

The Open University Open Futures Scholarship for Black Students

The Open University is a leading distance learning provider. We are committed to driving change and ensuring that academic institutions remain inclusive and accessible for all members of society.

The Open Futures Scholarship for Black Students launched for the first time in 2022/23. Now in its fifth year, it will generously offer 10 scholarships for the 2026/27 academic year, giving new, UK-resident students who identify as Black the opportunity to study for free.

Terms & Conditions

These conditions contain the terms of the Open Futures Scholarship for Black Students. They set out the rights and responsibilities of each party which will apply in relation to your application for the scheme and, for successful applicants only, whilst you are a registered student. Please read these conditions carefully before you submit an application and make sure that you understand them.

A. Eligibility

1. In order to qualify for a scholarship, you must meet **all** the following criteria:
 - Identify as being from a Black background (see [Appendix 1](#) for full details)
 - Have an annual household income of not more than £25,000 or be in receipt of a qualifying benefit
 - Be ordinarily resident in the UK and eligible for a UK fee

- Hold no existing higher education qualification(s)
- Be a new student to The Open University
- Be studying towards an undergraduate OU qualification or module commencing in the 2026/27 academic year
- Be studying at a minimum intensity of 25% (30 credits) per academic year

B. Supporting Evidence

2. You may be required to provide evidence of your UK fee eligibility to support your application (see [Appendix 2](#) for further information).
3. You will also need to provide evidence of your annual gross household income or a qualifying benefit to support your application (see [Appendix 3](#) and [Appendix 4](#) for further information).

C. Scholarship Awards

4. The scholarship award will offer full fee waivers for up to 360 credits of study across the duration of your scholarship. The number of credits you study each year can vary as long as you meet the credit requirements. The minimum study intensity permitted in each academic year is 30 credits and the maximum is 120 credits. Fee waiver amounts will be calculated based on the fee amounts for which you are directly liable.
5. 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.

6. 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.
7. 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 [Fee Rules 2026/27](#).
8. 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.
9. Cash alternatives will not be available.

D. Applications

10. Applications may be submitted by email to fees-fs-bursaries-scholarships@open.ac.uk or by post to:

Student Fees

The Open University

PO Box 6055

Milton Keynes

MK10 1NH

11. The deadline for applications is midday on 24 June 2026. A completed application form and supporting evidence, including residency evidence where required, must be received by this date. 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).
12. 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).
13. 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.
14. Only one application per person. In the instance that more eligible applications are received than scholarships available, a randomised draw will take place to allocate the 10 scholarships.
15. Applications from students who have previously been awarded an Open University scholarship will not be considered.
16. 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. 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. Ni fydd ffurflenni a gyflwynir yn Gymraeg yn cael eu trin yn llai ffafriol na'r rhai a gyflwynir yn Saesneg.

17. Successful applicants will be notified by email on or before 10 July 2026.
18. 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.
19. 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.
20. 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 24 June 2026. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered.
21. 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.

22. The successful applicants may be offered the opportunity to take part in promotional activity related to the Open Futures Scholarship for Black Students, such as attending fundraising events or taking part in forums.
23. 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.
24. 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.
25. 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.
26. 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.
27. Promoter: The Open University, Walton Hall, Kents Hill, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

E. Frequently Asked Questions

How were the eligibility criteria decided?

The aim of the scholarship is to open up higher education to underrepresented groups and ensure that these students receive the support they need to succeed in their studies. The eligibility criteria were designed to encourage individuals from specific target groups to study with The Open University.

Why do the entry criteria positively discriminate when The Open University claims to be "open to all"?

We value all our students and we want to do our best to ensure that the OU reflects the whole of our society. Our analysis indicates that currently we have a shortfall in the numbers of students we would like to attract from some groups of UK society. Widening access to and success in higher education is at the heart of the OU's mission. We aim to support students whatever their backgrounds, to reach their potential and fulfil their ambitions.

Why isn't the scholarship open to all students?

Scholarship funds are limited, it is therefore not possible to open the scheme up to all students. This limit on funds was considered when determining who the scholarship would be available to. The eligibility criteria are in place to maximise the benefits of the scheme and ensure it reaches those who will benefit from it most.

Appendix 1 – Ethnicity

Applicants must have one of the following ethnicities:

- Black African
- Black Caribbean
- Black Other
- Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed – White and Black African
- Other mixed background (to include Black African, Black Caribbean or Black Other)

Appendix 2 – UK Fee Eligibility

The evidence you'll need to provide will depend mainly on your immigration status. We've listed the evidence required by immigration status, so you can check and have it ready to submit with your application.

