



Open College of the Arts

Student Support

Bursary Guidance notes

Introduction

Studying with OCA is very good value for money, particularly for students who are considering studying for a degree. Attendance at a university for three years would typically cost over £9,000 in fees alone, but students living away from home also have to take into account the costs of accommodation, food and other day to day expenses. By comparison, studying to degree level with the OCA costs less than £5,000 and can be completed from home. However we do recognise that, for some people, the costs of studying with the OCA can still be a barrier and for that reason we have set up a Bursary Scheme.

The purpose of the OCA Bursary Scheme is defined as: 'to provide additional support for prospective students who can demonstrate commitment and potential - but who face financial or other practical constraints from enrolling in the usual way.'

The Scheme provides tangible evidence of the OCA's charitable purpose and commitment to equality of opportunity. We receive no state funding at all (unlike UK universities, including the Open University) but the Trustees have nevertheless set aside an annual sum to be allocated through bursaries.

OCA bursaries were introduced for the first time in Autumn 2008 but the scheme was revised substantially in October 2009. These notes provide practical guidance for potential applicants.

A: About the scheme

A1. What is a bursary?

A bursary is financial support towards the cost of your course. It is provided in the form of a discount. Thus, if a course costs £595 and the value of a bursary is £200, you will only be asked to pay £395 for that course.

A2. How much is made available each year?

The fund has been set at £15,000 in the period from 1st July 2009 to 30th June 2010. The money will continue to be allocated by the Bursary Committee until the total for that year has been reached.

A3. What happens if the budget for the year is already spent?

Once the budget has been allocated, potential applicants would either have to go ahead without a bursary or wait until the beginning of the next financial year. In the latter scenario, the application would be considered on its own merits in the next year. No guarantee could be made, that any particular application would be successful, simply because it had been deferred.

A4. Can I speak to anyone for advice?

Yes. The Academic Services team will be able to answer your queries on the scheme. You can ring them on 0800 731 2116. Emma Mason is the scheme administrator and best placed to give advice; however other members of the team will be able to help with most queries. Do remember, however, that the team will not be able to comment on the likelihood of your application being successful – other than in very general terms. All decisions are taken by the Bursary Committee itself.

B: Eligibility

B1. Is everyone eligible to apply?

Yes, the scheme is open to everyone who feels they have a case, *provided they are UK (or EU) residents and do not already have a degree or equivalent qualification.*

B2. What do you mean by 'UK (or EU) residents'?

The definition used is someone who, for the last 3 years, has either been settled in the UK or has been resident in the UK, European Union or Switzerland. Please contact the Academic Services team if you are not sure whether you would qualify (see A4 above). Given the pressure on this budget, we are *not* currently able to consider applications from other overseas students.

B3. What do you mean by 'degree or equivalent qualifications'?

Where students already have a Higher Education (HE) qualification, they will *not* be entitled to be considered for an OCA bursary – even if the original qualification was in a very different subject. We recognise there is an element of rough justice about this but it seems better to encourage as many people as possible to access HE courses *for the first time*, rather than use the scarce resources to part fund subsequent learning.

HE level qualifications include HNC, HND, Cert Ed, BA, BSc and many professional qualifications. For a fact sheet on the National Qualifications Framework, see: <http://www.qcda.gov.uk/5967.aspx>.

Those with existing HE qualifications should also bear in mind that they might qualify for credits toward their degree by having their prior learning accredited. There is a guidance booklet on this topic – see

http://www.oca-uk.com/data/useful_documents/accreditation-of-prior-learning-apl-booklet-5.pdf. Contact the Academic Services team (see A4) if you need a printed copy.

B4. Do I need to be outstandingly gifted to apply?

No. The important things (other than providing evidence of hardship) are (a) to show you have sufficient ability in the relevant subject area to be able to benefit from the course and (b) to demonstrate your commitment (see Section D below).

B5. Is the scheme open to prisoners?

Yes. Do be aware, however, that OCA bursaries will not meet the full cost of the course. You will therefore need to find an alternative source of funding for the balance. The Prisoners Education Trust may be able to assist here. Their contact details are (email): info@prisonerseducation.org.uk and (tel) 020 8648 7760.

C: Making an application

C1. How do I apply?

Please complete the Bursary Scheme application form, located at the end of this booklet. This can also be downloaded from the OCA website. If you need an additional printed copy, please ring the Academic Services team on 0800 731 2116.

C2. Can a parent or carer make an application on my behalf?

Yes. However we require a written statement from the applicant him/herself saying that they authorise the parent or carer to make the application on their behalf and that they confirm the details given are accurate.

C3. Can I submit my application online or by email?

