

Student Financial Assistance Procedure

Policy Code: FN1881

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Purpose

The procedure sets out processes for administration of the Student Financial Assistance Fund. The purpose of the fund is to provide financial support for students during the period that they are enrolled for an award course at Federation University Australia. The financial support will be related to the students' essential needs in order to continue their program at the University. The applicant must be able to demonstrate financial hardship.

These procedures attempt to strike a balance between providing support for students in need and exercising responsibly the University's duty of care.

Applications for Student Loans, Student Grants and Emergency Aid are to be made via the prescribed application process and forwarded to the Student Finance Office at the Mt Helen campus for evaluation, except for applications from the Gippsland campus which should be forwarded to the Student Connect office at that campus.

Scope

This policy applies to all students of Federation University Australia who are enrolled in an award program at a FedUni campus.

The procedure is also related to the maintenance and administration of the Student Financial Assistance Fund.

The procedure does not relate to fee deferment processes or TAFE fees instalments, concessions and exemptions.

Legislative Context

Definitions

Term	Definition
Fund	Student Financial Assistance Fund
Student Loan	A sum of money which is provided to a student on the basis that it will be repaid within an agreed time period.
Emergency Aid	Emergency assistance provided to a student in the form of vouchers or payment of small debts in cases of extreme need (with a maximum of \$200 per academic year). Repayment is voluntary.
Student Grant	Financial support option of last resort. A sum of money larger than the amount available for Emergency Aid which is provided to a student who can demonstrate significant financial hardship and the inability to repay a student loan. A maximum of \$500 is available and can only be accessed once per academic year. Repayment is voluntary.
Enrolled Student	Student who is enrolled in an award program at Federation University Australia at a FedUni campus.
Student Financial Support Officer	A staff member designated to provide financial assistance to students at each of the main campuses.
Counsellor	A staff member who may provide financial assistance when the Student Financial Assistance Officer is unavailable.
Guarantor	A Guarantor is a person who guarantees the repayment of a Student Loan exceeding \$1000.

Actions

The following parameters are set each year by the Chief Operating Officer and Director, Student Connect.

- The minimum reserves that the Fund will hold at any point in time.
- The total pool of funds available in any calendar year.
- Conditions of loan repayment.

Administration of Financial Assistance

The Student Financial Assistance Fund shall be administered by Student Connect at the Gippsland campus and by Student Connect at the main campus (Mt Helen) for all other campus locations.

All Financial Assistance enquiries and applications for Federation University Australia students located at the Gippsland campus shall be directed to Student Connect at the Gippsland campus, whilst all enquiries from students from other FedUni campus locations shall be directed to Student Connect at the main campus Mt Helen.

The Associate Director, Financial Services and Student Finance (or nominee) will be responsible for the follow up of all outstanding debt and monthly reporting on the status of the fund to the Associate Director, Financial Accounting and Systems for all campuses. The monthly reports are to include an updated total amount of financial assistance provided to students across all assistance methods.

The role of the Student Financial Support Officer (or Counsellor) is to:

- assist with applications for Student Loans, Student Grants and Emergency Aid;
- assist with applications for Student Loan extensions;
- provide financial education to clients.

The Student Financial Support Officer (or Counsellor) has the authority to:

- approve Emergency Aid;
- disburse Emergency Aid funds to approved applicants;
- approve loan repayment extensions within set parameters; and
- record all loans/grants on the University finance/student information management system.

Finance will generate reminder and overdue letters to recipients; provide reports to the Associate Director, Financial Services and Student Finance monthly or as requested which incorporates the following information:

- the total number of loans, grants and emergency aid allocated;
- the total amount of loans allocated;
- the total amount of repayments received;
- the balance remaining in the Fund;
- the amount and number of overdue loans; and
- the action taken on overdue loans.

