

University Hardship Fund (UHF) 2019/20

Guidance Notes

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What is the University Hardship Fund?The Plymouth Marjon University, University Hardship Fund (UHF) is available to help students who need extra financial support because they have higher than expected costs or experience severe financial difficulty during their course due to unexpected events.

Each application is assessed on an individual basis and means tested using the universities UHF assessment guidelines and figures which are based around the NASMA HE Support Fund Guidance 2019/20 with some changes made under agreement of the UHF assessors to reflect Plymouth Marjon University’s student profile, courses, local knowledge and budget available.

The size of the fund is limited and we may not be able to meet your needs in full or guarantee that funds will be available, especially towards the end of the academic year.

If you are successful, awards are paid in the form of a non-repayable grant.

Who can apply?You must meet certain residence requirements to qualify for the fund. You must have home fee status and have ordinarily been resident in the UK for at least five years prior to the start of your course, this residence not wholly or mainly for the purpose of receiving full-time education.

International students, EU students and students from the Channel Islands or Isle of Man cannot apply to the UHF.

If you are studying part-time then your course must be equivalent to at least 25% of a full time course.

Postgraduate students can apply but have further specific criteria – please see section on Postgraduate Students for further information.

When can I apply?The Fund is open from the start of the academic year until the end of May as long as monies remain. The application deadline will be advertised on the online [Community HUB](http://hub.marjon.ac.uk/) each year.
If there are still funds left, a Summer University Hardship Fund (SUHF) will be opened for a limited time for continuing students who will be in financial difficulty over the summer period. Details of this will be posted on the Community Hub.

Application forms are available on the Money Matters section of the Student Handbook, or paper copies are available from the Information Hub.
The University will normally only consider one UHF application each academic year (not including the SUHF), however if your financial situation changes you may contact studentfunding@marjon.ac.uk for a reassessment form.

Conditions of the University Hardship Fund
Before applying to the UHF students must have applied for and received the maximum amount of statutory student funding available to which they are entitled to during the academic year. Students that have chosen not to apply for their full student finance entitlement will not be eligible to apply.

Students must also have a student interest free banking account. Students that have been declined for a student overdraft facility must detail the reasons for this on their application and provide any relevant evidence.

Students applying to the fund who have accumulated debt prior to coming to university must show that appropriate steps have been taken to arrange affordable payment plans or that they have sought advice from debt help charities (e.g. Step Change or the Citizens Advice).

Normally only priority debts will be taken into account when assessing entitlement to the UHF. For further information regarding priority and non-priority debts please refer to our Debt Sheet on the Money Matters section of the Student Handbook.

Students who have received University Hardship Fund awards during previous academic years must show that the money awarded was used appropriately for its intended purpose to be able to receive further awards, unless unexpected essential expenses have occurred.

To be eligible for an award students must be fully enrolled at the University and be in attendance. If our online University databases show lack of attendance or non-submission of work the reasons for this will be questioned and may involve contacting other appropriate members of staff in the university such as Professional Development Tutors or Programme Leaders.

Priorities for assistanceThe UHF is there to help any eligible student who has a particular financial need, however as we may not be able to meet the needs of every application that we receive the University will give priority to the following groups of students when deciding how to allocate funding:

* Mature students (especially those with existing financial commitments including priority debts)
* Students with children (especially lone parents)
* Students with disabilities
* Students entering from care, foyers or were previously or currently homeless
* Students with caring responsibilities
* Estranged students
* Final year students
* Commuting students with higher than average travel costs

If you are unsure if you fit into one of these priority groups or would like further information please contact studentfunding@marjon.ac.uk

If you are not in one of the priority groups you can still apply, however you should provide as much evidence as possible to show why you have an exceptional need for help.

Disabled students – DSA & Educational Psychologist contribution costsStudents in receipt of DSA who wish to apply to the fund to cover the additional cost of support not covered by DSA (e.g. the additional cost towards a laptop) cannot apply for this cost alone but must undertake a full UHF assessment and provide all evidence required.
Students who need an Educational Psychologist assessment will be requested to pay a £50 contribution towards the assessment which will be in the form of a University loan. If a student cannot afford this contribution, then they will need to apply to the UHF.
In both instances the student would be assessed to see if they have a financial deficit over the academic year and if they would be eligible for support from the fund. If awarded financial support from the UHF, the student can then choose to put this towards the additional DSA support costs or the Educational Psychologist contribution loan would be cleared, and any additional award paid to the student.

Non-payment of assessed contributions from parents/partnersUndergraduate and PGCE/School Direct students are financially assessed for student funding based on the income of their parents (if under 25) or partner (if applicable). Any shortfall in funding up to the maximum amount is expected for the parents/partner to contribute.
The maximum SFE maintenance loan figures for 2019/20 are £7,529 for students living at home and £8,944 for students living away from home and outside of London.
The UHF cannot be used to provide the expected parent/partner contribution that is not received because a student’s parents or partner have chosen not to pay or refuse to be financially assessed. However, where a student declares that the expected contribution is not being met and have explained the reasons why in the supporting statement then genuine cases will be treated sympathetically.

If your household income has changed substantially since the initial student funding application was made please contact studentfunding@marjon.ac.uk for advice on how to be reassessed for student funding.

Postgraduate studentsPostgraduate students will be expected to show that they can meet the cost of tuition fees and that they have made reasonable provision to support themselves throughout the course.