No. Applications have to be completed by hand, signed and sent by post.

C4. What sort of supporting material should I send in with my application?

See Section D below.

C5. What is the closing date for applications?

There is no closing date. Applications can be received at any time. Bursary Committee meetings are held every 2 to 3 weeks, so you should never have to wait too long for your application to be considered.

C6. How will the OCA process my application?

When your completed form is received, the scheme administrator will review it to check there is nothing missing. She may contact you at this point to advise you to make good any gaps. Please don't interpret this as a signal that, provided you supply the missing item(s) you will necessarily be successful: the administrator will simply be doing her job and trying to ensure the Committee has a complete picture when it comes to making their decision.

C7. Who makes the decision about bursary applications?

The Bursary Committee is chaired by the OCA's Chief Executive and includes 3 other senior managers. The scheme administrator is *not* a member of the committee, so please do not blame her if you are unhappy with the decision!

C8. How soon will I know?

We will confirm the Committee's decision within 5 working days of the meeting. In practice, you should never have to wait more than 4 weeks from the date of OCA receiving your application to receiving notification of the outcome, provided that you have supplied all the relevant information.

D: Supporting material to submit with my application

D1. How can I demonstrate my commitment to the course I am applying for?

There is a space on the application form for you to provide evidence of your commitment to the relevant subject area. The points you make are entirely up to you but must, of course, be truthful statements. Examples would include courses already studied, relevant books recently read, time spent in producing artistic work/practice/preparation. The Bursary Committee will be looking for evidence that you are really serious and, if given financial help, are likely to make the most of it.

D2. What sort of examples should I provide of my work?

Applicants are asked to provide some actual examples of their work (e.g. a few poems, photographs, drawings, pieces of music, or whatever – as relevant to the course). We are not looking for outstanding ability here, simply evidence that you have sufficient understanding to be able to benefit from the course. There is a space on the application form for you to introduce/describe your examples.

D3. Will my examples be returned to me?

No, the examples will **not** be returned. We recommend you don't send originals. If some of the items you wish to submit are large and/or bulky, it would be preferable to send a photocopy or photograph. Images of photographs, music scores and paintings/drawings can also be submitted on a CD (*but not by email*), but this will not be returned. Please speak to the scheme administrator (Emma Mason) if you are unsure.

D4. Is it mandatory to provide a reference from a tutor or artist?

No, it's not an absolute requirement but it could certainly help to strengthen your case. There's a space on the application form for you to add a reference from a practising artist or tutor who you have worked with and who can provide an informed, independent view of your commitment and ability.

D5. If my application is based on financial hardship what sort of evidence do you need?

There is a space on the application form for you to make out your case. Wherever possible, supply copies of documentation to support the points you make (e.g. copies of letters from HMRC).

D6. Is the financial position of my partner relevant?

Yes it is. If your case is based on financial hardship, please make reference to the position of your partner (if appropriate). We recognise there could be sensitivities here but making an application is entirely voluntary and we feel that income to the *household as a whole* should be taken into account.

D7. If I am on benefits, will I be guaranteed a bursary?

No. We assess all applications on their own merits, irrespective of entitlement to benefits.

D8. If I am on a pension, will I be guaranteed a bursary?

No. We assess all applications on their own merits.

D9. If my medical condition or disability is relevant to this application, what supporting evidence should I supply?

A simple description in the relevant box on the application form will suffice.

E: If my application is successful...

E1. How much will my bursary be worth?

The cash value of the bursary will never be less than £100 and never more than £495. Please note that bursaries *never* cover the full cost of courses; in other words, students will always have to find some of the funding themselves. Awards tend to be towards the lower end of the continuum, other than in exceptional cases. Given the pressure on this budget - and the absence of any state funding at all - we try to ensure that as many people as possible are able to derive some benefit from the scheme.

E2. Is there a time limit within which I have to take up the bursary?

Yes. We normally expect students to have enrolled on the specified course by the end of the third month after receiving formal notification of the award. If there are exceptional circumstances which result in your needing a small extension, please speak to the scheme administrator (Emma Mason) as soon as you can. If we have not heard from you, the award will expire as stated.

If you do not take up the bursary, you may re-apply in the future, but your application would be considered on its own merits and in the light of any changed conditions applying at that time.

E3. What if I decide I still will not be able to afford the course, even with support from the Bursary Scheme?

If your judgment is that - even taking the value of the bursary into account - you still will not be able to afford the course, you are under no obligation to proceed. Any savings that arise as a result of such circumstances will be returned to the fund and allocated to other applicants.

E4. What happens if I do not complete the course for which the Bursary was awarded?

