

# University of Essex

## Graduation Assistance Fund Terms and Conditions 2021-22

The University of Essex offers an Assistance Fund to assist graduands who cannot afford the cost of gown hire and/or guest tickets for their Graduation ceremony. Awards take the form of a non-repayable grant awarded to successful applicants.

### Terms and conditions

#### 1. Eligibility

Below is a list of the full eligibility criteria for each element of the Graduation Assistance Fund. **You must meet all** these conditions to be considered for an award:

- You are a current or former University of Essex student eligible to attend a Graduation ceremony in July 2022
- You are from a low-income household of £35,000\* or below.

\*Applicants who are from households of over £35,000 can apply if they are experiencing significant and exceptional unforeseen financial difficulty. These circumstances should be explained in their application form.

#### Applicants who are not eligible

The following applicants are not eligible for this award regardless of meeting the above criteria:

- Applicants who do not fulfil the definitions and eligibility given above

#### 2. Evidence

To support your Graduation Assistance Fund application, you must provide accurate, up to date and relevant evidence to support your reason for applying. Some examples are provided below, though this list is not exhaustive, so please be aware that you may be asked to provide further evidence if it is necessary to assess your application.

All evidence provided must be clear enough to read, in accepted formats (pdf, jpg, doc, xlsx, png, txt) and in English. You must ensure that any evidence that is displayed in a language other than English is translated **before** submitting it as part of your application.

You are required to provide the following evidence to support your application, regardless of the element of the fund you are applying for:

Evidence type	Applicant type	Conditions and examples
Proof of household income  Household Income means any of the following that apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• your parents' income, if you're under 25 and live with them or depend on them financially</li><li>• the combined income of one of your parents and their partner, if you're under</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All Applicants</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Most recent evidence of your household income.  This may be a P60 for the 2020/21 tax year, a Statement of Earnings from HMRC or equivalent evidence from your home country. If your income was zero or if you have an emergency tax code (e.g. ending in M1, W1, or T) you must submit a Statement of Earnings instead of a P60 (unless you are</li></ul>

<p>25 and live with them or depend on them financially</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• your partner's income, if you're over 25 and live with them (even if they spend most of their time abroad)</li> <li>• income you get from your own savings, investments or property, for example dividends or rent</li> </ul>		<p>claiming one of the means tested benefits listed below).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are living with a partner, you must provide proof of their income even if it is zero, unless you or they are claiming one of the means-tested benefits listed below.</li> </ul>
	All applicants	<p>All financial statements must be in a clear readable format, containing the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• applicant/partner or spouse name and address</li> <li>• Bank account details, including sort code and account number</li> <li>• Opening and closing balance</li> <li>• Transactions covering the last 90 days before you applied to the Fund</li> <li>• Notes must be added to all transactions going into or out of your accounts over £50 and must explain the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Who the transaction is from/to</li> <li>○ What the transaction is for</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Bank statements for <u>every</u> financial account that you and your partner/spouse own		

In addition to the evidence in the above table, you may be asked to provide additional evidence if the assessor deems it necessary.

### 3. How to apply

To apply for financial support from the Graduation Assistance Fund, you will need to do the following:

1. Ensure that you meet the eligibility criteria
2. Complete our [online application form](#)
3. Follow the instructions to complete the application form, upload the required evidence and submit your application

**Note: your application will not be assessed until you submit a full and complete application form, including all necessary evidence to complete an assessment.**

### 4. Award and Conditions

Please see more details for each element of the Graduation Assistance Fund that you may be eligible to receive following a successful outcome. You may apply for one or both of these elements as part of a single application.

Hardship Fund elements	Award	Conditions
Guest tickets	Up to 2 guest tickets for 1 ceremony in July 2022	Graduands can apply for tickets for up to 2 guests to attend 1 ceremony in July 2022 with a cost of £25 per ticket, maximum £50 total.
Graduation gown hire	Hire costs of 1 gown for 1 ceremony	Graduands can apply for the cost of 1 gown for themselves to wear to 1 ceremony at a maximum cost of £45

If you are successful in being awarded the Graduation Assistance Fund, you will be notified to your email account. If you wish to receive an award letter, this can be requested by contacting the [Graduation Team](#).

## 5. Application assessment process

As part of your application, you will be required to complete a 'supporting personal statement', providing details of your individual circumstances. As part of your statement, you must demonstrate the following:

- What your current financial difficulties are
- Why you or your guests cannot afford to pay for your gown and/or guest tickets

The Graduation Assistance Fund is discretionary and applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis. We aim to process applications as soon as possible but during our busiest times there may be a delay.

Assessments will examine how well you meet the eligibility criteria for the fund, with a particular focus on:

- **Supporting personal statement:** This should outline your current financial situation and include any other relevant information about your case. Ensure that you have read all supporting guidance and Terms & Conditions fully in order to ensure that you present a strong and complete case for support.
- **Financial situation:** In addition to the information provided in your personal statement, we will look at your income and expenditure in order to understand your financial situation. If you have high levels of non-essential expenditure, your application may be rejected.

All information provided in support of an application will be considered and we encourage you to provide as much relevant information as possible in order to give us a full picture of your circumstances.

We aim to complete the assessment and provide an outcome of a **full** and **complete** application and evidence within **10 working days**. If you are required to provide further evidence as part of your application, the 10 working days will only start from the point we have received **all** necessary evidence.

## 6. Payment arrangements

- Payment will only be processed when we have completed your Graduation Assistance Fund assessment.
- Payments will be usually processed within **7 working days**.
- Awards will be paid via BACS to your nominated bank account as stated in your application.

## 7. Graduation Assistance Fund closing dates

Applications to the Graduation Assistance Fund close on Sunday 26 June at 11.59pm.

## 8. Appeals

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of your outcome of your application, you can appeal within **10 working days** of your outcome email to the [Graduation Team](#).

Your appeal will be considered at the discretion of the Graduation Manager or their nominee.

**NOTE:** *These terms and conditions apply to the Graduation Assistance Fund awarded for the academic year 2021-22. The University of Essex reserves the right to update these terms and conditions as necessary.*