

## **The Open University Care Experienced Scholarship**

The Open University is a leading distance learning higher education provider. We have helped over 2 million people fulfil their potential and open up their future through education. Young people who have spent time in care can face many significant barriers to entering and succeeding in higher education. Our latest scholarship has been designed in collaboration with [The John Lewis Partnership as part of the Building Happier Futures initiative](#), to offer young people with experience of being in care an opportunity to study an undergraduate qualification for free.

The Open University Care Experienced Scholarship is offering ten full undergraduate scholarships for 2026/27, to care experienced young people aged 30 and under.

## **Terms & Conditions**

These conditions contain the terms of the Care Experienced Scholarship. They set out the rights and responsibilities of each party which will apply to your application for the scheme and, for successful applicants only, whilst you are a registered student. Please read these conditions carefully, ensuring that you understand them before applying.

### **A. Eligibility**

1. A care experienced student is defined as anyone who has spent time living, or is currently, in the care of a Local Authority at any stage in their life, no matter how short, including adopted young people who were previously in care. This care may have been provided in one of many different settings

such as in residential care, foster care, kinship care, or through being looked after at home under the supervision of a Social Worker.

2. To qualify for the scheme, you must meet all the following criteria:

- Be starting OU study for the first time in the 2026/27 academic year
- Be 30 years of age or under on 1 September 2026
- Be ordinarily resident in the UK and eligible for a UK fee
- Hold no existing higher education qualification(s)
- Be able to demonstrate proof of your experience of being in care
- Have a gross personal income of not more than £25,000 per year or be in receipt of a qualifying benefit
- Be studying a minimum of 30 credits of study per year, towards an Open University undergraduate qualification

## **B. Supporting Evidence**

3. You will need to provide evidence of your care experience. This could be a letter from your Local Authority confirming your care leaver status, or a letter from a GP, social worker, care experienced support service or other professional person from the local authority in which you were looked after (see [Appendix 1](#) for examples).
4. You will also need to provide evidence of your personal income or a qualifying benefit (see [Appendix 2](#) and [Appendix 3](#) for further information).

5. To ensure the panel can fairly review all evidence provided, please limit your supporting documents to a maximum of 50 pages. Applications which exceed this limit will not be accepted.
6. Application forms and supporting evidence submitted by email must be sent as file attachments (for example a PDF file, Word document, JPEG image). For security reasons we cannot accept evidence that has been sent as a clickable hyperlink requiring the opening and downloading of data (for example Google Drive or OneDrive links).

### **C. Scholarship Awards**

7. The scholarship award will offer full fee waivers for up to 360 credits of study across the duration of your scholarship. The minimum study intensity permitted in each seasonal academic year is 30 credits, the maximum per seasonal academic year is 120 credits. Fee waiver amounts will be calculated based on the fee amounts for which you are directly liable.
8. Study breaks of up to one academic year are permitted. If you take a study break of one academic year and return in the following year, you will remain eligible for your scholarship funding. Study breaks of longer than one academic year will terminate your eligibility for the scholarship, after which a request for exceptional reinstatement will be required. Requests for reinstatement should be submitted directly to [fees-fs-bursaries-scholarships@open.ac.uk](mailto:fees-fs-bursaries-scholarships@open.ac.uk).

9. In circumstances where you are required to repeat, defer or withdraw from a module, consideration will be given to the circumstances which led to the repeat, deferral or withdrawal and an exceptional award of additional waivers or a Discretionary Fee Credit may be approved.
10. Decisions on exceptional awards will be made by the Senior Manager, Policy & Controls, Academic Services or their delegated authority in line with the eligibility criteria for Discretionary Fee Credits defined by the University Senate and detailed in the applicable [Fee Rules 2026/27](#).
11. Any awards made by The Open University as a result of inaccurate or false information submitted by the applicant will be recovered from the applicant.
12. Cash alternatives will not be available.

#### **D. Applications**

13. Applications may be submitted by email to [fees-fs-bursaries-scholarships@open.ac.uk](mailto:fees-fs-bursaries-scholarships@open.ac.uk) or by post to:

Student Fees

The Open University

PO Box 6055

Milton Keynes

MK10 1NH

14. The deadline for applications is midday on 1 July 2026. No further applications will be accepted after this date. This applies to all study

which begins during the 2026/27 academic year (1 August 2026 to 31 July 2027).

15. If you would like a Welsh version of the application form or terms and conditions, you can request this by emailing Student Fees at [fees-fs-bursaries-scholarships@open.ac.uk](mailto:fees-fs-bursaries-scholarships@open.ac.uk). Any forms submitted in Welsh will not be treated less favourably than those submitted in English.

Os hoffech fersiwn Gymraeg o'r ffurflen gais neu y telerau ac amodau, gallwch ofyn am hyn drwy e-bostio Ffioedd Myfyrwyr: [fees-fs-bursaries-scholarships@open.ac.uk](mailto:fees-fs-bursaries-scholarships@open.ac.uk). Ni fydd ffurflenni a gyflwynir yn Gymraeg yn cael eu trin yn llai ffafriol na'r rhai a gyflwynir yn Saesneg.

