

SOAS Hardship Fund Guidance 2025/26

When you make an application to the SOAS Hardship Fund, you are automatically assessed for any of the funds that you may be eligible for. If an award is made, you are awarded from the most relevant fund or the fund that benefits you the most. We cannot make awards from multiple funds, except for the SOAS Childcare Fund. An award from the Fund is usually a grant which does not need to be paid back.

SOAS Hardship Funds cannot help with paying tuition fees.

How to submit your SOAS Hardship Fund application

Submit your application using the online [SOAS Hardship Fund application form](#). At the end of the form, you can upload evidence to support your application. If evidence is missing from your application, an assessor will contact you by email to request it. Missing evidence may delay the processing of your application.

Second applications

You can only apply once per academic year and reapplications will only be considered in highly exceptional circumstances, for instance if you...

- are facing eviction
- have emergency travel costs
- have new caring responsibilities

Deadline 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.

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 by emailing the team: soashardship@soas.ac.uk

How you are paid

You're required to provide UK bank details on the application form and the payment should reach your account within 10 working days of receiving confirmation of your award. Awards of over £1,000 are paid in up to two instalments.

Help completing the form

If you need help with the application process, please raise a ticket through the Student Information Desk (SID) for the [Student Advice Service](#) and you will be contacted by 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.

- [SOAS Access to Learning Fund](#)
- [SOAS Additional Study Support Fund](#)
- [SOAS International Hardship Fund](#)
- [SOAS Childcare Fund](#)

SOAS Access to Learning Fund

The Access to Learning Fund can provide discretionary financial assistance to students whose essential costs are higher than their income and those who find themselves in unexpected financial hardship.

Who can apply?

You must meet the following general criteria:

- You must be fully enrolled
- Pay fees at the Home rate
- Study at undergraduate or postgraduate level which includes research degrees
- Study full-time or part-time on campus unless undertaking fieldwork, or participating in an outgoing Study Abroad programme
- You've applied for and are in receipt of your full Student Finance entitlement (loans and grants)
- You've applied for all statutory funding you're eligible for e.g. state benefits
- Online and distance learning students are not eligible to apply

Undergraduates

- You must have taken out your full entitlement of Maintenance Loan before being eligible to apply
- If you are only entitled to the EU Tuition Fee Loan you must have taken out this loan and demonstrate that you have made realistic provision to fund your living costs
- You are expected to have a student bank account with interest-free overdraft facility or provide evidence that you cannot open this type of account

Postgraduates

- You must be receiving your full entitlement of the Postgraduate Master's Loan or Postgraduate Doctoral Loan
- In addition to your loan, you must demonstrate that you have made realistic financial provision to pay your fees and cover your living costs before starting your programme:

| Type of student | Expected income per week |
|--|--------------------------|
| Single student | £250 |
| Student with children | £200 |
| Students who cannot work due to health reasons | £200 |
| Single student living with parents | £200 |

How your application is assessed

Awards will be assessed using a process common to many universities. Our standard assessments are based on the shortfall between your expected income and your 'reasonable' expenses for the year. The size of the fund is limited, and we aim to provide a contribution towards your shortfall rather than covering it in full. We will also consider a non-standard award for those who are in unexpected financial difficulty.

How your income is calculated

Undergraduate students are assessed using a realistic income figure which includes an assumed

amount for part-time work. This figure is reduced for final year students to allow them to reduce part-time work and focus on studies.

Postgraduate students must have a weekly income of £250 per week to cover living costs. Students living with their parents, students with children or those unable to work due to a disability must have a weekly income of £200. This income can be from several sources including part time work, additional support from your parents, family supporters or partner, a bank overdraft, savings etc. **This income must be in place before starting your course and be in addition to your Masters or Doctoral Loan.**

We will still consider your application if you do not have the full amount of expected income but have exceptional circumstances that can be supported with evidence.

We cannot make awards to help with the costs of private medical care or dental work for you or family members.

How your expenses are assessed

The figure for certain expenses is fixed at a set amount to cover costs such as food, household bills, clothing, entertainment, mobile phone etc. This ensures that all applicants are treated fairly, regardless of their individual lifestyle choices.

| Type of student | Fixed expenses per week |
|--|-------------------------|
| Single student | £157 |
| Dependent children 1 st child | £163 |
| Each additional child | £125 |

Variable expenses

We also include figures for variable expenses such as rent/mortgage, travel, prescriptions, and disability costs. However, these are capped at maximum amounts. For example, weekly travel costs are capped at the cost of a weekly [18+ Student Oyster travelcard](#) from Zone 1 to the Zone you live in.

