(COVID-19) EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FUND (EAF-PGR)

Guidance notes for POSTGRADUATE (DOCTORAL) RESEARCH STUDENTS:

The UCL Emergency Assistance Fund (EAF) provides support to students who can demonstrate they are in financial need as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. These notes provide guidance for Postgraduate (Doctoral) Research (PGR) students only and cover:

1. Eligibility
2. Funding available
3. Making an application
4. Assessment / decision
5. Application process

1. Eligibility

1.1 The EAF-PGR is open to postgraduate research students currently enrolled on a programme at and paying tuition fees to UCL. (Doctoral students on Completing Research Status (CRS) are not normally eligible, but may be considered on a discretionary basis). Please ensure you download and complete the correct form.

1.2 To apply to the EAF-PGR you must be in at least one of the following groups:
   - Self-funding students (i.e. not in receipt of, or eligible to apply for full sponsorship e.g. scholarships, studentships, Government Loans, employer funding etc.)
   - Those students with children, especially single parents
   - Students with disabilities

1.3 The EAF-PGR is assessed on the basis of overall financial need. Therefore, all students must demonstrate they have made reasonable and realistic provision at the start of their programme of study to fund both their tuition fees and living costs – whether via partial sponsorship, self-funding, or a combination of both – and that this has materially changed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. (All students who are eligible to apply for student financial support (e.g. loans) from their home Government must do so before applying to the EAF-PGR).

1.3 Applicants must be able to demonstrate via the application form and supporting documentation why they are in need of financial assistance. This will include providing evidence of income and expenditure, and specifically, how they have been affected by Covid-19 related issues (e.g. emergency relocation costs, accommodation costs, loss of paid employment).

1.4 Applicants that have outstanding tuition fee debt to the university are not eligible to apply for the fund. (Please note the fund cannot be used to assist in the payment of tuition fees under any circumstances).
2. Funding available

Awards are for living costs only and will vary depending on individual circumstances and availability of funds. Maximum awards are currently as follows:

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<tr>
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<th>Students without dependants</th>
<th>Students with dependants</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Research Student</td>
<td>£2,500</td>
<td>£3,000</td>
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3. Making an application

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU HAVE ALL YOUR SUPPORTING EVIDENCE READY BEFORE STARTING THE APPLICATION FORM.

- **Document Checklist**

(We cannot return original documentation, so please provide legible scans or digital copies, only. If we cannot view your evidence correctly your application will be rejected).

- **Bank statements**: You must supply copies of itemised bank statements covering the last three months, with the most recent being no more than two weeks old from the date you submit your application. You must do this for all accounts held (e.g. Current Account, Savings Account, Credit Card account, NISA). These statements must show your name, bank account details and an itemised list of transactions. Please annotate to explain any debits or credits over £200. We can accept official bank statements, screenshots of statements or online banking printouts. **Statements printed on an Excel spreadsheet are not accepted.**

- **Evidence of income**: You must provide evidence of how you were intending to fund your programme of study/research e.g. Student Finance England award notification, scholarship/studentship/grant award letter, statement showing income from investments/savings, salary slips/statements dated within last 3 months. (If you are in receipt of any benefits or tax credits evidence must also be provided)

- **Evidence of costs**: You must provide evidence showing your:

  - **rent/mortgage costs for the entire academic year** – if you have been forced to reside in more than one location, please provide evidence of all tenancies. (Where you do not have a tenancy agreement you can provide a signed letter from your landlord).
  
  - **Covid-19 related costs** – evidence and must be provided for all costs you would like us to consider, for example:
    - **Loss of salary** – if you are applying on the basis of loss of employment, please provide the following: evidence of loss of employment (e.g. P45), evidence you do not qualify for the Government’s [Income Support Scheme](#) or [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](#) (e.g. letter from employer);
    - **Emergency accommodation/relocation** – if you have been forced to move accommodation, evidence can be provided of additional rent and/or moving and storage costs;
    - **Laptop/IT costs** – to assist students with disabilities to purchase IT hardware or specialist software up to £500 in total.
- **Additional evidence (where relevant):**
  - If a parent/carer, copies of each child’s birth certificate;
  - If you have a disability, supporting evidence may be required where this is not already registered with UCL.

- **Bank details form:** This form must be completed and submitted with your application for any award to be paid.

**Section A: About You**

**Personal Details:** The UCL student number is found on your UCL Student ID card

**Term Time Address:** All communications from our office will be to your UCL email account. However, it is useful for us to know where you live as this may need to be factored into our assessment process.

**Programme Details:** It is important that we know as much as possible about your degree programme in order to assess you correctly

**Bank Accounts:** We will assess these with reference to the statements you have provided.

**Tuition Fees:** Please let us know how you are paying your Tuition Fees. Students who have outstanding tuition fees cannot be assessed for support, unless an extension has already been agreed with the Student Fees department.

