

FAQ: Law School Hardship Grant Scheme

What does the scheme do?

The Hardship Grant Committee makes small grants available to students in the School of Law. It has about £3000 available to it each year. The average award is £250.

Who can apply?

Individuals who are registered as a student (undergraduate or postgraduate) with the University of Bristol School of Law at the point when the Hardship Grants are allocated are eligible to apply. An annual call for applications is made, usually in February-March. In exceptional circumstances, grants may be made outside this period. Applications in such circumstances should first be discussed with Michael Chappell law-sam@bristol.ac.uk (Student Administration Manager) or Elizabeth Mumford law-ug-seniortutor@bristol.ac.uk (UG Senior Tutor), Holly Powley law-pg-seniortutor@bristol.ac.uk (PG Senior Tutor) then an application made on the usual application form and submitted to the Clerk to the Trustees.

How do I apply?

The Law School Trust provides a form for applicants to complete which requests details of financial income and expenditure for the current year of study and a student's current level of indebtedness. There are then two free text sections in which students can make their case for award of a Hardship Grant. The first requests that applicants identify why they are a suitable candidate for an award, the second requests any other information that the applicant thinks that the Committee should take into consideration when reviewing their application. The form can be downloaded from Blackboard.

What criteria are used?

Exceptional financial hardship, e.g. financial circumstances that may significantly impair an applicant's study, or their ability to complete their course.

Key Points to note:

- The Trustees make their decisions based on the information provided in the form and supporting documentation. Applicants should not assume that information they have made known to other individuals in the Law School, such as tutors and the Student Support Officer, will be available to the Trustees. If you feel that particular information is pertinent to your application, it should **always** be included in the form or supporting documentation.
- Applicants should note that funds available from the Trust in any year are limited and the Committee is unlikely to be able to make awards to all those applying. Trustees will be looking for evidence of **exceptional** financial hardship. Applicants who do not make a **convincing, and fully documented**, case for exceptional financial hardship are unlikely to receive awards.
- Effective applications:
 - contain precise information about income, expenditure and indebtedness;
 - describe concisely, but clearly, the reasons for claiming exceptional financial hardship;
 - identify why the financial hardship is outside the applicant's control, or otherwise unexpected;
 - outline any other measures the applicant is taking, or has taken, to address their difficulties
 - identify one or more specific purposes/needs that the funds sought will meet or contribute to;
 - are realistic about the amount of funding likely to be available.

Who makes the decision?

The Hardship Grant Committee of the Law School Trust. The Trust, established in 1983 at the time of the School of Law's 50th Anniversary, consists of an educational fund - the Anniversary Appeal Fund – which aims to support and advance legal education in the School of Law. The primary use of the Anniversary Appeal Fund has been to provide awards under the Student Hardship Grant Scheme. The Trustees of the Law School Trust include members of Staff of the Law School and individuals drawn from the legal profession. The Hardship Grant Committee consists primarily of the Trustees who are members of Staff of the Law School.

Other Questions

Q: I've applied for, and received, a Hardship Grant in a previous year; does this mean I can't apply again this year?

A: While the Trust maintains a record of successful applications, each year's applications are dealt with on their own merits, based on the information contained in the application form. Prior applications, whether successful or not, are no barrier to a fresh application.

Q: I have a number of documents (e.g. letters, medical certificates etc.) that I would like the Trustees to consider as they are directly relevant to my circumstances; can I include them with my application form?

A: Where applicants have documentary evidence which directly relates to the exceptional financial hardship for which an award is being sought, and which may be helpful to the Trustees in their deliberations, it is acceptable to attach copies to the form. Please do NOT provide original documents unless these are requested by the Clerk to the Trustees. Applicants should ensure they adequately explain the relevance of additional documents.

Q: I have a student loan and an overdraft. I would like to play a particular sport at Bristol, but can't afford the equipment and/or fees; can I get a grant for this?

A: The hardship grants are designed to help applicants through circumstances of exceptional financial hardship which may impair or threaten their studies. They are not designed to facilitate greater access to social or non-academic activities.

Q: I didn't receive a grant, although I thought I made a good case for one; can you tell me why I was unsuccessful?

A: The Trust cannot, and does not, give grants to all applicants; grants are prioritised to those perceived by the Trustees, on the basis of their application, as being most in need. All applications are reviewed and discussed by the Trustees. Not all applications are deemed to meet the criteria of exceptional financial hardship. The Trust does not enter into correspondence on the perceived merits or otherwise of individual cases.

Any queries about the Trust, or the proposed awards, may be made by contacting Andrew Charlesworth, the Clerk to the Trustees (law-trust-admin@bristol.ac.uk).