

Learner Support Scheme

Guidance notes

University
for the
Creative Arts



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Document Control Number: STLSS200717

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Introduction

The OCA's Learner Support Scheme has two objectives:

- To support progression to qualification
- To widen participation in Higher Education

The scheme is open to current and prospective students who do not qualify for tuition fee support from Student Finance. Bursaries are awarded on a unit by unit basis and will not cover the full course unit fee. The award of a bursary is dependent on an assessment by the committee that:

- The student has a reasonable chance of successfully completing the unit
- The student could not realistically self-fund the entirety of their studies for the unit

If you are interested in applying to the Learner Support Scheme for a bursary, please read the *guidance notes* below and complete the *application form* included with this booklet.

Guidance for applicants

Please ensure that you read these notes fully at least once before completing your application. If you need any help with these guidance notes, please contact the Student Services team on 01226 740395 or email enquiries@oca.ac.uk

A: About the Scheme

A1. Terminology

Bursary – by this we mean the provision of financial support towards the cost of a course unit. This is provided in the form of a discount. Thus if a course unit costs £1315 and the value of a bursary is £515, you would only be asked to pay £800 towards it.

Disability – when referring to disability we use the definition in the Equality Act, that is: a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term effect (i.e. lasting for at least a year) on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Affected by disability – where a student is not disabled, but is affected by the disability of another person, we will take this into account when considering an application for funding. For example, a student has formal caring responsibilities for somebody else who has a disability and this has a substantial and long-term effect on the student's ability to carry out day-to-day activities.

A2. What happens if the budget for the year is already spent?

Once the budget has been allocated, potential applicants would need to wait until the beginning of the new academic year to re-apply (1 August each year). The application would be considered on its own merits in the next year and up to date financial evidence would be required at the time. No guarantee could be made that any particular application would be successful, simply because it had been deferred. Retrospective applications cannot be accepted and so students are advised not to enrol onto a course unit prior to applying to the Learner Support Scheme.

A3. Who can I speak to for advice?

Who can help	How can they help
Student Services Advisers	They will be able to help with general queries regarding the course unit you are interested in applying for and questions on completing your form. enquiries@oca.ac.uk / 01226 730495
The Learner Support Adviser	They will be able to advise when your application will be considered, whether anything is missing from your application and support with completing your form. learnersupport@oca.ac.uk / 01226 704378
Course Support Advisers	They will be able to discuss subject specific queries with you, such as which course unit or level of study may be most appropriate. coursesupport@oca.ac.uk / 01226 730495

B. Eligibility

Applicants must meet all of the following criteria:

Ability

Applicants must demonstrate sufficient ability in the relevant subject area to be able to benefit from the course and to demonstrate commitment to study (see Section D below).

Course eligibility

Applications can be accepted towards the Foundations units, and any course unit which will be formally assessed towards our BA (Hons) degrees. However, please be aware that bursaries are awarded for individual units, not complete qualifications. You can only apply for bursaries on a unit by unit basis.

Financial criteria

Applicants will be required to evidence that they are not eligible for Student Finance funding, along with evidence of a low household income / financial hardship.

Entry requirements

Applicants must also be sure that they meet the few entry requirements of studying with the OCA:

- **Internet access and IT requirements:** www.oca.ac.uk/studying-with-the-oca/faqs/
- **English language requirements:** www.oca.ac.uk/studying-with-the-oca/faqs/

Please note: Music Composition has its own specific entry requirements which you should refer to if applicable: www.oca.ac.uk/studying-with-the-oca/music-courses-faqs/

C. Making an application

C1. How do I apply?

Before making an application, do please check that you are eligible first (see Section B). The application form will be provided with these guidance notes and should be straightforward to complete, but you may find the information below helpful.

C2. Can I submit my application online or by email?

Yes. Applications should be completed electronically and emailed to learnersupport@oca.ac.uk. Supporting evidence may be scanned and emailed, or posted if appropriate to the address on the form.

C3. What is the closing date for applications?

There is no closing date. Applications can be received at any time. Learner Support Committee meetings are usually held once a month, so you should never have to wait too long for your application to be considered.

C4. How will the OCA process my application?

When your completed form is received, the Learner Support Adviser will review it to check there is nothing missing. Your application may be returned if any elements are missing.

C5. Who makes the decision about Learner Support Scheme applications?

The Learner Support Committee will be chaired by a member of the leadership team and includes at least one Course Support Adviser and the Learner Support Adviser.

C6. How soon will I know the outcome of my application?

