

Overview

The Hardship Fund (HF) provides a non-repayable grant from Bristol Old Vic Theatre School to help students who, due to unforeseen circumstances, may be in financial difficulties that put them at risk of withdrawing from university.

Pilot 24/25

A simplified process for distributing the HF will be piloted in 2024/25 in order to:

- Provide a clear framework for BOVTS to follow
- remove the need for committee meetings to discuss applicant eligibility
- make the application process more accessible so that eligible students are aware of, and apply for, the HF.

As this Hardship Fund process is being piloted in the 24/25 academic year, there may be changes to the fund and this process in the next academic year, including award levels and eligibility requirements.

Eligibility

To be eligible for an award, an applicant must:

- Be a fully registered Bristol Old Vic Theatre School student on an undergraduate or postgraduate degree course.
- Be in financial difficulty that puts them at risk of withdrawing from university.
- Have access to less than £100 across all their bank accounts.
- For undergraduates, receive the full government maintenance loan available to them (unless exempt* or for religious reasons).
- For postgraduates, receive the full Postgraduate Loan available to them (unless exempt* or for religious reasons)

* Students who have previous HE studies at the same level are exempt from receiving Student Finance.

Award levels

There are three award levels available.

Level 1 - £250

Level 1 awards are available to applicants who declare that they are in financial difficulty and can prove access to less than £100 across all bank accounts (including savings). This is after income (from part-time work, scholarships, bursaries, or other sources) and reasonable expenses for the term.

Level 2 - £500

Level 2 awards are available to applicants who meet Level 1 criteria and are taking reasonable steps to reduce their financial problems but remain in difficulty. This can include:

- working a part-time job for a reasonable number of hours per week
- using a considerable amount of an overdraft.

Alternatively, applicants may have:

- excessive debt
- a health problem preventing their ability to work a part-time job.

Level 3 - £750

Level 3 awards are only available to applicants who meet Level 2 criteria and satisfy at least one of the following:

- have dependent children
- have caring responsibilities
- are 25 and under and a care leaver, are estranged from their parents/guardians, or have no living parents
- presently or at immediate risk of homelessness
- have a disability

Application Process

Applications for the Hardship Fund are open each term. Students can apply once a term. No award is provided over the summer break.

Applicants must complete the application form (found on the Intranet and BOVTS website), providing:

- bank details
- screenshots or statements showing the current balance, and at least the previous months transactions, for all accounts in which they hold funds
- screenshot or statement which shows the latest maintenance loan payment entering the applicant's bank account, where applicable.
- any additional information required in the application form.

BOVTS aims to process all applications within five working days of submission. Any payments will be made directly to the applicants chosen bank account by BACS transfer.

Unsuccessful applications

If an application is unsuccessful or an applicant is unhappy with the decision, they can contact the Admissions Manager to ask for an explanation of how the award was calculated within seven days of the date of the decision.

Reassessment of applications will only take place on the basis of:

- new information/evidence not submitted before assessment
- there being an error on the original submission
- a major material change in your financial circumstances

For reassessments, the award amount will be the difference between the updated award level and the previous award level.

If an applicant has no further information to disclose but wishes to appeal against the decision, they must submit an appeal to the Head of Finance within seven days of the date of the decision.

Data Usage

Data collected on the application form will be used solely for the purpose of assessing applications and for statistical, monitoring purposes and audit purposes.

However, information provided in the application that indicates a potential student welfare concern will be shared with the Student Support Manager, who will then contact the relevant student. Supporting financial documentation will be kept for auditing purposes and will be deleted within two academic years.

UWE Hardship Fund

BOVTS students may also be eligible for hardship funds via UWE Bristol. BOVTS undergraduate or postgraduate students are able to apply for the UWE Hardship Grant, which can provide grants of up to £500 to help students facing unexpected financial problems or additional expenses to remain on their course. [For more information and to apply please see here.](#)

The UWE Student Support Fund is a significant fund to support UK undergraduate and postgraduate students who may need extra financial support to remain in higher education. [For more information and to apply please see here.](#)

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