

Access Financial Support Policy - 2022



This policy is of relevance to students / staff / applicants

Version No.	2
Approved on	14 th April 2022
Approved by	Ops Board
Written by	Head of Access and Participation
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Overview

As part of its Access and Participation Plan commitments, the School has established Access Financial Support to assist UK undergraduate students most in need of financial assistance, in recognition of the difficulties of juggling an intensive full-time programme with paid employment, and the need for sufficient rest and recuperation. There are two awards:

Access Bursary Award

The Access Bursary is awarded to cover general living and maintenance costs during the course of a programme, including additional costs incurred in vacation periods where there is no, or limited, family financial support. There will be **up to thirty** Access Bursary awards in 2022/23, valued between £3000 and £5000. Successful applicants (see eligibility below) will be paid in three termly instalments. The Access Bursary is not automatically recurrent and **students will need to re-apply each year**. Students can apply in every year of undergraduate study, and do not need to have received it previously to apply (e.g., a student in final year could apply successfully).

Access Equipment Fund

The Access Equipment Fund is available specifically for Supported Application Scheme new entrants, enabling them to settle into life at the School without financial worries. The awards are valued at £350, and allow recipients to purchase equipment for the undergraduate programme (such as suitable clothing for lessons and performances, technical equipment, books) and to set-up their student accommodation (e.g. kitchen equipment, bedding). This award is a one-off, paid only in the first term of the first year of study, to eligible newly enrolled students.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible for the **Access Bursary**, students will need to satisfy the requirements in both Section 1 and 2. In order to be eligible for the **Access Equipment Fund**, students will need to satisfy the requirements in Section 3. Students may be eligible for, and receive, both sources of funding.

Section 1

Students must meet both of the following conditions.

1. Be registered on an in-person undergraduate degree programme at the School and have Home fee status¹

2. Be from a low income household

Applicants living away from home must receive a **maintenance loan² of at least £11,500** per year from their UK funding body³, which indicates a household income of £33k or below. Applicants living at home must receive a **maintenance loan of at least £7,000**, again indicating a household income of £33k or below. The School cannot consider applications from anyone on a higher income, regardless of their eligibility for Section 2, as this bursary is awarded on the basis of financial need. The School cannot accept applications from students who have not accessed all the financial support that they could receive from their student funding body.

Section 2

Students must demonstrate that they fall into **one** of the categories listed at the start of the academic year for which they are applying for support.

1. A recent care leaver

To be eligible the student will need to have spent at least **13 weeks of the last 5 years, including their 16th birthday**, in local authority care, prior to the start of their programme.

This could include

- Living with foster parents
- Living at home with parents/guardians under the supervision of social services
- Living in a residential children's home
- Living in another residential setting like a school or secure unit

2. Estranged from their parents/guardians

To be assessed as estranged from their parents/guardians; the student should have had no contact with their parents/guardians for at least 12 months before the start of their academic programme and be unlikely to have a relationship with them again.

3. Disability

Students eligible under this criterion must have a declared disability on their student record and have applied, or be in the process of applying (where eligible), for Disabled Student Allowance. Student Affairs may advise on eligibility, and the impact of the declared disability on financial need.

4. Independent

To be considered as financially independent from their parents/guardians, the student will need to meet one of the following conditions:

¹ ELQ students are not eligible for the Access Bursary.

² Applicants for the Access Bursary are required to be eligible for, and have applied for a UK undergraduate maintenance loan. Students who are not eligible for this financial support are not eligible for the Access Bursary.

³ These are: Student Finance England, Student Finance Northern Ireland, Student Finance Wales and Student Award Agency for Scotland.

- Be aged 25 or over at the start of their academic programme
- Be married or in a civil partnership
- Be in charge of a dependent child
- Have supported themselves for at least three years before the start of their programme of study. This could include full-time employment or self-employment, receiving benefits including for sickness and disability, or receiving training under a government scheme for unemployment
- Have no living parents/guardians

5. From an area of the UK with low progression to higher education

To be eligible for this criterion, the home postcode on your application to the School must be Quintile 1 or 2 on the POLAR4 dataset. POLAR4 is a dataset produced by the Office for Students, which outlines the likelihood of an 18 year old in an area progressing to Higher Education.

Section 3

To be eligible for the Access Equipment Fund, students must satisfy the following criteria.

1. Be registered on an in-person undergraduate degree programme at the School and have Home fee status⁴
2. Have participated in the Supported Application Scheme for the year of entry when they first enrol at the School (e.g. participated in the Scheme in 2021/22, and enrolled in September 2022)
3. Have applied for the full, means-tested maintenance loan that they are eligible for via the UK student funding body, and consented to share this information.