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 subject. 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 / developing practice. The Learner Support Committee will be looking for evidence that you are really serious and, if given financial help, are likely to make the most of it. If you have studied with the OCA before, the Committee is likely to consider your level of engagement in previous studies as an indicator of your potential future commitment.

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

Applicants are asked to provide some actual examples of their work as relevant to the course unit. We are not looking for outstanding ability here, simply evidence that you have an active interest in, and sufficient understanding to be able to benefit from, the course or activity. See the tables at the end of these guidance notes for what to include.

D3. Will my examples be returned to me?

No. The examples will not be returned so you may prefer to send clear digital images, scans, prints or photocopies. If sending by email, you may find that the images will need to be split across two or three emails depending on the size. Please do not send examples on a CD or portable memory device such as a memory stick. File sharing services are acceptable. Speak to the Learner Support Adviser 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 outline if a reference is included from a practising artist or tutor who you have worked with – and who can provide an informed, independent view of your commitment and ability. Please do not provide a name and address and ask us to contact them; you should include a copy of the reference with your application if you would like it to be considered.

D5. What sort of financial evidence do you need?

There is space on the application form to make out your case. Please supply copies of up to date (within the last 3 months) documentation to support the points you make (e.g. copies of letters from HMRC / benefits agency, wage slips etc).

D6. Is the financial position of my partner relevant?

Yes it is; please supply the same documentary evidence as above with regard to your partner (if applicable). 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. Please also be explicit about any dependants for whom you have an on-going responsibility.

D7. If I am on benefits or in receipt of pension will I be guaranteed assistance?

No. Subject to there being money available in the fund we assess all applications on their own merits, irrespective of entitlement to benefits.

D8. If my medical condition or disability (or that of another person for whom I have caring responsibilities) is relevant to this application, what supporting evidence should I supply?

Please supply a doctor's letter confirming your circumstances and their impact on your ability to study. If you are in receipt of disability benefits, please enclose documentary evidence of this.

E. If my application is successful...

E1. How much support will I receive?

Each application will be considered on its own merits and it is therefore impossible to say how much will be awarded in individual cases. However we are committed to being demonstrably fair and consistent in our decision-making processes.

The cash value of any bursary awarded will never be more than 50% of the course unit fee, with the exception of the Foundations units which may be up to 90% of the course unit fee. This means students will always have to find some of the funding themselves, however this can be paid by agreed instalments. 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.

Applicants must also bear in mind that there are other costs associated with studying and should consider whether this would be feasible, for example arts consumables and postage costs for assignments if studying visual arts.

E2. Is there a time limit within which I have to take up any funding offered?

Yes. We normally expect students to have enrolled on the specified course unit within three months of the date of the formal award notice.

If there are exceptional circumstances which result in your needing a small extension, please speak to the Learner Support Adviser as soon as you can. If we have not heard from you within three months, the award will expire as stated on your offer letter.

If you do not take up funding offered to you, 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 will not be able to afford the course unit, even if I am offered support from the scheme?

If your judgement is that – even taking the value of any bursary offered into account – you will not be able to afford the remaining fees, you are under no obligation to proceed.

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

We do expect bursary holders to make every effort to complete their studies. 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.

F. If my application is turned down...

F1. Can I appeal against the decision?

No. The decisions of the 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?

If your application is unsuccessful solely because the fund has run out for the year in question, you may re-apply at the beginning of the following academic year (1 August).

Each application is made seeking funding for a single, defined purpose. If your application is turned down, you may submit an application in the future seeking funding for a different purpose. For example, if the Committee felt you did not have the skills required to begin the course unit, you may re-apply in the future having developed those skills. 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 are not currently aware of external grant funding services.

Examples of work to send - Level 1 (HE4) and Level 2 (HE5)

For Level 3 (HE6) please contact learnersupport@oca.ac.uk to discuss.

Unit(s)	Foundations Requirements	Level 1 (HE4) Requirements	Level 2 (HE5) Requirements
Drawing and Textiles	Images of 8 - 10 pieces and any explanation you feel relevant. For Textiles, please also include some examples of drawing / sketchbook work.	<p>Images of 8 - 12 pieces. For Textiles, ensure that this includes some examples of your drawing skills / sketchbook work.</p> <p>Also include a brief commentary about your pieces. Think about why you chose them and what you think was successful about them. How did you develop them - the materials used, size and any inspirations for them (which books and artists may have influenced certain pieces?).</p>	As Level 1 but also include a short commentary (approx. 500 words) on an artist, work or movement of your choosing. This should not be a biography – we are looking at what you have learnt from it.

