

University of Essex Graduation Assistance Fund 2024

The University of Essex is offering a Graduation Assistance Fund to assist graduands experiencing financial difficulty who require financial support with the cost of gown hire and/or up to two guest tickets for their Graduation ceremony. Awards will be paid directly to the University and the gown hire company.

If you apply for this fund, please do not purchase tickets or a gown while your application is being assessed. If tickets for your ceremony are still available, up to two tickets and a gown will be reserved for you by the Graduation and Awards Team when you submit your application and will be reserved until you receive an outcome.

Terms and Conditions

Eligibility

To be eligible for the Graduation Assistance Fund, you will need to meet the following eligibility criteria:

- You **must** be a current or former University of Essex student eligible to attend a Graduation ceremony in April 2024.
- You must be able to show that you are in current financial difficulty.

Students who are not eligible

The following students are NOT eligible for this scholarship regardless of meeting the above criteria:

- Students who do not fulfil the definitions and eligibility given above.
- Students who are studying through a University of Essex Partner (e.g. Kaplan, University of Essex Online, Tavistock, etc).
- Students whose course is sponsored by an employer.
- Students who are on a distance learning programme.
- Students on Higher/Degree Apprenticeship courses.

Evidence

To support your Graduation Assistance Fund application, you must provide accurate, up to date and relevant evidence to support your reason for applying. Please be aware that you may be asked to provide further evidence if it is necessary to assess your application.

All evidence provided must be clear enough to read, in accepted formats (pdf, jpg, doc, xlsx, png, txt) and in English. You must ensure that any evidence that is provided in a language other than English is translated **before** submitting it as part of your application.

You are required to provide the following evidence to support your application.

Evidence type	Conditions and examples
Bank statements for <u>every</u> financial account that you and your partner/spouse own	<p>All financial statements must be in clear, readable format, containing the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Applicant/partner or spouse name and address▪ Bank account details, including sort code and account number▪ Opening and closing balance▪ Transactions covering the last 30 days prior to the date you submit your Graduation Assistance Fund application.▪ Notes must be added to all transactions going into or out of your accounts over £50 and must explain the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Who the transaction is from/to- What the transaction is for

How to apply

To apply for the Graduation Assistance Fund, you will need to do the following:

1. Ensure that you meet the eligibility criteria above
2. Carefully read these Terms and Conditions
3. Click [this link](#) to access the fund. You will need to register for the Blackbullion online money management website if you do not already have an account, using your external email address
4. Click the 'Funds' tab and select 'Graduation Assistance Fund' or use the search facility to find the fund

5. Follow the instructions to complete the application form, upload the required evidence and submit your application

Note: your application will not be assessed until you submit a full and complete application form, which includes all necessary evidence to complete an assessment.

Application and assessment process

As part of your application, you will be required to complete a 'supporting personal statement', providing details of your individual circumstances. As part of your statement, you must demonstrate the following:

- What your current financial difficulties are
- Why you or your guests cannot afford to pay for your gown and/or guest ticket(s).

The Graduation Assistance Fund is discretionary, and applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Assessments will examine how well you meet the eligibility criteria for the fund, with a particular focus on:

- **Supporting personal statement:** This should outline your current financial situation and include any other relevant information about your case. Ensure that you have read all supporting guidance and Terms & Conditions fully to ensure that you present a strong and complete case for support.
- **Financial situation:** In addition to the information provided in your personal statement, we will look at your expenditure to understand your financial situation. If you have high levels of non-essential expenditure, your application may be rejected.

All information provided in support of an application will be considered and we encourage you to provide as much relevant information as possible to give us a full picture of your circumstances.

We aim to complete the assessment and provide an outcome of a **full** and **complete** application and evidence within **3 weeks**. If you are required to provide further evidence as part of your application, the 3 weeks will only start from the point we have received **all** necessary evidence.

Payment arrangements

- If eligible, and if tickets for your ceremony have not sold out, you will be granted up to two guest tickets free of charge and/or a gown will be provided free of charge on the day of your ceremony.

Appeals

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of your outcome of your application, you can appeal within 10 working days of your outcome email from Blackbullion. Appeals should be sent to the [Funding Team](#).

Your appeal will be considered at the discretion of the Funding Manager or their nominee.

Resolution of disputes

Acceptance of the Graduation Assistance Fund constitutes acceptance of these terms and conditions. Registered students should contact the [Funding Team](#) in the first instance for guidance regarding this award. In cases not covered by the above terms and conditions, or where a student claims exceptional circumstances, or disputes a decision not to make payments due under this scheme, final appeals on decisions regarding eligibility must be made via the [Student Complaints process](#). The Academic Registrar or their nominee will review the case and their decision will be final.

NOTE: These terms and conditions apply to the Graduation Assistance Fund awarded to students for the academic year 2023-24. The University of Essex reserves the right to update these terms and conditions as necessary.