

The Open University Carers' Scholarship

The Open University is a leading distance learning provider. Our flexible, innovative teaching fits around the lives of students who otherwise could not attend a campus-based university.

Carers face disadvantages that may prevent them from pursuing the education that they need. Providing unpaid care for a friend or family member can place huge demands on the lives of carers. It can affect progress in school, make sticking to a timetable difficult or require a career change to find employment that fits around caring.

We launched the Carers' Scholarship in 2020. So far, we have offered more than 150 scholarships to carers, providing them the opportunity to study for free and the freedom to plan for their futures and build lives around their responsibilities. In 2026/27 we are offering a further 10 scholarships to carers, including a minimum of 3 reserved for young carers aged 25 and under.

Terms & Conditions

These conditions contain the terms of the Carers' 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 carer is defined as anyone who looks after a family member, partner or

friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, mental health problem or addiction and who can't cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.

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 ordinarily resident in the UK and eligible for a UK fee
- Be a carer who cares for an average of at least 15 hours per week; or have been a carer within the last 2 years, with caring responsibilities for an average of at least 15 hours per week, but due to bereavement are no longer a carer
- Be able to demonstrate proof of your current, or recently ended, caring responsibilities
- Have a gross household 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 undergraduate study per year, on a modular basis or towards an Open University undergraduate qualification

B. Supporting Evidence

3. You will need to provide evidence which confirms that you are or have been providing unpaid care to one or more people. This could be a letter from your current GP, social worker, or carer support organisation (see [Appendix 1](#) for examples).

4. You will also need to provide evidence of your household 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.

C. Fee Waivers

6. 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.
7. 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.
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 [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

or by post to:

Student Fees

The Open University PO Box 6055

Milton Keynes

MK10 1NH

14. The deadline for applications is midday on 17 June 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. Application forms and supporting evidence submitted by email must be sent as file attachments (for example a PDF file, Word document, JPEG images). 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).

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. 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.

18. 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.

19. Applications from students who have previously been awarded an Open University scholarship will not be considered.
20. Successful applicants will be notified by email on or before 3 July 2026.
21. 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.
22. 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.
23. 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 17 June 2026. Applications received after this deadline will not be considered.
24. 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.
25. The successful applicants may be offered the opportunity to take part in promotional activity related to the Carers' Scholarship, such as attending fundraising events or taking part in forums.
26. 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.

27. 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.
28. The Open University accepts no responsibility for any disappointment incurred by the applicant as a result of entering the application process. The scheme is discretionary, and the outcome of the panel's decision is final.
29. 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.
30. Promoter: The Open University, Walton Hall, Kents Hill, Milton Keynes, MK7 6AA.

Appendix 1 – Supporting Evidence of Your Caring Responsibilities

To ensure your circumstances are fully considered, please supply evidence from both categories listed below. Providing sufficient and relevant evidence will ensure we have a complete view of your situation. Remember to make sure your supporting documents do not exceed 50 pages.

Caring

- Copy of letter confirming Carer's Allowance
- Copy of letter from your local caring organisation
- Copy of letter from Social Services
- Copy of a letter from your own GP
- Copy of a letter from the GP/Consultant/Nurse of the person you care for detailing their condition(s)
- Carers passport
- Carers ID card

Reason(s) you care

- Copy of a letter from the GP/Consultant/Nurse of the person you care for detailing their condition(s)/explaining the reason(s) they need care
- Copy of a letter from your local caring organisation explaining who you care for and why they need care

Appendix 2 – 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 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)