You can still complete your application if you don't have all the evidence requested. You'll need to tell us why you cannot provide it though, because if we know the reason why we may be able to suggest alternatives.

EU Settlement Scheme status

If you or your family member have an EU Settlement Scheme status (settled or pre-settled status) provide one of the following:

- Home Office share code to allow us to view your EU Settlement status, a copy of the ID page of your passport and a copy of the Home Office letter or email confirming the outcome of your application from which your current leave was granted and the dates between which it is valid.
- A copy of the front and back of your current biometric residence permit (BRP) confirming EU Settlement Scheme status.

No immigration restriction on the length of your stay in the UK

If you or your family member have no immigration restriction on how long you can stay in the UK, provide one of the following:

- A Home Office share code for us to view your eVisa and a copy of the Home Office letter or email confirming the outcome of your application from which your current leave was granted and the dates between which it is valid.
- A copy of the front and back of your biometric residence permit (BRP).

Refugee, Humanitarian Protection, or Leave under either the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) or Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) or a family member of someone granted one of these immigration statuses

If you have been granted one of the above residency immigration statuses, provide one of the following:

- Home Office share code for us to view your eVisa, a copy of the ID page of your passport and a copy of the Home Office letter or email with the outcome of your application from which your current leave was granted and the dates between which it is valid.
- A copy of the front and back of your current biometric residence permit (BRP) and a copy of the Home Office letter or email with the outcome of your application from which your current leave was granted and the dates between which it is valid.
- A copy of your travel document issued by the Home Office and a copy of the Home Office letter or email with the outcome of your application from which your current leave was granted and the dates between which it is valid.

Leave granted under the Ukraine Family Scheme, the Homes for Ukraine Sponsorship Scheme or the Ukraine Extension Scheme

If you have been granted one of the Ukraine immigration statuses, provide one of the following:

- Home Office share code for us to view your eVisa and a copy of the Home Office letter or email with the outcome of your application from which your current leave was granted and the dates between which it is valid.
- A copy of the front and back of your current biometric residence permit (BRP) and a copy of your Home Office letter or email with the outcome of your application from which your current leave was granted and the dates between which it is valid.
- A copy of the travel document issued by the Home Office and a copy of the Home Office letter or email with the outcome of your application from which your current leave was granted and the dates between which it is valid.

British Armed Forces personnel and their family members

If you're enlisted in the British Armed Forces, you'll need to provide a letter or email from your Commanding Officer or personnel department which includes the following:

- Where you were permanently resident on enlisting.
- If, since you enlisted, you have set up a permanent residence in a different nation and the date this happened.

Member of the British Armed Forces – Section 8(4) (a) of the Immigration Act 1971

You'll need to provide a copy of the ID page of your passport and your exempt vignette.

Asylum seeker

To confirm you have applied for asylum in the UK you will need to provide one of the following:

- A copy of the front and back of your Application Registration Card (ARC).
- A copy of any relevant Home Office correspondence.

Long residence

If you have been in the UK for over half of your life, or 20 years if you're over 18 or 7 years if you're under 18, you'll need to provide one of the following to confirm when you entered the UK:

- A copy of the immigration control entry stamp in your passport.
- A copy of your entry clearance permit.
- A copy of the front and back of your biometric residence permit (BRP) that confirms your entry date.
- A copy of any relevant Home Office letter.

To confirm your current immigration status, provide one of the following:

- A copy of the front and back of your current biometric residence permit (BRP).
- Home Office share code for us to view your eVisa, a copy of the ID page of your passport and a copy of the Home Office letter or email with the outcome of your application from which your current leave was granted and the dates between which it is valid.

Immigration status not already mentioned

To confirm your immigration status you'll need to provide one of the following:

- A copy of the front and back of your current biometric residence permit (BRP) and a copy of the Home Office letter or email confirming the

grounds your leave was granted and the dates between which it is valid.

- Home Office share code for us to view your eVisa, a copy of the ID page of your passport and a copy of the Home Office letter or email with the outcome of your application from which your current leave was granted and the dates between which it is valid.

Evidence to confirm your relationship to your family member

Depending on your relationship with your family member, you'll need to provide a copy of the relevant evidence from the following:

- Marriage certificate.
- Civil partnership certificate.
- Birth certificate.

Home Office share code for us to view your eVisa

You can get a Home Office share code to prove your immigration status on the GOV.UK website at [View and prove your immigration status: get a share code](#).

There are different types of Home Office share code available, however we can only accept a share code to prove your immigration status as part of your application.

Appendix 3 – Household Income

Types of income and evidence

Types of income and supporting evidence required for yourself and/or your partner

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 4 – 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)