Guidelines on how to apply for financial assistance from the OU Students Educational Trust (OUSET)

Please read these notes carefully before submitting your application form.

Thank you for your enquiry about assistance from OUSET. This is a registered Charity which is run by the Open University Students Association.

The Students Association and OUSET are operated independently of the Open University. OUSET funds are raised by students to support other students who are suffering financial hardship.

Please make sure you have competed the following steps before submitting your application

* Read the current OUSET Eligibility Criteria carefully, to make sure your situation is suitable for an application to the Trust. If you have queries about the Criteria, please contact the office to discuss.
* You must be reserved or registered on the module(s) to which your application relates.
* Check that the window for OUSET accepting applications is still open, by visiting the Students Association website [here](http://www.open.ac.uk/ousa/help-and-support/ouset). Applications received outside of this application window will not usually be accepted.
* OUSET funding is reserved for those who have exhausted other potential sources of financial support. The Trust will not accept applications from any student who has not been in touch with the OU Student Recruitment and Fees (SRF) to discuss their finance options and from any student who is eligible for alternative funding, including but not limited to:

1. A loan from the Student Loans Company (for undergraduate and postgraduate modules)
2. A grant from the Open University’s Student Support Fund (this is a source of funding allocated by the University to help students with study associated costs, such as set books, tutorial travel and computing equipment), or any other hardship fund available to you at the time of making an application to OUSET.

* You will be asked to evidence your discussion with the OU Student Recruitment and Fees and inform us what options of funding you have explored prior to applying to OUSET (including any evidence of any decision outcomes/ grounds for rejections for funding)
* If you are eligible for a student loan or any other alternative loan facility but choose not to take that option, it is NOT appropriate to then apply to OUSET for funding.
* The form should be completed electronically or, if completing by hand, please write clearly in black ink and block capitals.
* Your application must be accompanied by documentary evidence of your current income and expenditure, including the **three most recent consecutive months’ bank statements** for every account held in your sole or joint name. This includes savings accounts and ‘unused’ accounts with very low balances. The Trust also reserves the right to request additional household financial information to support applications.

Credit Card and Loan Repayments

It is essential that you provide full and documented details of your total monthly income as well as your total monthly expenditure and commitments in the Financial Disclosure section of the application form. The Trustees will assess your level of financial hardship having regard to disposable income. You should further note that if you simply state ‘loan repayment’ or ‘credit cards’ without giving any further explanation, the Trustees will regard such amounts as disposable income.

Non-English Language Documents

Please note that if the information/evidence provided to support your application is not in English you must provide a translation. This can be in the form of detailed annotation of the documents, or separate copies of translated versions. Your application will be returned as incomplete without a proper translation.

##### General Advice to Applicants

OUSET was established by The Open University Students Association to help students of this university who are in financial need. It is particularly aimed at those students who, for whatever reason, do not meet the criteria of the larger assistance funds operated under Government Schemes or by the University itself.

As the Trust is a charity it is not constrained by the rules governing public funds and has far more discretion to consider each student’s application on its individual merits. However, all applicants should bear in mind the following important factors:

* The Trust’s reserves are small by comparison with Government and University Assistance Funds.
* The overwhelming majority of the Trust’s funds come directly from other students, many of whom are not well off themselves.
* The Trustees have a duty to those students who work to raise the funds and to the others who contribute to the Trust to use those funds wisely and appropriately.

Please help us to help you by completing your application as fully and clearly as possible. Answer every question and make a note on the form if a question is not applicable to you. For more information on how to complete your application please read our step-by-step guide.

As a small charity, OUSET does not have the resources to enter into detailed correspondence and dialogue because applicants have failed to provide the information requested. Moreover, since our funds are almost wholly raised by and from other students, the Trustees have a duty to minimise the costs of administering the Charity so that we can maximise the number of students we can assist. Please help us protect our resources, by fully completing your application before submitting it.

Submitting your application

* OUSET will not usually accept an application outside the specified application windows (specified [here](http://www.open.ac.uk/ousa/help-and-support/ouset) on our website) where the application is for module fees or another form of financial assistance required by a module start date. There is some flexibility with applications for financial assistance that is NOT required by the module start date—please speak to the office about this before making an application outside of the timeframe.
* Your application will usually take between 4 and 6 weeks to process. Once we received your application and confirm it is complete, we may contact you (by email) to obtain any further relevant information. We will obtain a Letter of Support from the University, usually from your Student Support Team. Your case will then be put before the Trustees, by way of a Small Case Group or, for more complex cases, to the Full Board. We will write to you when the Trustees have made their decision, confirming the details of your grant or explaining why your application was unsuccessful.

Payment of Grants

* Where an award is made for module fees, payment is made directly to the University by way of a Sponsorship Agreement and not to the applicant unless part payment has already been made to the University.
* Where an award is made for travel to tutorials or day schools, it is paid directly to the applicant, in two instalments. The first payment (usually half of the amount awarded) is made at the beginning of the module and the second payment is made once we receive written confirmation from your tutor of your attendance to date, together with copies of all travel receipts. At the end of the course you will be expected to provide us with written confirmation from your tutor of your attendance and the remainder of your travel receipts.
* Payments for other categories of grant will be addressed on a case by case basis.

Case Review

The OUSET Trustees have absolute discretion to decide the circumstances in which to make an award. If your application has been rejected by a Small Case Group you may apply to have it reviewed by the Full Board. To do this, you will need to obtain a Case Review Form, available on the website [here](http://www.open.ac.uk/ousa/help-and-support/ouset), and submit it to the office within 10 days of the original decision. Please refer to the separate document covering Case Review Process [here](http://www.open.ac.uk/ousa/help-and-support/ouset) on the website. The decision of the Full Board of Trustees is final.

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Contact Details

To return a completed application form or to discuss any aspect of the application process, please contact the office:

OU Students Educational Trust

PO Box 397

Walton Hall

Milton Keynes

MK7 6BE

England

[ouset@open.ac.uk](mailto:ouset@student.open.ac.uk)

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