

SOAS Access to Learning Fund Guidance 2022/23

What is the Access to Learning Fund?

The Access to Learning Fund provides discretionary financial assistance for students who find themselves in unexpected financial hardship or who have to meet above average costs. Students who may be considering leaving higher education because of financial problems are particularly encouraged to apply. You can apply to the Fund at any point throughout the academic year, but early application is recommended as funds are limited and can run out. Any help you receive from the Fund is usually a grant and is non-repayable.

Tuition Fees

The Fund cannot help with paying tuition fees. If you are a full time undergraduate student you can apply for help from Student Finance England (SFE) in the form of a [tuition fee loan](#). You can also apply to SFE for a loan to help with tuition fees or living costs if you are a [post graduate taught](#) or [research student](#).

Who Can Apply?

The Access to Learning Fund is for **home fee paying undergraduate and postgraduate** students registered on full-time or part-time on-campus courses

Undergraduates must have taken out their full entitlement of Maintenance Loan before being eligible to apply. Postgraduates must have taken their full entitlement of the Postgraduate Master's Loan or Doctoral Loan.

If you are a full time undergraduate you are expected to have a student bank account with interest-free overdraft facility. If you are having difficulties opening a bank account please provide evidence of this when applying.

Any full-time student will also be expected to have the [TfL 18+ Student Oyster Card](#) or alternative travel discount card.

Postgraduates must demonstrate that they have made realistic provision to fund their fees and living costs before applying.

Priorities for Assistance

The Fund is there to help any eligible student who has a particular financial need but we cannot meet every application we receive and we cannot always meet all of the costs that you might apply for. SOAS gives priority to the following groups of students when deciding how to allocate the funding:

- Students receiving the final year loan rate, who are in financial difficulty
- Students with caring responsibilities
- Students with children (especially lone parents)
- Mature undergraduate students, especially those with existing financial commitments, including priority debts
- Students from low income families
- Students who are displaced people, refugees or asylum seekers
- Estranged students and those with experience of care
- Disabled students (especially where the DSA is unable to meet particular costs)
- Students who have entered higher education from Foyers or who are homeless

Disabled Students

Disabled students, especially those with Specific Learning Differences are eligible for funding up to £425 towards the cost of their educational assessment. You will need to see a Learning Adviser (contact studentadviceandwellbeing@soas.ac.uk) to access this grant.

If you are a home fee paying student, you may apply to the Access to Learning Fund to help meet any disability related costs not covered by the DSA, such as a £200 award towards the cost of a laptop. If you are a non-UK student and you are in financial hardship, you may apply to the International Hardship Fund to help meet this cost.

Students on benefits

Applicants are advised that payments from the Access to Learning Fund may have implications for their entitlement to DWP benefits. For further advice about this please email advice@soas.ac.uk

Information on how your application will be assessed

Awards will be assessed using a process common to many universities. The assessment process is designed to identify students who have particular financial needs and those who are in unforeseen financial difficulty. Assessments are made using income and expenditure figures for the whole academic year.

For full time undergraduate students being assessed for a standard award there is an assumed income, set at a realistic level - £2,337 per year for full year students and £935 per year for final year students. This assumes income from a number of sources including part time work, additional support from your parents/partner/supporters, bank overdraft, savings etc.

For full time postgraduate students, a weekly *Notional Postgraduate Income* amount is applied to standard assessments of £250.. For students with children or who are unable to work due to a disability these amounts will be £200.

This income can be from a number of sources including part time work / additional support from your parents /partner / bank overdraft / savings etc.

If you do not have the full amount of *Notional Postgraduate Income* but have exceptional circumstances we will still consider your application.

There will also be a set expenditure level, known as *Composite Living Costs* to allow for general living costs such as food and usual household costs such as utility bills. The relevant amount will be set depending on your circumstances, for example if you have children this amount would be larger.

How to submit your application

Please submit your application using the online form located on [the SOAS website](#). At the end of the form you can upload evidence to support your application.

Timeline for making a decision

Provided your application form has been accurately completed and the appropriate documentary evidence supplied, a decision should be made within **4 working weeks** of submission. If you have not been asked for further evidence, you can request an update after 4 working weeks from shf@soas.ac.uk

Help completing the form

If you need any assistance with application process, please email advice@soas.ac.uk to request a meeting with a Student Advisor.

How to appeal

If you are not satisfied with the decision made on your application you may appeal in writing to the Head of Student Advice and Wellbeing, Mike Chung, mc124@soas.ac.uk

Any appeal must be made within 4 weeks from the date of the original decision.