

# University of Essex

## Care Experienced Bursary 2025-26

For students who have experience of being in local authority care, we recognise that accessing financial support from family and friends may be particularly challenging. This bursary is in place to support costs associated with university and is offered as part of our commitment to widening participation at university, making higher education more accessible.

If you are an undergraduate or postgraduate student, verified as a care leaver or as care experienced and you were under the age of 25 when the 2025-26 academic year started, you could be eligible for a bursary of up to £1,500.

The deadline to apply for this bursary is **Friday 17th July 2026**.

## Definitions

### Care leaver

- A care leaver is a young person who has been in the care of, or has been given accommodation by, their local authority (LA) such as foster care or a children's home for a period of at least 13 weeks between their 14th and 16th birthday and including their 16th birthday.

### Care experienced

- Care experienced is a wider term that means any person who has experienced care under the age of 18. This is not the same as being a 'Child in Need'; to have experienced care there would generally need to be a court order for removal from the birth family.
- Anyone who does not fit into the 13-week rule above and does not received support from the local authority but has at some point been removed from their birth parents would be considered care experienced. For example, if you have been adopted, if you have a formal kinship care arrangement, or you experienced care before fourteen or after sixteen.
- We recognise that many care experienced people face the same challenges to care leavers but do not receive local authority support.

We also offer an Estranged Bursary. Estrangement from your parents/guardians is different to Care Experienced.

## Terms and Conditions

### Eligibility

You must meet the criteria listed below to be eligible for an award:

- Students must be verified as a care leaver or eligible care experienced individual by the Funding Team and must have been resident in the UK during the period of care (i.e. England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland - including the Republic of Ireland).
- You must be under the age of 25 years when starting the 2025-26 academic year.
- This bursary is restricted to students who have been assessed as paying Home fees and are entirely self-funded\*.
- Students must register at the University of Essex on a full-time or part-time\*\*, undergraduate or postgraduate course in academic year 2025-26.
- Students must have applied for and have been **approved** for funding from Student Finance England (SFE) (or other UK funding provider) with the University of Essex as their chosen institution and have consented to the sharing of data.
- Undergraduate students must have had a **means-tested assessment** for funding from SFE (or other UK funding provider).

\*Students receiving a repayable loan to fund their studies will be considered as self-funded. This includes but isn't restricted to tuition fee loans from Student Finance England or other UK funding body.

\*\*Substantial part time refers to a student who is registered on a part-time programme that is at least 50% of the full-time equivalent programme.

### Students who are not eligible

The following students are not eligible for this award, regardless of meeting the above criteria:

- Students who are not in attendance, and on an assessment only programme.
- Students who are undertaking a repeat year of study or are repeating part-time.
- Students whose course is sponsored by an employer.
- Students on a distance learning programme.

- Students on unsubstantial part-time or short courses.
- Students who are studying through a University of Essex Partner (e.g. Kaplan, University of Essex Online, Tavistock, etc.).
- Students on Higher/Degree Apprenticeship courses.

## Evidence

To support your application, you must provide evidence that you were in local authority care prior to starting your course.

### Care leaver

Evidence would normally be a letter from your Personal Adviser/After Care Social Worker, other forms of evidence may be accepted.

### Care-experienced

You will need to provide a letter on headed paper from the local authority responsible for your care or with another official organisation who were involved with your care at the time it took place. This letter needs to confirm that you have spent time in care and ideally, what type of care was provided.

If you are unable to provide this evidence, you should contact the Funding Team for further advice at: [askthehub@essex.ac.uk](mailto:askthehub@essex.ac.uk)

## How to apply

**The deadline to apply for this bursary is Friday 17th July 2026.**

1. Ensure that you meet the eligibility criteria above and you have carefully read these T&Cs.
2. Login to your Blackbullion account – you will need to register as a University of Essex student if you do not already have an account.
3. Click the '*Funds*' tab and select '*Care Experienced Bursary*'.
4. Follow the instructions to complete the application form, upload the required evidence and submit your application.

## Assessment and payment

- We aim to complete an assessment within 3 weeks of a full and complete application and evidence. You will be notified of the outcome to your **Essex email account**.
- If you are successful in being granted an award and are studying full-time, you will receive a bursary of £1,500. If you are studying part-time\*\* you will receive £750.

- Awards will be split into **two instalments**, with payments made by the end of January and the end of April.
- We will contact you prior to each payment date with instructions on how to receive payment of your bursary.
- Students who are awarded the bursary **after** the January payment date will receive the full award by the end of April. Students who are awarded the bursary **after** the April payment date will receive a payment of the full amount and will be contacted regarding the payment date.
- If you have not claimed your bursary by **Friday 29th July 2026**, you will no longer be eligible for the bursary and you will not receive payment for the 2025-26 academic year.

## **Can I hold this with other awards?**

The Care Experienced Bursary **cannot** be held in conjunction with the Refugee Bursary or the Estranged Bursary offered as part of the University Access and Participation Plan funding.

With the exception of the above, the Care Experienced Bursary can be held in conjunction with other University awards that you may be eligible for, including financial support.

## **Appeals**

You may appeal if you think you have valid grounds. Appeals will only be upheld if it is deemed that the application assessor's original decision would or should have been different, while taking into consideration the eligibility criteria noted in these T&Cs.

Appeals that do not have valid grounds will be dismissed. Before requesting an appeal, please read the eligibility criteria above first. If you still believe that you have valid grounds and meet all eligibility criteria, please detail your reasoning in an email to the Funding Team within 2 weeks of your initial outcome email.

Your appeal will be considered at the discretion of the Funding Manager or their nominee, and you will receive an outcome within 2 weeks.

## **Resolution of disputes**

Acceptance of this bursary 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.

*These terms and conditions apply to the Care Experienced Bursary awarded to students for the academic year 2025-26. The University of Essex reserves the right to update these terms and conditions as necessary.*