

# **Colchester Institute Hardship Fund 17/18**

***Deadline for applications to be returned to Student Services is: 24<sup>th</sup> November 2017***

***Applications received after this time will not be considered until the next Semester.***

Please read these Guidance Notes carefully before completing the application form.

If you think that you will struggle financially across this academic year then please submit your application as soon as possible. The Hardship Fund is a limited pot of money – once it has been spent we cannot make any further awards.

Applications will be accepted from Undergraduate students until the last day of the Summer term subject to the availability of funds.

## **Eligibility to apply:**

- Students must be fully registered at their educational institution
- Students must be enrolled on a course at Year Zero, Foundation Degree, or above.
- Students must fulfil the residency criteria (see section A and B)
- Undergraduate students must have taken the full amount of Student Loan to which they are entitled before they can apply to the Hardship Fund – this means that you must have been financially assessed. The only exception to this is where students have not been financially assessed because their household income is over the income threshold for means-tested support. In this case students must provide evidence of their household income (i.e. P60's, wage slips, etc.)

## **What is the Hardship Fund?**

The Fund can help with unexpected financial hardship. You can apply to the Fund at any point throughout the academic year (so long as there are still funds remaining). Any help you receive from the Fund is usually non-repayable. The Fund cannot help with paying tuition fees; instead undergraduates should apply for a loan from the government.

Continuing part-time old fees students who are receiving the fee grant may also be eligible for tuition fee support via the Additional Fee Support Scheme (see separate AFSS application).

## **How your application will be assessed**

Your application will be assessed by a panel for either a 'standard' or a 'non-standard' claim.

The assessment process for 'standard' and 'non-standard' awards is designed to identify students who have particular financial needs and those who are in unforeseen financial difficulty

You may only apply to the Fund once during an academic year unless your circumstances have undergone a significant change which has resulted in a loss of income (which was not

taken into account in the original assessment) or an increase in essential expenditure. Running out of money is not regarded as a Change in Circumstances.

You will be asked to complete a Change of Circumstances application form (available to collect from Student Services) and provide documentary evidence for the change in circumstance.

### **Submitting your application**

Before Colchester Institute will consider your application to the Hardship Fund we require you to take the following steps:

1. Seek advice and assistance from Citizens Advice Bureau about your financial situation.
2. Seek advice from the National Debt Agency (if you have debts)
3. Research charities that may be able to help i.e. Turn2Us.org.uk
4. Be in or able to evidence that you are actively seeking paid employment.
5. Complete the Money Management Development Modules available from Student Services.

***Please provide evidence of the above with your application. If the above steps are not evidenced in your application it will not be assessed and a decision will be delayed.***

***In addition to the evidence above, on the back page of the application form is a list of documents you will need to submit with your completed application form.***

If any evidence is missing your application will not be accepted and no assessment will be made.

Please retain these notes for your information and return your completed application form and ALL supporting documentation in person. Your form and documentation will be checked-in by a member of staff who will try to ensure nothing is missing but required evidence will be different depending on your individual situation. Your assessment will be delayed if evidence is missing, so please look through the checklist to ensure that you are submitting all the evidence relevant to your situation.

There are times when it is not apparent that evidence is missing until the assessment is being carried out. If this happens the panel will email you to let you know what is needed and you will be given a three week deadline within which to submit the outstanding evidence. If we do not receive the additional information/evidence by the deadline your current application will be withdrawn. This does not prevent you from submitting a new application (so long as there are still funds remaining), however please be advised that you will be required to submit new, up-to-date, information/evidence and your application will be treated as a brand new application. All applications are dealt with in strict date of receipt/completion order.

Provided your application form has been accurately completed and ALL the appropriate documentary evidence supplied, a decision should be made within four working weeks of submission.

We will use your @colchester email address to request any additional information from you, and to notify you of the outcome of your application. It is, therefore, important that you check your email regularly and let Student Services know should your email address be out of action or you expect to be unable to check your messages for some time.

If you would like us to use a different email address (or contact you by post) please state this clearly on your form. Decisions will not be given by telephone or in person.

### **Payments**

Payments are made by BACS directly into your bank account. Please ensure that your bank details are correct and that you specify which bank account you require payment to go into should your application be successful. Occasionally awards will be made to third parties with your permission.

Ordinarily, payments will not be made until the start of the Spring Term. After this time, you can also expect to receive payment with the four-week period.

### **How to request an appeal**

Appeal: If you are unhappy with the decision reached by the panel you may submit an appeal within two weeks of the outcome of the panel. Your appeal will be considered Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality.

The decision of the Vice Principal following appeal is final.

### **Top tips for budgeting**

Managing your money can be daunting, especially if you have not been responsible for your finances before. Before you get into serious trouble, seek confidential financial advice and help with money management from the advisers in Student Support. The following tips will get you started:

- Spend time preparing a budget planner. Consider your income and expenditure – do you have a healthy surplus each week, or are you living beyond your means?
- Consider setting up direct debits and standing orders to pay regular bills, so you don't miss payment dates and get fined. Most companies offer discounts if you pay by Direct Debit.
- Plan for extra or unforeseen expenditure by saving a little each week/month.
- Avoid credit cards and bank loans where possible. Keep an eye out for interest free balance transfer offers.
- Get a student bank account and take advantage of discounts and offers in supermarkets.
- Be environmentally friendly and money conscious – switch off lights when you leave a room!

- If you live in University accommodation in your first year remember that your bills are included in the rent and your daily travelling costs are likely to be low. Be prepared for higher living costs if you move off campus in your second year.
- Consider purchasing a NUS Extra card for discounts in certain shops and online

For more information about any of the hardship funding, please contact Student Services  
For information on the bursary schemes operated by Colchester Institute, please contact UCC Operations.