We do expect bursary holders to make every effort to complete the course. However, we recognise that this will not always be possible and, provided we are satisfied you have done your best, we will not seek any repayment.

E5. Can I claim for any additional expenses (e.g. costs of materials or postage)?

No. The Bursary Committee has no power to award any additional funding over and above the amount stated in the formal letter.

F: If my application is turned down ...

F1. Can I appeal against the decision?

No. The decisions of the Bursaries Committee are final. In making your application, you accept that the OCA will not enter into debate or correspondence about the decision.

F2. Can I re-apply if I am unsuccessful?

It depends on the reason. If it's purely because the fund has run out for the year in question, you may re-apply at the beginning of the following financial year (starting on 1st July). However, if the reason is because the Committee turned down your application, their decision is final and no resubmission is possible.

Each bursary application is for a single, defined course. If you are turned down for one course, you may submit an application for a different course in the future. However, if your personal circumstances are much the same, it is likely that the decision will also be the same.

F3. If I am unsuccessful can you suggest any other sources of grant funding?

We only have a working knowledge of other funding sources. In practice, your best bet would be to contact the (free) Careers Advice Service on 0800 100 900. The relevant page on their website is:

<http://careersadvice.direct.gov.uk/helpandadvice/helpwithfunding>.

They also have an email service (links on the same web page).

See also http://archive.niace.org.uk/information/Briefing_sheets/83-Sources-of-funding-for-adult-learning.pdf and

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/AdultLearning/FinancialHelpForAdultLearners/index.htm>

OCA Bursary scheme: student application form

A: About you

1. Your name:

2. Address:

.....

3. E-mail: 4. Tel no:

5. For which course are you applying for bursary support?

6. Have you studied with OCA before? Y/N

If yes, please enter your student no:

7. Please provide a simple statement to explain why you are seeking a bursary. This should focus on the particular hardship(s) that you believe the Bursary Committee should be taking into account. There is no need to go into detail here as the supplementary questions overleaf cover these points.

We recognise that some of these questions are intrusive. However, applications for bursaries are entirely voluntary and by filling in this application you accept that OCA has a right to ask about your personal circumstances.

The budget for bursaries is strictly limited. Please note that bursaries are not awarded to students who (a) already have a first degree or equivalent qualification and/or (b) have not been resident in the UK or EU for at least 3 years prior to submitting their application. For further details see *Guidance Notes*.

B: Your commitment - and the suitability of course applied for

8. Please use the box below to describe the steps you have already taken to **demonstrate your commitment** to learning of this type and at this level (e.g. courses already studied, relevant books recently read, time spent in producing artistic work/practice/preparation).

9. It is a requirement that applicants submit examples of their recent work (e.g. a few poems, photographs, drawings, pieces of music, or whatever). We are not looking for outstanding ability here, simply evidence that you have **sufficient understanding to be able to benefit from the course**. Use the box below to introduce/describe your examples. These copies will **not** be returned, so we recommend you don't send originals.

10. Are you enclosing a reference from an independent artist or tutor? Y/N

Please read the guidance notes on this point. If yes, please give the following information:

11. Name: 12. Job title:

13. Please describe the nature of your contact with this referee:

C: Extent of hardship

14. Are you currently on benefits of any kind? Y/N *If yes, please **state specifically which benefit(s) you are currently on**, the amount received and the dates from which the benefit(s) have been paid:*

Please provide copies of official documentation which confirms your receipt of the benefit(s) listed here.

15. If you have any **disabilities and/or medical conditions** that you would like us to be aware of, please give brief details here:

16. If your claim is based in part on **financial hardship**, please give brief details here. If you have a partner with whom you live, it is important to make reference to his or her financial position also. It is also important to be explicit about any dependents for whom you have an on-going responsibility:

Please supply supporting evidence (e.g. salary slips, pensions notifications).

D: And finally

17. I confirm that:

The information supplied in this application is accurate, to the best of my knowledge.

I do **not** already have a degree or equivalent qualification.

I am settled in the UK and/or have been resident in the UK, European Union or Switzerland for at least 3 years before today's date.

I recognise that the decision of the Bursary Committee is final and that there is no right of appeal.

Signed:

Date:

Please note that decisions will be made purely on the basis of the information you supply. Any inaccurate, misleading or dishonest responses, given with a view to affecting the Bursary Committee's decision, would constitute fraud and could result in legal action.

Please send the completed form, and supporting material, to:

Secretary to the Bursary Committee, Open College of the Arts, Michael Young Arts Centre,
Redbrook Business Park, Wilthorpe Road, Barnsley S75 1JN

Open College of the Arts

0800 731 2116

www.oa-uk.com





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