 August 2023.

17. No further applications will be required. Once a scholarship is approved, fee waivers will be allocated automatically subject to satisfactory participation in study for the previous academic year.

18. Applications on behalf of another person will not be accepted. The Open University accepts no responsibility for applications that are lost, delayed, misdirected, incomplete or cannot be delivered.

19. 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 26 July 2023. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered.

20. If an applicant rejects the scholarship, fails to complete their registration for study for which the award was made 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.

21. The successful applicants may be offered the opportunity to take part in promotional activity related to the Care Experienced Scholarship, such as attending fundraising events or taking part in forums.

22. 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.
23. 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.

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

25. 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.

26. Promoter: The Open University, Walton Hall, Kents Hill, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.
Appendix 1 – Supporting Evidence of Your Care Experience

Below are suggestions of how you may be able to evidence your experience in care:

- A letter from a local authority confirming care leaver status.
- A letter from a GP, social worker, care experienced support service (or other professional person listed below) will be accepted as evidence of care leaver status.

A professional person is someone from the local authority where you were looked after, or a:

- social worker
- doctor
- nurse
- lawyer
- solicitor
- college/university student adviser
- teacher
- nursery teacher
- notary public
- counsellor
- police officer
- minister of religion
- family mediation worker
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 2022/23 if you are not sure, you must provide evidence of 2021/22 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

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)