Application Process

Access Bursary Award

Students/offer holders must:

1. Contact the School's Access and Participation (A&P) team, by emailing wp@gsmd.ac.uk, to express an interest in applying for the Access Bursary or alternatively contact the Student Funding Officer studentfundingofficer@gsmd.ac.uk. The final deadline for notifying the A&P team of their interest to be included in the 2022/23 bursary allocation will be **Monday 4th July 2022**.
2. Apply for a full maintenance loan from their funding body. Students should ensure that they **have ticked 'consent to share'** on their funding body record which will enable the School to confirm their student status as either a care-leaver or as an independent student. Funding bodies will not normally confirm a student's status as an estranged student and, therefore, the School will require additional information to confirm this.

Continuing students will be required to reapply for their maintenance and tuition fee loans from their student funding body every academic year and **should ensure that 'consent to share' is activated** on their account.

⁴ ELQ students are not eligible for this funding, even where they might have participated in the Supported Application Scheme.

3. Apply for Guildhall Financial Awards. **New students** should apply for a Guildhall Scholarship, via eGo, as soon as they have accepted an offer of a place at the School. The application deadline for the Guildhall School Scholarship differs by department. Please see http://www.gsmd.ac.uk/about_the_school/shared_left_nav/fees_and_funding/guildhall_school_scholarships_and_other_funding/ for more information about the Guildhall School Scholarships. **Continuing students** will be required to reapply for a Guildhall Scholarship by the deadline set out by their department.
4. Contact the School's A&P Team with further evidence regarding student status under Section 2 above (see below for relevant evidence) and to provide the official confirmation from Student Finance that outlines the awarded maintenance loan. The deadline for submitting this evidence will be **Monday 4th July 2022**, unless otherwise notified.

Access Equipment Fund

Supported Application Scheme offer holders must:

1. Apply for the full amount of the means-tested maintenance loan available to them from their student funding body by the relevant deadlines.
2. Contact the A&P Team on wp@gsmd.ac.uk to confirm they would like to be considered for the award by **1st August 2022**, and provide the official confirmation from Student Finance that outlines the awarded maintenance loan.
3. Enrol at the School at the earliest opportunity, so that payment can be made at the start of term one.

Please note that this payment is a one-off at the start of the first year of study. It cannot be made retrospectively later in the first year, and former Supported Application Scheme participants who enrolled at the School in September 2020 or earlier are not eligible to apply.

Eligibility Checks

The School will liaise with the students funding body to check their status as an independent student or a care-leaver; however, students may be required to submit the following supplementary information for the Access Bursary Award **only**:

- **Care-leavers:** If care-leaver status is not reflected on the student's funding body record (i.e. the student has not disclosed this information to them), they will be expected to supply a letter from a local authority or social work department, which states the period that they were in local authority care and when they left local authority care.
- **Estranged:** As estrangement is not reflected in student funding body records, estranged students will be expected to supply a letter from a social worker, doctor, teacher or another professional, stating that the student is "irreconcilably estranged" from their parents and have not had contact with them for a period of 12-months or more.
- **Disability:** Students must ensure that their disability is recorded on their student record, and that they seek relevant support from Student Affairs. Student Affairs will advise the A&P Team further on eligibility.

Eligibility for the remaining criteria will be assessed as follows:

- **Independent:** Independent students will have this status reflected on their funding body record - providing that they have informed their funding body of their status and have ticked the 'consent to share' box, which allows the School to access their information. The School cannot verify independent student status. *Mature students (aged 25 or over) will be prioritised within this criterion.*
- **POLAR4 Quintile 1 or 2 postcode:** The A&P Team will input the student's home postcode from their application form into the POLAR4 'search postcode' tool⁵ to determine whether it is Quintile 1 or 2.

The A&P Team will refer to Supported Application Scheme participant data to confirm eligibility for the Access Equipment Fund.

Additional Information

Students are encouraged to apply for the Access Bursary Award as soon as possible, and may do so before they have received their student funding award letter from their funding body. The School may provisionally offer eligible students a bursary, but it will only be confirmed on receipt of the student's funding information.

Students who receive an Access Bursary Award will need to accept the [Guildhall School Scholarships Applicants and Award Holders Terms and Conditions](#).

Confirmed Access Bursary Awards will be disbursed in three equal instalments after full enrolment and all the Terms and Conditions have been met. Confirmed Access Equipment Fund Awards will be paid to students in one instalment as soon as possible after enrolment.

Where there are more eligible applications than Access Bursaries, applications will be ranked by need, with priority given to care leavers, and then in the order (1-5) outlined above. Additional priority will be given to applicants from Scotland and Northern Ireland, who receive less support from government-funded maintenance loans, and to those with greatest financial need. To support decision-making, the A&P Team will liaise with departments to assess overall scholarship awards, ensuring parity of overall financial support.

For 2022, there will be no limit to the Access Equipment Fund Awards – all eligible applicants will be awarded.

The A&P Team will not make any Award offers until after the 4th July deadline, to ensure that every potentially eligible student has the opportunity to apply.

Students awarded Access Bursary funding are expected to engage with evaluation activity organised by the A&P Team, as per the requirements in the Access and Participation Plan. Failure to do so may jeopardise their eligibility for financial support in future years, and termly instalments could be halted.

⁵ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/young-participation-by-area/search-by-postcode/>