The Open University Carers' Scholarships Fund

The Open University is a leading distance learning provider. Our flexible, innovative teaching fits around the lives of students who otherwise could not attend a campus-based university.

Carers face disadvantages that may prevent them from pursuing the education that they need. Providing unpaid care for a friend or family member can place huge demands on the lives of carers. It can affect progress in school, make sticking to a timetable difficult or require a career change to find employment that fits around caring.

We launched the Carers’ Scholarships Fund in 2020. So far we have offered 90 scholarships to carers’, providing them the opportunity to study for free and the freedom to plan for their futures and build lives around their responsibilities. In 2022/23 we are offering a further 20 scholarships to carers’, including a minimum of 6 reserved for young carers aged 25 and under.

Terms & Conditions

These conditions contain the terms of the Carers’ Scholarships Fund. 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 submit an application and make sure that you understand them.

A. Eligibility

1. A carer is defined as anyone who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and can’t cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.

2. To qualify for the scheme, you must meet all the following criteria:

   - Be starting OU study for the first time in the 2022/23 academic year
   - Be ordinarily resident in the UK and eligible for a UK fee
   - Be a carer who cares for an average of 15 hours per week or have been a carer within the last 2 years, with caring responsibilities for an average of 15 hours per week, but due to bereavement are no longer a carer
• Be able to demonstrate proof of your current, or recently ended, caring responsibilities
• Have a gross household 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 undergraduate study per year, on a modular basis or towards an Open University undergraduate qualification.

B. Supporting Evidence
3. You will need to provide evidence which confirms that you are or have been providing unpaid care to one or more people. This could be a letter from your current GP, social worker, or carer support organisation (see Appendix 1 for examples).
4. You will also need to provide evidence of your household income or a qualifying benefit (see Appendix 2 for further information).

C. Fee Waivers
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 may be permitted up to a total of 12 months in aggregate. 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 studentfees@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 2022/23.

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 studentfees@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 24th June 2022. No further applications will be accepted after this date. This applies to all study which begins during the 2022/23 academic year (1st September 2022 to 31st August 2023).

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 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 8th July 2022.
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 24th June 2022. 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 Carers’ Scholarships Fund, 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 panel’s decision 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 caring responsibilities

To ensure your circumstances are fully considered, please supply evidence from both of the categories listed below.

**Caring**
- Copy of letter confirming Carer’s Allowance
- Copy of letter from your local caring organisation
- Copy of letter from Social Services
- Copy of a letter from your own GP
- Copy of a letter from the GP/Consultant/Nurse of the person you care for

**Reason(s) you care**
- Copy of a letter from the GP/Consultant/Nurse of the person you care for explaining the reason they need care
- Copy of letter from your local caring organisation explaining who you care for and why they need care
Appendix 2 – Household income

Types of income and evidence
Types of income and supporting evidence required for yourself and/or your partner.

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.

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 household income

- Contribution-based JSA/ESA
- Incapacity Benefit
- Maternity Allowance
- Statutory Sick Pay
- Carer’s Allowance
- Retirement Pension

Benefits NOT to include as part of household 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

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 Scheme (students in Wales only)