

Student Financial Support Procedure

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| Category: Student Life | Date Created: January 2019 |
| Responsibility: Student Success Senior Manager | Date Last Reviewed: June 2021 |
| Approval: Executive Director Te Mana Taura | Version: 21.1 |

Scope

Applies to domestic and international students.

This procedure applies to the Student Financial Support Policy.

Responsibility

- Any member of the Wellbeing Hub, any Team Leader in student Success can advise and students on the procedures of applying for financial hardship support and receive the applications made in writing by students who are eligible to apply.
- The Student Advocate will request a meeting of the Executive Deans Operational Committee to consider applications for financial support for courses and programmes on compassionate grounds (applications known as Compassionate Grants).
- The Student Success Senior Manager, together with any member of the Wellbeing Hub, and/or any of the Team Leaders in Student Success will consider applications for emergency financial assistance (applications known as Student Hardship Assistance).

Delegations to approve applications for Student Financial Support are as follows:

- Applications for Compassionate Grants – *Senior Manager Student Success, Executive Director Education and Applied Research, and the Chief Financial Officer*, in accordance with UCOL's Financial Delegations.
- Applications for Student Hardship – *Student Success Senior Manager*, any member of the Wellbeing Hub (including Counsellors, *Student Advocate and Welfare Coordinator*), Student Success Team leaders and in exceptional circumstances *The Financial Controller and Chief Executive* in accordance with UCOL's Financial Delegations.
- Compassionate Grants outcome appeals – *The Chief Executive*.
- Student Hardship Assistance outcome appeals – *The Senior Manager Student Success or the Chief Financial Officer depending on the circumstances*.

In the normal course of events the Chief Executive is not involved in decision-making in order for that person to remain independent and able to consider an appeal.

Procedure

Applications for Compassionate Grants

1. Applications are to be made in writing, using the Application for Compassionate Grant application form. All accompanying documentation and evidence (indicated on the application form) is to be attached and submitted with the application. All applications are to be noted in Pātaka Korero and assigned to the Executive Director Student Success. The confidentiality protocols must be adhered to when recording the application.
2. Applications are to be lodged with the Student Advocate and Welfare Coordinator.
3. The Student Advocate and Welfare Coordinator is to acknowledge receipt of the application directly with the applicant and advise the applicant of the process and steps the application will take, including an indicative timeline. (All applications MUST be completed within a three (3) month period).
4. The Student Advocate and Welfare Coordinator will review the application to ensure:
 - a. The application form is complete;
 - b. Check that the necessary evidence required by the Executive Deans' to fully assess the application is attached, or request additional information from the applicant;
 - c. Download and print the student's enrolment, payment and achievement details from the Student Management System together with any additional information that may be useful; and
 - d. Complete a cover letter for the application to progress to the Executive Deans' Committee.
5. The Executive Director Student Success will convene and chair the Executive Dean's Committee which will meet on a monthly basis. All applications will be forwarded together with the agenda at least two (2) weeks prior to the meeting. In exceptional circumstances, late or urgent applications may be accepted to the agenda.
6. All applications will be deliberated by the Executive Deans who will make a recommendation on the applications with the information and evidence provided.
7. The recommendations for applications will be forwarded to the Executive Director Student Success, Executive Director Education and Applied Research and the Chief Financial Officer who will review the recommendations and make a decision on the outcome.
8. Applicants are to be notified within two weeks of the decision of the application.
9. Applicants who wish to appeal the outcome of the decisions of their applications are to do so within one (1) calendar month of receiving the initial outcome. Appeals will be evaluated by the Chief Executive, or a delegate. If a delegate reviews the outcome of the appeal, approval will need to be obtained from the Chief Executive.

Guidelines for assessing Compassionate Grant applications

Applications must be submitted within a twelve month period from the first day of the course /programme.

The application must be accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation from the student.

The following **criteria** will be used to assist decision-making:

1. Only the following situations which affect the student's study ability will be considered as being compassionate:
 - Serious illness
 - Serious injury
 - Events beyond the control of the student
2. The following conditions or circumstances are not normally acceptable grounds for compassionate grants where it already existed when the student first enrolled at UCOL:
 - Long-term conditions (e.g. physical disability, epilepsy, depression);
 - Chronic relapsing conditions (e.g. glandular fever, ME);
 - Ongoing personal trauma.
3. However, an application could be considered if a change in a long-term or recurring condition impairs a student's study ability.
4. The following situation is not normally acceptable grounds for a compassionate grant:
 - Failing to pass or complete a pre-requisite course in a programme.
5. Those seeking relief for financial hardship must apply under the Student Hardship Assistance Application.
6. A student who is successful in gaining an apprenticeship during their programme may use the same procedure to apply for a discretionary grant.