Financial Assistance Available

Both domestic and international Enrolled Students can apply for financial assistance, as follows:

Category	Amount	Eligibility - the applicant must:	Mode of Payment	Repayment Conditions	Permitted Purposes	Guarantor
Emergency Aid	\$20 - \$200 (max. per academic year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be currently enrolled as a student in an award program at 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vouchers • cheques 	Voluntary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the purchase of food, fuel, or clothing only; and/or 	N/A

Category	Amount	Eligibility - the applicant must:	Mode of Payment	Repayment Conditions	Permitted Purposes	Guarantor
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a FedUni campus; be able to demonstrate that you are experiencing financial difficulties; 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> household utility costs (electricity, gas, water). 	
Student Grant	\$200 - \$500 (max. per academic year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> be currently enrolled as a student in an award program at a FedUni campus; be over 18 years; have exhausted all other financial support options (internal and external); be unable to repay a student loan; be able to demonstrate that you are experiencing financial difficulties; and be able to demonstrate an ability to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cheque direct deposit 	Voluntary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> accommodation expenses; household utility costs (electricity, gas, water); essential medical expenses; 	N/A

Category	Amount	Eligibility - the applicant must:	Mode of Payment	Repayment Conditions	Permitted Purposes	Guarantor
		be able to finance your study in the future;				
Student Loan	\$0 - \$1000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be currently enrolled as a student in an award program at a FedUni campus; • be over 18 years; • be able to demonstrate that you are experiencing financial difficulties; • be able to demonstrate an ability to make regular repayments; and • have no outstanding student loans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cheque • direct deposit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fortnightly /monthly; • Up to 12 months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accommodation expenses; • household utility costs (electricity, gas, water); • essential medical expenses; • study related computer hardware/software; • essential program and study-related costs including travel costs; • approved overseas study. 	N/A
Student Loan	\$1001 - \$2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be currently enrolled as a student in an award program at a FedUni campus; • be over 18; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cheque • direct deposit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fortnightly /monthly; • Up to 24 months; • Final payment 2 months prior to completion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accommodation expenses; • household utility costs (electricity, gas, water); • essential medical expenses; 	Required

Category	Amount	Eligibility - the applicant must:	Mode of Payment	Repayment Conditions	Permitted Purposes	Guarantor
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have successfully completed at least one academic semester of study; • be able to demonstrate that you are experiencing financial difficulties; • be able to demonstrate an ability to make regular repayments; • have no outstanding student loans; and • provide details of a guarantor 		of program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • study-related computer hardware/software; • essential program and study-related costs including travel costs; • approved overseas study. 	

Further Eligibility Criteria

The Student Financial Support Officer will review the student's eligibility for the category of financial assistance requested (see above table) plus:

1. Demonstration of financial hardship (a bank statement for the past two months)
2. Check student's enrolment status, and assess student's reasonable prospects of completing the program being undertaken. This does not apply to commencing students.
3. Student's proof of income (copies of recent payslips, Centrelink payment summary, bank statement)
4. In general, proof of the amount needed must be provided (e.g. utility bills, written quotes, letter/advice from school if applicable e.g. travel for placement)
5. Assess student's previous loan history and payment record.
6. Assess student's capacity to repay the debt.

7. Check for any outstanding debt(s) to the University
8. Review other avenues of funding and attempts to obtain loans from other sources (financial assistance should be a last resort).

A Student Loan will not be provided while an outstanding Student Loan exists, or where a student has previously failed to repay a loan.

Allowable purposes

Allowable purposes for the use of funds for Student Loans, Student Grants and Emergency Aid are as detailed below.

Student Loans

Funds may be used for most study-related expenses in order to alleviate financial hardship which would affect a student's ability to continue their program/course of study at the University.

- Purchase of books and/or equipment necessary to their course of study
- study-related computer hardware/software
- accommodation and essential living expenses (excluding on-campus accommodation)
- travel costs
- approved overseas study
- household costs e.g. utility bills

Student Grants

Funds are intended to provide immediate relief from unexpected one-off expenses which, if not paid, will have a detrimental effect on the student's wellbeing.

Types of expenses for which a Student Grant may be available include, but are not limited to:

- Accommodation expenses, excluding students residences
- Household utility costs
- Emergency travel
- Emergency food
- Medical treatment

Emergency Aid

Funds are intended to provide immediate relief from unexpected one-off expenses which, if not paid, will have a detrimental effect on the student's wellbeing.