Unit(s)	Foundations Requirements	Level 1 (HE4) Requirements	Level 2 (HE5) Requirements
Painting, Sculpture and Printmaking	N/A	<p>Images of 8 - 12 pieces. For Painting, ensure this includes painting / colour work. Ensure that you include some examples of your drawing skills / sketchbook work for any of these units.</p> <p>Also include a brief commentary about your pieces. Think about why you chose them and what you think was successful about them. How did you develop them - the materials used, size and any inspirations for them (which books and artists may have influenced certain pieces?).</p>	As Level 1 but also include a short commentary (approx. 500 words) on an artist, work or movement of your choosing. This should not be a biography – we are looking at what you have learnt from it.
Sculpture and Printmaking	N/A	<p>Images of 8 – 12 pieces. Ensure that you include some examples of your drawing skills / sketchbook work. Also include a brief commentary about your pieces. Think about why you chose them and what you think was successful about them. How did you develop them - the materials used, size and any inspirations for them (which books and artists may have influenced certain pieces?).</p>	As Level 1 but also include a short commentary (approx. 500 words) on an artist, work or movement of your choosing. This should not be a biography – we are looking at what you have learnt from it.

Unit(s)	Foundations Requirements	Level 1 (HE4) Requirements	Level 2 (HE5) Requirements
Music	A summary of your musical experience and interests.	<p>Composition units: 3 examples of composition work with a brief commentary about your pieces – why you chose them, your compositional processes and what you feel is successful about the works.</p> <p>Theoretical units: A short essay (up to 500 words) on the output of a composer who inspires you. This should include your own critical reflection, supported by well-researched academic enquiry.</p>	As Level 1 but include a short commentary (approx 500 words) on a composer, work or compositional style of your choosing. This should not be a biography – we are looking at what you have learnt from it.
Photography	8 - 10 images and any explanation you feel relevant.	<p>10 standalone images OR up to 3 series of images (each series containing no more than 8 images).</p> <p>Also include a brief commentary about your pieces – why you chose them, techniques used and any inspirations for them and what you think was successful about them.</p>	As Level 1, ideally relevant to the unit genre if applicable (e.g. examples of landscape for Landscape) but also include a short commentary (approx. 500 words) on a photographer, work or genre of your choosing. This should not be a biography – we are looking at what you have learnt from it.
Creative Writing	3-5 pieces of your creative writing and any explanation you feel relevant.	<p>6 - 8 pieces relevant to the unit genre if applicable (e.g. send examples of poetry for Art of Poetry; script or dialogue for Scriptwriting; pieces of short fiction for Short Fiction).</p> <p>Also include a brief commentary about your pieces – why you chose them, any inspirations for them and what you think was successful about them.</p>	As Level 1 but also include a short commentary (approx. 500 – 1000 words) on an author, work or genre of your choosing. This should not be a biography – we are looking at what you have learnt from it.

Unit(s)	Foundations Requirements	Level 1 (HE4) Requirements	Level 2 (HE5) Requirements
Illustration	N/A	<p>Images of 8 - 12 pieces. If your illustrations are digital, please ensure that you include some examples of drawing / sketchbook work.</p> <p>Also include a brief commentary about your pieces – why you chose them, materials or programmes used, any inspirations for them and what you think was successful about them.</p>	<p>As Level 1 but also include a short commentary (approx. 500 words) on an artist, work or technique of your choosing. This should not be a biography – we are looking at what you have learnt from it.</p>
Graphic Design	N/A	<p>Images of 8 - 12 pieces.</p> <p>Also include a brief commentary about your pieces – why you chose them, programmes used, any inspirations for them and what you think was successful about them.</p>	<p>As Level 1 but also include a short commentary (approx. 500 words) on an artist, work or technique of your choosing. This should not be a biography – we are looking at what you have learnt from it.</p>
Interior Design	<p>Images of 8 - 10 pieces showing an interest in Spatial Design. Include a short written explanation of why you chose these pieces and also include some examples of preliminary/ sketchbook work.</p>	<p>Images of 8 - 12 pieces of work showing an interest in, and a basic understanding of, Spatial Design.</p> <p>Please provide a short written explanation of why you chose these pieces, any applications (CAD, PhotoShop) used and what you think was successful about them.</p> <p>Please also include some examples of preliminary/sketchbook work.</p>	<p>As HE4 but in addition a short written commentary (approx. 500 words) about a spatial designer or architect whose work inspires you.</p>