Supporting documentation

The application must be accompanied by appropriate supporting documentation from the student. The table below sets out examples of supporting documentation which is considered appropriate to accompany the application. This is not a complete list.

| Examples | Appropriate supporting documentation |
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| Serious illness or injury (student or significant other) | Declaration from a health professional assessing the student or significant other: e.g. GP |
| Bereavement of significant other | Death notice, or order of service from funeral providing student is mentioned by name and confirming relevant dates |
| Psychological impairment | Declaration from a health professional assessing the student: e.g. Psychiatrist |

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| Exceptional Circumstances | As defined in the Academic Statute*: this may be applied if the Deans' Committee believes the student meets this criteria rather than one of the above. |
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Additional supporting documentation:

- Certified copies of supporting documents if the original is not provided
- Confirmation of payment of fees for courses for which the student is seeking relief
- A completed Change of Circumstances form, or written notice of withdrawal (if applicable)
- Completed Application for Compassionate Grant form

Potential outcomes

- Decline of application based on failure to demonstrate that criteria are met
- Offer of future study with a discounted fee
- Fees paid deferred to an alternative study period
- Payment of a compassionate grant

* **Academic Statute** definition of Exceptional Circumstances:

Exceptional Circumstances means critical personal circumstances relating to a student's health and/or personal life that may seriously impact on the student's final result in a course/programme. These circumstances must be viewed as having either a significant effect on the student's performance in an assessment or a serious impact on the student's ability to attend, complete or submit an assessment on time. Each personal circumstance will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The final decision on all exceptional circumstances' requests will be made by the appropriate Faculty Board of Educational Improvement.

Applications for Student Hardship Assistance

1. In order to access student hardship students must be enrolled in an approved programme at UCOL and attending classes on a regular basis.
2. Applications can be lodged with any member of the Wellbeing Hub, any Student Success Team Leader or the Senior Manager Student Success. Applications may be received by any member of the Student Success team and forwarded to in the first instance a Wellbeing Hub member if they are unavailable, a team Leader or Student Success Senior Manager, Palmerston North. All applications are to be noted in a confidential records maintained by the Student Advocate and Welfare Coordinator. Confidentiality protocols must be adhered to when recording the application.
3. The staff member who receives the application is to acknowledge receipt of the application directly with the applicant and advise the applicant.
4. The nominated person will review the application to ensure:
 - a. The application form is complete;
 - b. Check that the necessary evidence required to fully assess the application is attached, or request additional information from the applicant; and

- c. Download and print the student's enrolment, any previous applications or payments made to the applicant and any additional information that may be useful.
5. The nominated person will convene an assessment meeting to assess the application. Applications should be assessed on the same day the application is made given the emergency nature of the assistance required. The nominated person and two of the following UCOL team members are required to assess each application:
 - a. The Senior Student Success Manager
 - b. Any Student Success Team Leader
 - c. Any member of the Wellbeing hub
 - d. The Financial Controller
6. Applicants must be advised within One (1) business day of making the application of the outcome. Applicants must also be advised of the right of appeal to the outcome of their application. Appeals must be made to either the Senior Manager of Student Success or the Chief Financial Officer.
7. Payments for approved applicants should be processed on the same day the outcome is made. All approved payments are required to be countersigned by at least two (2) of the following authorised signatories:
 - a. Any Student Success Team Leader
 - b. The Senior Student Success Manager
 - c. The Student Advocate and Welfare Coordinator
 - d. The Financial Controller

Guidelines for assessing Student Hardship applications

1. Applications must be submitted within the year of enrolled study. No applications will be accepted or assessed prior to the withdrawal period of the programme the applicant is enrolled in (that is 10% of the time of the programme or 30 days from commencement of the programme – whichever is the lesser).
2. The need for assistance should be of a temporary nature. However, if it is a long term problem the applicant must also be referred to organisations and groups that may be able to offer assistance.
3. The assistance is only for essential expenses, such as food, petrol or an emergency assistance with rent or a doctor's appointment that the student cannot meet. Eligibility for referral to an emergency doctor can only be administered by staff based at the student wellbeing hub, the Senior Manager, or a nominated delegate.
4. All information provided remains confidential. Permission may be gained to obtain clarification where necessary.
5. Those assessing the application may review the applicant's bank statement provided to evaluate the need and use of finances. The following expenditures made by the applicant (but not limited to) may be, but not necessarily, reasons to decline the application:

- a. Purchases of alcohol
- b. Purchases of tobacco, cigarettes, and or vaping devices or cartridges
- c. Transactions related to gambling
- d. The purchase of illicit or recreational narcotics or supplements
- e. Unexplained repetitive cash withdrawals

Supporting documentation

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| Examples | Appropriate supporting documentation |
|---|---|
| Evidence of financial hardship and financial management | Copy of a bank statement showing transactions for the past month |
| Accommodation support | Rental invoice, or evidence of previous rent payments, or copy of a lease agreement |
| Emergency medical support | Evidence of injury or illness, invoice from a medical practitioner etc. |
| Exceptional Circumstances | Evidence of financial needs for emergency relief, eg. Bill payments etc. |

Potential outcomes

- Decline of application based on failure to demonstrate that criteria are met
- Offer of budgetary and financial management
- Food voucher or purchase voucher for food from an approved supermarket/store
- Payment of a one-off hardship grant
- Referral to another organisation, group or service for follow up

Additional information

1. This is a discretionary grant and not an entitlement. Every application will be assessed on the individual details and merits of the application. The number of students receiving assistance is limited by the funds available each year.
2. As a condition of receiving the hardship grant applicants may be required to seek further long term budgeting, or other advice.
3. Payments are made as a non-recoverable grant as first preference.
4. Applicants who supply incorrect information will have their application declined.

5. There will be a limit set to how much an individual student can receive in a 12 month enrolment period. \$350 per full time student or on a prorata basis dependant on enrolment period is the limit. Any amount above this requires approval from the Chief Financial Officer.
6. Statistical information is to be kept for reporting purposes.

Related Documentation

- [Student Financial Support Policy](#)
- Executive Deans Operational Committee Terms of Reference (Office of Executive Director, Education & Applied Research)
- [International Student Fees and Refunds Procedure](#)
- [International Students Procedure](#)
- [Student Fee Refund Procedure](#)