Types of expenses for which Emergency Aid may be available include, but are not limited to:

- emergency food
- shelter
- emergency travel
- Medical treatment

Not Permitted Purposes - Student Loans and Student Grants

Student Loans and Student Grants will generally not be provided for the following purposes:

- Commonwealth supported place (CSP) charges
- TAFE or Higher Education tuition fees, material fees or ancillary fees
- Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF)
- student visa charges (for International students)
- holiday expenses (recreational travel)
- any debt incurred before enrolling at the University
- credit card or loan debts
- purchasing vehicles
- fines and penalties
- costs associated with moving into on-campus student residences

Guarantors

A Guarantor is required for all loans exceeding \$1000. The Guarantor will be required to enter into a guarantee agreement with the University. A Guarantor must be:

- 21 years of age or over;
- an Australian citizen or permanent resident of Australia;
- in full time employment
- not a full time student of Federation University Australia or any other tertiary institution; and
- not the spouse, fiance or de facto partner of the student.

Number of loans

Normally, a student may access only one Student Loan or Student Grant at a time. In exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the Director, Student Connect or nominee, students may access both.

A student may access Emergency Aid funds more than once. The sum of the individual payments (less any contributions from the student) must not exceed the maximum amount permitted (\$200), in a twelve month period (i.e. from 1 January to 31 December). In exceptional circumstances where this may be exceeded, a Student Loan or Grant should be considered.

Documentation required

For Emergency Aid payments, students must provide:

- photograph identification (e.g. student card and/or driver's licence)
- proof of financial hardship (e.g. past two months bank statements)

For Student Loans and Student Grants, students must provide copies of the following with their application:

- photograph identification (e.g. student card and/or driver's licence); and evidence of the purpose and necessity of the loan; and
- proof of financial hardship (e.g. past two months bank statements)
- evidence of the cost of the item or service for which funding is sought; and

- proof of source of income/demonstration of ability to repay according to the agreed schedule (e.g. scholarship documentation, Centrelink documentation, pay slips, demonstration of future employment prospects, demonstration of employment record, bank statements); and
- bank account details (hard copy), i.e. BSB and account number; and
- where relevant, details of the Guarantor, i.e. name, address, telephone number, relationship to the applicant and proof of identity (e.g. driver's licence).

The student is required to consent to a review of their enrolment for the consideration of their application.

For example, the necessity of items directly related to program/course requirements such as texts, equipment or placements may be demonstrated by providing relevant Handbook information, program/course booklists, or academic references indicating support for the application. The necessity of travel assistance may be demonstrated by proof of an OS-HELP loan application and a denial response, or supporting documentation from the relevant school.

Application Process

The student must attend an appointment with the Student Financial Support Officer (or Student Counsellor) to discuss financial support. The student must then complete the appropriate financial assistance application form including:

- Amount requested
- Purpose of financial assistance
- Supporting documentation including quotations
- Evidence of attempts to obtain funds from other sources (e.g. through family or friends)
- Budget Planner
- Sign a declaration attesting that the information supplied is true, complete and correct.
- Guarantor details for Student Loans exceeding \$1000

Non-approval of Financial Assistance Applications

Where the authorised officer (Manager, Student Support; Coordinator, Counselling or nominee) has decided not to approve an application for financial assistance the Student Financial Support Officer (or Counsellor) will:

- a) Notify the student verbally (by appointment or over the phone)
- b) Make a file note on the students record form

Approval of Financial Assistance Applications

Once financial assistance is approved by the authorised officer the Student Financial Support Officer (or Counsellor) must:

- a) Notify the student of the approval (via phone)
 - b) Inform the student of the timeline for payment
- Emergency Aid – immediate payment in the form of vouchers
 - Student Grant – payment processed as soon as possible
 - Student Loans – weekly payment cycle

c) If a Student Loan has been approved the Student Financial Support Officer (or Counsellor) must:

Prepare a Loan Agreement

1. Establish a loan agreement with the student, which includes provision for the regular payment of an agreed amount;
2. Advise the student of the conditions of the loan; and
3. Organise for the Student Loan Agreement to be signed and returned as specified in the accompanying letter.
4. Forward Cheque Requisition form or Electronic Funds Transfer Requisition form to Finance for payment. Ensure a copy of the Banking Details Form for Student Loan Applications is attached, along with a copy of the signed Student Loan Agreement.

Repayment of Loans

A student who has been provided a Student Loan must enter into a written agreement with the University to repay the loan on the terms and conditions approved by the Student Financial Support Officer.

These conditions will normally be as follows:

- Repayment shall be made as agreed via the payment methods listed on the student's signed loan agreement.
- If a loan recipient ceases to be an enrolled student, his/her loan must be repaid in full prior to leaving the University.
- A student, who is unable to meet the agreed repayments due to unforeseen circumstances, may seek to renegotiate those repayment dates by contacting the Student Financial Support Officer directly.