Part-time postgraduate students who receive an award from the Access to Learning Fund will qualify for the [TfL 18+ Student Oyster photocard](#).

Priorities for assistance

SOAS gives priority to the following groups of students when deciding how to allocate the funding:

- Students receiving the final year rate of Maintenance Loan 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 (under 25 years of age)
- Disabled students (especially where the Disabled Student Allowance is unable to meet particular costs)
- Students who have entered higher education from Foyers or who are homeless

Disabled Students

Disabled students are eligible for funding of up to £425 towards the cost of their educational assessment. You will need to see a Learning Adviser to access this grant. Contact studentadviceandwellbeing@soas.ac.uk to set up an appointment. The Fund is not able to cover the costs of private ADHD and other medical assessments.

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. We will not cover the additional cost if you choose to upgrade to a more expensive laptop.

If you do not qualify for support from DSA with your travel costs, you may be able to get help from the [Taxicard](#) scheme run by local councils in London.

Students on benefits

If you claim government benefits such as Universal Credit, payments from the Access to Learning Fund may affect the amount of benefit you receive. For further advice please raise a ticket through the Student Information Desk (SID) for the [Student Advice Service](#) and you will be contacted by a Student Advisor.

SOAS Additional Study Support Fund

This fund is designed to assist undergraduate students from low-income backgrounds who are struggling financially.

- Your household income has been assessed as below £25,000 per year and you receive the maximum maintenance loan

Please note that meeting these listed criteria alone will not guarantee this award as these are limited in number.

Priority will be given to the following groups:

- Estranged students and those with experience of care (under 25 years of age)
- Students from lowest participation neighbourhoods (Polar Quintile 1)
- Students who are first in their family to go to university
- Students with refugee status

The assessment process is carried out in the same way as the assessment of Undergraduate students for the [SOAS Access to Learning Fund](#).

We cannot make awards to help with the costs of private medical care or dental work for you or family members.

SOAS International Hardship Fund

International students who encounter emergency unforeseen costs or unexpected financial hardship may be eligible to apply for a small grant usually up to £1000 from the SOAS International Hardship Fund. You are expected to provide evidence of your unexpected financial hardship with your application.

To be eligible to apply you must meet the following criteria:

- You must be fully enrolled
- Pay fees at the Overseas rate

- Study at undergraduate or postgraduate level which includes research degrees
- Study full-time or part-time on campus unless undertaking fieldwork, or participating in an outgoing Study Abroad programme
- Demonstrate that you have made reasonable provision for living costs and tuition fees before starting your programme
- Online and distance learning students are not eligible to apply
- Students from the following groups will be considered a priority for assistance:
 - Final Year Undergraduate
 - From a low-income country
 - PhD Student writing up
 - Master's student writing dissertation

The International Hardship Fund cannot cover the cost of tuition fees, visa extensions and costs associated with applying for a visa.

We also cannot make awards to help with the costs of private medical care or dental work for you or family members.

SOAS Childcare Fund

The Childcare Fund is designed to help cover the cost of providing care for your child or children whilst you study your programme. The fund is not means-tested and provides a grant of up to £1000 towards the cost of Ofsted registered childcare. As funds are limited, we will not fund the cost of tutoring or other extra-curricular activities. The Childcare Fund is limited and distributed on a first come first served basis, so early application is advised.

To be eligible to apply you must meet the following criteria:

- You must be fully enrolled
- Pay fees at the Overseas or Home rate
- Study at undergraduate or postgraduate level which includes research degrees
- Study full-time or part-time on campus unless undertaking fieldwork, or participating in an outgoing Study Abroad programme
- Pay for Ofsted registered childcare for your children
- Online and distance learning students are not eligible to apply

The Childcare Fund is designed to help cover the cost of childcare whilst you study your programme in the UK. As funds are limited, we will not fund the cost of tutoring, other extra-curricular activities or overseas childcare costs.

You must provide evidence of your childcare costs such as invoices plus a birth certificate. You do not need to provide any further supporting documentation unless you wish to apply for further support from one of our other funds.