**Section B: Your Circumstances**

**Your Dependents:** Complete this section if relevant. Provide details of any children and/or adults who are financially dependent on you.

**Disability:** Testing for Specific Learning Difficulties can be accessed through UCL’s Student Disability Service. If you wish only to apply for assistance towards the cost of a diagnostic test, please contact the UCL Student Disability Service through AskUCL. They will be able to provide a shorter dyslexia diagnostic-only application. UCL-FAF/EAF does not cover the cost of Dyslexia Diagnostic Testing. Please provide details of any disabilities or Specific Learning Difficulties here.

**Income and Expenditure:** Please provide annual or monthly figures (as required) for the items relevant to your circumstances. Documentary evidence must be provided for certain items (with reference to the ‘Document Checklist’ contained in these guidance notes). Section 4 of this guidance explains how we assess income and expenditure.

**Section C: Supporting Statements**

This section consists of three parts. All sections must be completed.

- We require you to explain how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on your financial plan for this academic year. You must also demonstrate that your original financial plan (i.e. prior to the Covid-19 pandemic) provided realistic, reasonable or adequate provision to meet your living costs for this
academic year. This plan might include Government support, sponsorship, family support, paid work, etc.

- We ask you to describe the steps you have taken in an attempt to meet your current financial need from other sources. The EAF resources are limited and we need to ensure that they are both, directed to those students who cannot reasonably access other sources of financial assistance, and able to assist as many students as possible.

- We ask you to indicate the minimum amount that would alleviate your current financial need. This is so that we can refer to the evidence you have provided to support your application.

4. Assessment / decision

4.1 The level of EAF assistance provided is based on an assessment of financial need. We do this by calculating annual income against annual expenditure using a combination of evidenced costs and notional costs. While the EAF has been designed to take into account one-off or combined Covid-19 related costs the scheme is aimed at identifying those students with an overall shortfall in funding, rather than to meet specific costs without reference to income. Where a shortfall is identified we will award 60% of this amount up to the maximum award cap (see section 2.).

Income assessment:

4.2 It is expected that applicants apply for all (home) Government support to which they are entitled (including tax credits and benefits, where appropriate) before becoming eligible for EAF consideration.

When assessing income we follow the sector best practice prescribed by the National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA).

4.3 For postgraduate students, a weekly Notional Postgraduate Income (NPI) will be applied to full-time postgraduate and teacher training students. NASMA recommends the following figures for 2019-20:

Postgraduate students: £248.00 per week
Postgraduates with children, or who are unable to work: £199.00 per week

Actual net income will be used in the assessment of part-time students, including earnings, grants, savings, tax credits and benefits etc.

4.4 The income assessment will be adjusted accordingly where evidence is provided of loss of paid work during the immediate Covid-19 pandemic period.

Living costs:

4.5 There are predetermined expenditure levels, known as Composite Living Costs, for all students. These are based on state benefit amounts for general living costs, such as food and usual household costs, such as utility bills. The actual amount applied will depend upon your circumstances. For 2019-20 Living-in-London rates, see below:

Single Student: £125.00 per week
Single parent with 2 children under 16: £361.00 per week
Student with partner and 2 children under 16: £407.00 per week
Students with children, per child will be added to the student rate: £74.00 per week

5. **Timetable for Making a Decision**

5.1 Once your application and all evidence has been received, we will send an email informing you that a decision will be made within three working weeks. If more evidence is required, the three week waiting period will reset, so please do make sure you have submitted all required supporting evidence.

If we require more evidence, and email you with that request, you are asked to respond within one week. If we do not hear back from you within two weeks of the request, we will have to close your application.

Please be aware your assessment will be delayed should we receive your application without the following core pieces of supporting evidence:
- 3 most recent months of bank statements for all your accounts
- Proof of how you have planned to fund your course (through Student finance or any other funding authority)
- Proof of any rent/mortgage you are paying
- Evidence of Covid-19 related costs

5.2 The decision turnaround time of three working weeks will not begin until you submit an application with at least these core pieces of supporting evidence. Please also be aware that any request for additional evidence will result in your assessment time being extended.

5.3 You will be informed of the outcome of your application by email (to your UCL email account). If successful, you should normally expect to receive payment within 7 days of the notification of your award.

6. **Application process**

Having read these Guidance Notes, please now complete the **EAF PGR Application Form** (only). If you have any questions, please contact the Student Funding Team via AskUCL.

Please submit your Application Form by logging into askUCL, select Log an Enquiry and choose Financial Assistance Fund (FAF) from the categories – please ensure you attached all supporting documentation (including the ‘bank details’ form).

Please note - you may only apply once during an academic year and appeals are not permitted.