

## Hardship Grant Policy

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<b>Approved By:</b>	Executive Committee
<b>Contact Person:</b>	Advocacy and Welfare Manager

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear direction for the University of Canterbury Students' Association ("**UCSA**") to administer financial assistance to University of Canterbury students through the Hardship Grant.

### **Policy Statement**

The mission of the UCSA is to help students succeed and belong. The UCSA provides a Hardship Grant for emergency assistance to fully enrolled students who are experiencing unexpected financial hardship. The grant aims to retain committed students who would be unable to continue their studies at the University of Canterbury, or seriously handicapped in doing so, due to financial hardship and circumstances beyond their control. The Hardship Grant is designed to cover temporary issues, and no on-going support will be given through this grant.

### **Responsibility**

The UCSA Hardship Grant is the responsibility of and administered by the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team.

The UCSA Executive must approve any changes to the Hardship Grant Policy. This policy must remain consistent with the terms of any relevant funding agreement that exists between the UCSA and UC.

## **1. Access**

In order to access the Hardship Grants, the student must meet with a member of the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team. The student must complete an application form and provide the requested evidence outlined in the application.

A student that turns up unannounced will be accommodated where possible but may be sent away with a later appointment time at the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team's discretion.

When meeting with an Advocacy and Welfare team member, the student may be asked for additional information so this team member may represent on their behalf to the Hardship Grant Panel. The team member may also request further documentation if necessary and will discuss this with the applicant in this meeting.

## **2. Eligibility**

To apply for a grant from the Hardship Grant, a student must be fully enrolled at the University of Canterbury. The grants are accessible to both domestic and international students.

Applications will only be considered if the student can prove they are currently experiencing a serious financial issue that directly impacts their current studies / threatens their continued study at University of Canterbury. Applicants must prove the financial burden is unexpected and temporary.

If the student does not meet the unexpected criteria, then at the discretion of the Hardship Grant panel, a grant may be approved if the financial cost directly impacts their studies and is not a consequence of the student's actions.

Applicants are required to demonstrate that they are willing and able to successfully complete their studies and graduate from the University of Canterbury.

Applicants must prove they are in financial need (less than \$1000 in all bank accounts) at the date of application.

Applicants must have tried to get assistance from ALL possible sources before making an application to UCSA. Possible sources of funding are, s but not limited to:

- Family assistance
- Grants from StudyLink or Work and Income (both recoverable and non-recoverable)
- Course related costs
- Part time work

- Tertiary student bank overdraft

### **3. Application**

Students must fill out a Hardship Grant application form. Students are required to be open, honest, and forthcoming with all information required for their application. The Hardship Grant application form is available through the Advocacy and Welfare team at the UCSA offices or by contacting the Advocacy and Welfare team via email.

The applicant is required to provide a completed application form along with all required documentation relevant to their application.

A student is required to provide the following for the Hardship Grant:

- Current student ID
- Internal academic transcript/progress report
- Last three months bank statements for all accounts\*
- Completed budgeting worksheet
- A copy of any relevant invoices

When applying for the grant, additional documentation may be requested depending on the individual circumstances, which is outlined on page 6 of the application form.

*\*Students are required to provide relevant bank statements for spouse or partner.*

### **4. Hardship Grant Panel**

The Hardship Grant Panel must consist of three people: one non-student representative and two members of the UCSA Executive. The non-student representative is selected from the pool of UCSA approved Hardship Panel members appointed by the UCSA Advocacy and Welfare team. This pool is made up of employees of the UCSA Early Learning Centres, UC Health Centre, and other UCSA staff members who are not Advocacy and Welfare team members.

A completed application will be presented to the Hardship Grant Panel. All information provided to the panel will be anonymised so that the applicants are not identifiable. This is to ensure there is no bias in the decision making process. As a result all applicants are not permitted to attend the meeting. An Advocacy and Welfare team member will facilitate the Hardship Grant Panel meeting, answer questions wherever necessary, but will not be a part of the decision making process.

A full panel will be required to make the Hardship Grant decision. The Hardship Grant Panel will make a joint decision on the application based on the applicant's eligibility. The decision must be unanimous, and the panel's decision is final.

The Hardship Grant Panel may impose conditions that students must fulfill before they can receive the grant, e.g., attending Budget Advice Services.

#### **5. Notification of Outcome**

Students will be notified of the outcome of their application for the Hardship Grant via their student email address. This will be sent within 24 hours of the panel making their decision.

#### **6. Provision**

The maximum grant, for the Hardship Grant, to any one student should not exceed \$300 but in exceptional circumstances may be approved up to \$800. A student may only receive a grant from the Hardship Grant once per calendar year.

Money can only be used to pay for costs directly. For this reason all approved grants will be made directly to the creditor/company/individual to who the money is owed – NOT to the student. The student must provide all necessary documentation requested for this payment within five working days. If the student fails to do so, the payment will not be deemed as urgent, and the grant may be cancelled. Under no circumstances will payments be made directly to a student.

The Advocacy and Welfare Team Manager will provide the UCSA Accounts Department with a Hardship Grant Accounts Form. Payments will be treated by the Accounts Department as a priority, and whenever possible, payments will be processed the day received.

#### **7. Use of Hardship Grant**

The Hardship Grant may be approved for:

- Unforeseen medical costs (i.e. pharmacy costs, doctors' visits, after hours doctors' bills, optometrists, emergency dental treatment)
- Replacing stolen or lost course materials
- Funeral/death in the family (i.e. transportation, normally within New Zealand)
- Certain transport costs (i.e. bus pass when unable to secure other transportation)
- Emergency housing assistance (i.e. unexpected homelessness, unsafe domestic situation)
- Emergency dental treatment \*\*

- Other desperate, unforeseen circumstances

\*\* Applicants must provide a dental quote of the emergency treatment needed from a dental practice registered with WINZ/StudyLink. Students are required to apply for financial assistance from StudyLink, WINZ, or private health insurance prior to applying for the Hardship Grant. Treatment will be considered for emergency or acute situations only. Preventative treatment will not be considered, nor will dentures, orthodontic or cosmetic work. Students should apply for the Hardship Grant prior to receiving treatment. If treatment was received prior to the Hardship Grant's decision on the application, applicant will be liable for all costs if the application is declined. The UCSA will not refund applicants for any dental treatment.

The Hardship Grant will not normally be approved for:

- Tertiary fees / costs
- Holidays
- Mobile phone or toll call bills
- Mortgage payments
- Hire purchases / lay-bys
- Graduation expenses
- Conference costs
- Tax or student loan repayments
- Cigarettes / alcohol
- Fines (i.e., parking, speeding, warrants, registration)
- Sports equipment / trips
- Child care
- Car repairs
- Credit card payments
- Veterinary costs

#### **8. *Special Circumstances***

Where there are special circumstances, the panel may decide to rule outside of this policy.

#### **Information, Privacy & Confidentiality**

All information gathered will be used for assessing eligibility and for statistical purposes to allow the UCSA to continually improve their services. No identifying information will be published.

The personal information provided to the UCSA for consideration of the Hardship Grant is protected by the Privacy Act 1993. As such, any information a student provides will not be shared with any non-relevant UCSA staff. The information will be stored in a secure manner for a period of at least seven years. Students are able to obtain this information and request changes as required by law.