

GUIDANCE ON SETTING UP AND ADMINISTERING AWARD SCHEMES

This guidance document covers ‘best practice’ for administering award schemes and should be referred to when submitting a proposal to establish a new scheme.

The Student Funding Office (SFO) can advise on award scheme proposals, including those administered locally in academic departments. Where central resources (e.g. central budget, staff overheads) are requested the SFO will arrange for the final details to be presented to the UCL Scholarships and Student Funding Committee (SSFC) for a decision. All schemes must adhere to the ‘UCL General Award Regulations’ and UCL’s legal duties (e.g. Equality Act, GDPR) – additional information is included on our staff intranet web page, which also includes an online ‘award proposal’ form <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/staff/task/propose-new-funding-award-students-scholarship-or-bursary>

All Award Schemes (with the exception of Studentships) administered and/or funded by UCL should be recorded on the central ‘UCL Scholarships Finder’ (search engine) <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/scholarships> – the SFO maintains these records. If you would like to add details of an award to this database, or have questions about establishing a new award scheme email fstaffenquiries@ucl.ac.uk

Essential steps to consider when establishing a scheme:

1. WHAT IS THE RATIONAL FOR THE AWARD SCHEME PROPOSAL?

As part of a proposal, you should identify the institutional or faculty strategic aims the scheme is designed to support. For example, a scheme may be designed to promote the participation of female students on specific engineering programmes where this group is underrepresented. Key aims and suggested KPI’s should be identified so that the potential impact and performance of the scheme can be assessed.

All staff proposing the set-up of a scheme must be aware of UCL’s duty to adhere to the Equality Act 2010. The Act identifies protected characteristics (e.g. race (including nationality or domicile), gender, age) and governs their use in scheme criteria. UCL is required to demonstrate that the use of these characteristics is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim (positive action). Where protected characteristics are used in scheme criteria and Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is required (see section 5 below on eligibility criteria). Comprehensive guidance on the Act and how this applies to funding awards/schemes is provided on our staff intranet web page. The UCL Legal Services and EDI teams are also able to assist with any specific queries.

2. WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF FUNDING?

Award schemes are funded from various sources - donations, partnership agreements, UCL funds, etc. The source of funding must be identified as part of the proposal. If the scheme is funded via a donation or partnership agreement it is important to involve the ‘Office of the Vice Provost Advancement (OVPA)’ or SFO at the very beginning of the process. They will be able to advise you on how to make the best use of any funding offered, while ensuring that the wishes of the donor(s)/partner organisation are respected.

3. NAMING THE AWARD:

It is important to recognise the different characteristics of ‘award types’ and how they apply to UCL schemes:

AWARD: This word is used as a generic term to describe all types of funding. It should not be used to describe any of the specific types of funding defined below.

SCHOLARSHIP: Usually awarded to prospective students, this is a full or partial award made on academic merit and/or financial need, that is payable for the duration of a student’s programme.

BURSARY: Normally awarded to prospective students, this is a partial award made on the basis of financial need.

PRIZE: Normally awarded to current students at the end of a programme of study or at the end of a particular year of study, this is an award that signifies prestige and is made on academic merit only, and is normally of nominal or no monetary value.

STUDENTSHIP: A merit based award normally made to graduate students (usually research students) funded predominantly by research councils or other similar research funding bodies/industrial sponsors.

FELLOWSHIP: At UCL this type of award is normally made to current MPhil/PhD students to assist with maintenance costs.

In many cases, the funding body or donor will want to be recognised for their contribution and this may be referenced in the name of the award. However, if the award is being offered in partnership with UCL then our name should appear in the award title (e.g. Smith Scholarship at UCL). Essential info on the use of the 'UCL brand' can be found on this page <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/cam/brand>

4. SETTING THE NUMBER AND VALUE OF THE AWARDS:

A decision on how many awards to offer and at what value should be calculated based on the types of students being targeted, and the type of support the scheme is offering. The average cost of study for a FT student ranges from approx. £20,000 pa for Home undergraduates, to £40,000+ pa for Overseas students (across all levels of study, based on maintenance and tuition fee costs).

Therefore, a scholarship would need to cover a significant portion of the target student/s cost of study for each year of their programme. (In addition, for overseas students (particularly for a needs-based scheme) this may also need to include travel costs, visa expenses, and other relocation costs).

A bursary award would need to be at a level that provided effective support to a student who already has an identified package of funding in place.

Prizes may only be of a relatively small value or take the form of a certificate, as the award should be based on prestige, rather than the cost of study.

5. SETTING ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

Basic eligibility criteria should be clearly defined. Awards that are administered through the central search engine (Scholarships Finder) can be targeted based on 4 main criteria:

- *Student Type (prospective, current, both)*
- *Level of Study (e.g. UG, PGT, PGR, UPC)*
- *Programme of Study*
- *Basis of Award (Academic Merit, Needs-based, combination)*

Please see the 'Selection Process' section below for evidence related to 'need' and / or 'merit' based assessment.

Where scheme proposals include criteria such as race (including nationality and domicile), or ethnicity, or gender (i.e. protected characteristics), best practice advice is to complete an 'Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)' – details can be found on our staff web page. SFO, EDI, and UCL Legal Services teams can then advise to ensure that the scheme complies with the Equality Act 2010.

6. DECIDING ON AN APPLICATION PROCEDURE:

Merit based award schemes can be assessed solely on admissions (application) data. However, where more information is required an application form and/or statement or essay – can be used. Where a research proposal is submitted as part of the application it may be necessary to request a lay summary. Academic references should normally be requested separately. The SFO can provide application form templates if required.

Information about the award scheme should be clearly advertised on the UCL web site. UCL Departments may wish to draft their own web pages for award schemes, but all schemes should be included on the central SFO award scheme search engine (Scholarships Finder). <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/prospective-students/scholarships>

The deadline for applications should be clearly indicated. Ideally, schemes should be advertised at least six months before the deadline/programme start date. New schemes designed to attract undergraduate students should be advertised at least twelve months in advance to achieve maximum impact.

At undergraduate level the closing deadline for our main scholarships is normally a date in late July, and selections are held in late August when exam results have been published.

At graduate level most of the main UCL scholarship schemes have deadlines at the start of the calendar year. Selections are held in February/March.

Bursaries are generally awarded prior to the start of the academic session or during the first term.

The majority of prizes are awarded at the end of an academic session.

7. SELECTION PROCESS:

Where academic departments are setting up 'needs-based' awards, consideration must be given to how an equitable assessment will be achieved. To ensure this, collection of the following types of evidence is recommended:*

- Sponsorship letter or confirmation of having applied for assessment (e.g. Student Finance England, NHS Grants Unit, private sponsorship letter);
- Accommodation and rent / deposit costs (e.g. tenancy agreement);
- Evidence of dependents and any associated costs (e.g. copy of birth certificate/s, receipts for childcare);
- Confirmation of disability (e.g. professional assessment diagnosis, letter from GP);
- Personal statements can be used to collect additional context and specific details on the need for support.

Departments should refer to the SFO for further detailed guidance on the types of application evidence to request and/or how these should be weighted as part of the assessment process (as required).

*Collection / storage / retention of sensitive information must comply with UCL duties under GDPR legislation <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/ucl-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr>

All students must have applied for admission to UCL, before submitting their award scheme application. All successful awardees must hold an offer of admission – or be a current student at UCL.

Where UCL Departments are selecting awards based on academic merit and/or financial need they should ensure that the selection process is transparent and retain a record of the short-listing and decisions for at least 12 months. Departments must provide successful recipients with an award letter setting out the terms of the award (SFO can assist with templates if required).