The fund cannot be used to meet the cost of postgraduate tuition fees and a weekly Minimum Required Provision (MRP) is applied to the assessment.
This income could come from a variety of sources such as a Postgraduate Loan, Professional and Career Development loans, grants, scholarships, part time work, savings etc.
The MRP for students living in the South West is £218 per week or £175 per week for students with dependants or students who are unable to work due to a disability.

If the student’s net income is over and above the MRP then the amount over the MRP will be counted in full. Partner’s income (if applicable) will be counted in full.

How we assess your applicationTo assess whether a student is eligible for an award from the UHF we will look at the shortfall between what is considered “reasonable” expenditure and the expected income over the academic year. General payments from the fund are known as “standard” awards which will be based on the shortfall in income.

If a student applies to the UHF due to exceptional or unexpected costs such as repairs to essential household equipment or to assist with emergency situations such as homelessness or family illness and they are not eligible for a “standard” award this will be assessed as a “non-standard” award. Non-standard awards are assessed on an individual basis taking into account the household income and if eligible the award will usually be a one off payment to help a student with their current situation.

Dependant on the individual situation some students may receive a standard and non-standard award simultaneously.

The maximum award that can be given to an individual student over an academic year is £4,000. This includes the Summer University Hardship Fund (SUHF) so if a student is awarded £4,000 from the UHF during term time then the payments will be split to include a payment before the start of the summer break to cover the summer period.
Students that have been awarded less than £4,000 during term time will be able to apply to the USHF for a possible further award up to the maximum available.

Students may be offered an Emergency Loan to be repaid with their next funding instalment instead of an UHF award at the discretion of the assessor.

Due to the UHF limited allocation of funds the average award made to students based on demand for assistance from students in previous academic years equates to 60% of the assessed shortfall between income and expenditure over the academic year for non-mature students (under 21).
Mature students (21 and over at time of application) will be awarded 70% due to them being a priority group with 85% of students awarded in 2018/19 being mature.

Dependant on demand in 2019/20 these figures may be adjusted to enable us to meet demand and ensure that funds are fully spent within the academic year. This may mean that awards made later in the year may be at a lower percentage if funds are low or a further award could be made if total demand is low and there are funds left. Students will be informed via their Marjon email account if any extra funds will be available to them.

If you live with a partner we will need details of their income and expenditure.
If your parents have to make a contribution to your living costs we will take this into account. As previously stated, if you are not receiving the expected contribution from your parents or partner you need to explain the reasons why in your supporting statement.

If you or your partner is receiving benefits we will not take into account any non-means tested benefits which are for particular circumstances e.g. Disability Living Allowance/ Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

For full time undergraduate students we have to take into account a South West “assumed” income level. This is £2,296 per year for standard year students, £1,531 for penultimate year students and £765 for final year students.
The only exceptions to this assumed income where it may be disregarded in full or partially are for students who are disabled (and in receipt of disability benefits) or students with children or with primary caring responsibilities (evidence required).
Full time students on PCGE or unsalaried School Direct courses are also considered for exemption from the Assumed Income due to the nature and intensity of the course.
Other exceptional circumstances may also be considered.

For postgraduate students assumed income figures please see previous postgraduate students section in these guidelines.

Some of your expenditure will be standardised in the assessment. The National Association of Student Money Advisers has produced standard spending figures to cover food, clothing, toiletries, social coast and utilities which are called Composite Living Costs (CLC).

If all or some utilities are included in the cost of rent then then a reduced rate of CLC will be applied to avoid these costs being duplicated in the rent and CLC.

Your costs for rent, childcare and travel will be considered on an individual basis depending on your circumstances and within maximum levels set by the assessors each year in relation to average local rental cap and public transport costs.

Students that need to travel to university will be expected to use public transport where available. The running of a car instead of using public transport must be justified in your personal statement.
Students with children or certain disabilities are exempt from this justification.
Where public transport is available and relevant to the students circumstances these costs will be used in the assessment.

InterviewsIn some cases assessors may call a student in for an interview regarding their UHF application. The purpose of the interview is to usually clarify some information in an application, particularly where a student may have very unusual circumstances.
If an interview is required we will contact students through their Marjon email account to arrange a convenient interview time.

Timescale for application assessment and paymentCompleted applications forms and evidence can be submitted in the following ways:

* In person to the Information Hub
* Emailed to: studentfunding@marjon.ac.uk
* Via post to: University Hardship Fund, Student Support, Plymouth Marjon University, Derriford Road, Plymouth PL6 8BH.

Provided that your application form has been accurately completed and the appropriate evidence submitted a decision will be made within 30 working days (excluding vacations) of the application being completed.

You will be notified of the outcome via an email to your Marjon email account. It is your responsibility to keep checking your Marjon email account for updates and in case we need further information from you to support your application.

Payments will be made into your designated bank account and your payment will be received within 10 working days of receipt of your award email, provided you have completed and emailed finance@marjon.ac.uk your BACS form which is detailed in the payment section of the application form.

How to appealIf you are unhappy with the outcome of your UHF application you can appeal against that decision by writing to:
The Appeals Panel, Student Support, Plymouth Marjon University, Derriford Road, Plymouth PL6 8BH
Or email: studentsupport@marjon.ac.uk with the subject line “University Hardship Fund Appeal”.