The Open University Open Futures Scholarship 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 Scholarship for Black Students launched for the first time in 2022/23. Now in its third year, it will generously offer 10 scholarships for the 2024/25 academic year, giving new, UK-resident students who identify as Black the opportunity to study for free.

Terms & Conditions

These conditions contain the terms of the Open Futures Scholarship 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 submit an application and make sure that you understand them.

A. Eligibility

1. In order to qualify for a scholarship, 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)
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• 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
• Be studying towards an undergraduate OU qualification or module commencing in the 2024/25 academic year
• 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 to support your application (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3 for further information).

C. Scholarship Awards
3. Full fee waivers up to a maximum of 120 credits per seasonal academic year and 360 credits in total will be available. Fee waiver amounts will be calculated based on the fee amounts for which you are directly liable.

4. A one-off study costs grant of £500 will be paid to successful scholarship recipients, no earlier than two weeks before the start of your first module. This grant is non-repayable and is intended to support you with the cost of preparing yourself for study with the OU, such as the purchase of a laptop, printer and ink, and internet costs.

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. Decisions on exceptional awards will be made by the Senior Manager, Policy & Controls, Academic Services, 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 2024/25.

8. 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.

9. Cash alternatives will not be available.

D. Applications

10. 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
11. The deadline for applications is midday on 3 July 2024. No further applications will be accepted after this date. This applies to all study which begins during the 2024/25 academic year (1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025).

12. 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.

13. Only one application per person. In the instance that more eligible applications are received than scholarships available, a randomised draw will take place to allocate the 10 scholarships.

14. If you would like a Welsh version of the application form or terms and conditions, you can request this by emailing Student Fees at fees-fs-bursaries-scholarships@open.ac.uk. Any forms submitted in Welsh will not be treated less favourably than those submitted in English.

15. Successful applicants will be notified by email on or before 19 July 2024.
16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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 midday on 3 July 2024. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered.

19. 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.

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

21. 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.
22. 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.

23. 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.

24. 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.

25. 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 scholarship 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 OU 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 scholarship open to all students?

Scholarship 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 scholarship 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.
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 2023/24 if you are not sure, you must provide evidence of 2022/23 income)

One of:

- Copy of letter from accountant confirming income from self-employment
- Copy of HMRC tax calculation
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- Copy of your P60, PIID 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
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- 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)