16. It is your responsibility to provide all supporting evidence for your application by the advertised deadline. We reserve the right to request additional evidence from you. Failure to submit all required evidence may cause a processing delay and could lead to your application being declined.
17. Only one application per person. In the instance that more eligible applications are received than scholarships available, a panel of Open University experts will review the application and supporting evidence accompanying each of the selected applications to determine which applicants are awarded a scholarship.
18. Applications from students who have previously been awarded an Open University scholarship will not be considered.
19. Successful applicants will be notified by email on or before 17 July 2026.

20. No further applications will be required. Once a scholarship is approved, fee waivers will be allocated automatically subject to satisfactory participation in study for the previous academic year.
21. Applications on behalf of another person will not be accepted. The Open University accepts no responsibility for applications that are lost, delayed, misdirected, incomplete or cannot be delivered.
22. For you to be certain your application has been received you should send it using a signed for delivery service such as special or recorded delivery. Proof of postage using an unrecorded delivery service cannot be considered proof of delivery to The Open University. Applications must be received by midday on 1 July 2026. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered.
23. If an applicant rejects the scholarship, fails to complete their registration for study for which the award was made or the applicant is in breach of these terms and conditions the award will be forfeited, and The Open University shall be entitled to select another recipient.
24. The successful applicants may be offered the opportunity to take part in promotional activity related to the Care Experienced Scholarship, such as attending fundraising events or taking part in forums.
25. By submitting your application, you agree to the collection, retention, usage and distribution of your personal information in order to process your application and contact you.

26. The Open University shall use and take care of any personal information supplied to it as described in its [Privacy Notice](#), a copy of which is available on request, in accordance with data protection legislation.
27. The Open University accepts no responsibility for any disappointment incurred by the applicant as a result of entering the application process. The fund is discretionary, and the outcome of the draw is final.
28. The Open University will take all reasonable steps to continue the services offered as part of this scheme. There may be circumstances outside of our control where we are unable to provide those services in full or in part for reasons such as fire, flood, pandemic, terrorist acts or industrial disputes. Where those, or similar, circumstances arise we will minimise disruption so far as we are reasonably able to.
29. Promoter: The Open University, Walton Hall, Kents Hill, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

## **Appendix 1 – Supporting Evidence of Your Care Experience**

Remember to make sure your supporting documents do not exceed 50 pages.

Below are suggestions of how you may be able to evidence your experience in care:

- A letter from a local authority confirming care leaver status.
- A letter from a GP, social worker, care experienced support service (or other professional person listed below) will be accepted as evidence of care leaver status.

A professional person is someone from the local authority where you were looked after, or a:

- social worker
- doctor
- nurse
- lawyer
- solicitor
- college/university student adviser
- teacher
- nursery teacher
- notary public
- counsellor
- police officer

- minister of religion
- family mediation worker

## **Appendix 2 – Personal Income**

### **Types of income and evidence**

Types of income and supporting evidence required.

#### **Employment income**

One of:

- Copy of P60 or P45
- Copy of pay slip from tax month 12 or tax week 52 showing 'total paid to date'

#### **Self-employment income**

(estimate for 2025/26 if you are not sure, you must provide evidence of 2024/25 income)

One of:

- Copy of letter from accountant confirming income from self-employment
- Copy of HMRC tax calculation
- Copy of your P60, P11D or confirmation of earnings from chartered or certified accountant

#### **Retirement or disability pension**

- Copy of proof of amount and how often it is paid

### **Benefits income**

- Copy of letter from Jobcentre Plus confirming amount and type of benefit (see the sections below on benefits to include/not to include as income)

### **Unearned investment income**

(e.g. interest from bank or building society accounts, ISAs, shares)

- Copy of letter or statement from bank, building society or investment company

### **Unearned income from property rental or lodgers**

- Rental income: Copy of tax calculation showing total property rental income
- Lodger income: Copy of signed letter from lodger confirming total amount of rent paid

### **Other income**

(e.g. loans, bursaries, maintenance payments, redundancy payments)

- Copy of proof of other income including amount and date received

### **Benefits to include as part of personal income**

- Contribution-based JSA/ESA
- Incapacity Benefit
- Maternity Allowance
- Statutory Sick Pay
- Carer's Allowance
- Retirement Pension

**Benefits NOT to include as part of personal income**

- Disability Living Allowance
- Attendance Allowance
- Industrial Injuries Benefit
- Child Benefit
- Guardian's Allowance
- Working or Child Tax Credits
- Higher Education Bursary paid to care leavers
- Personal Independence Payments
- Armed Forces Independence Payments

**Appendix 3 – Qualifying Benefits**

**Qualifying benefits**

- Income Support
- Housing Benefit (including Local Housing Allowance)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Universal Credit
- A reduction under the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (students in Wales only)