Payment method from University to students

Payment of Emergency Aid up to the maximum amount for the category published can be provided in a variety of means (food vouchers, direct payment of outstanding debts). Student Loans and Grants will generally be made by Electronic Funds Transfer to the student's designated account.

Loan repayment extensions and variations

If a student falls behind in their Loan repayments, they must contact the Student Financial Support Officer to discuss repayment options immediately.

Default on Loans

If a student does not comply with the conditions under which he/she obtained the Student Loan, the University may enforce Regulation 9.1 Fees and Charges (Higher Education Division) and Statute 9.2 Fees and Charges (TAFE Division) which states that:

"A person who has not paid all fees and charges owing by the person to the University may not be entitled to:

1. enrol or re-enrol
2. receive any results of assessment;
3. graduate or receive any award of the University;
4. receive an academic transcript;
5. use library services;

6. use computer services."

Students defaulting on loans become liable for reasonable debt collection costs incurred by the University. The University may commence proceedings for recovery of the debt from the student or Guarantor, or both.

Following the recovery process, bad debts will be written off according to the Federation University Australia Delegations – Contract, Financial, Staffing and Tenders Policy.

Development of the Fund

The Director, Student Connect shall, as circumstances warrant, seek to attract additional monies in order to extend the scope and effectiveness of the Fund to address the students' needs.

Appeals

Resolution at Department Level

If a student's application for a Student Loan or Student Grant is rejected by an authorised officer, the student may make a formal request for review by lodging a written appeal to the Director, Student Connect within seven days of being notified of the decision. A review will normally be based on procedural grounds only (i.e. whether the information provided in the application was correctly assessed, and whether the appropriate criteria and processes were correctly applied in accordance with this procedure and the [Student Financial Assistance Policy](#)) and a decision will be made by the Director, Student Connect in conjunction with the Associate Director, Financial Services and Student Finance.

University's General Grievance Procedure

If the student is still not satisfied with the decision, he/she has the right to seek recourse through the University's [Student Grievance Policy](#) and [Student Grievance Procedure](#).

Supporting Documents

Student Financial Assistance Fund Policy

Statute 9.1 Fees & Charges (Higher Education Division)

Regulation 9.1 Fees & Charges (Higher Education Division)

Statute 9.2 Fees & Charges (TAFE Division)

National Consumer Credit Protection Act 2009

Forms.

- [Application for Emergency Aid](#) (PDF 90.4kb)
- [Application for Student Grant](#) (PDF 92.9kb)
- [Application for Student Loan](#) (PDF 100.7kb)
- [Banking Details Form](#) (PDF 40.6kb)
- [Guarantee Agreement](#) (PDF 58.0kb)

- [Student Loan Agreement](#) (PDF 60.6kb)

Responsibility

Position	Responsibility
Director, Student Connect	responsible for overall management of the Fund.
Chief Operating Officer (or nominee)	responsible for the development, compliance, monitoring and review of this policy and associated guidelines and is responsible for allocating money to the Fund.
Associate Director, Financial Services and Student Finance (or nominee)	responsible for monthly reporting on the status of the Fund to the Associate Director, Finance, Accounting and Systems and for the follow up of outstanding debt.
Manager, Student Support	responsible for the overall administration of the Fund administered for all FedUni campuses.
Student Financial Support Officer (or Counsellor)	responsible for assisting with applications, providing financial education, and approval of emergency aid as set out in the Student Financial Assistance Policy and this procedure.

Implementation

The [Student Financial Assistance Procedure](#) is to be implemented throughout the University community and will take the form of:

1. An Announcement Notice under 'FedNews' on the University's website and through the University Policy - 'Recently Approved Documents' webpage to alert the University-wide community of the approved Policy;
2. Inclusion on the University's online Policy Library;
3. distribution of e-mails to Head of School / Head of Department / University staff; and
4. documentation distribution, eg. posters, brochures

Forms/Record Keeping

Title	Location	Responsible Officer	Minimum Retention Period
Application for Student Loan	Finance L drive>Finance>Student Loans>Forms	Student Finance Officer	7 years
Application for Student Grant	Finance L drive>Finance>Student Loans>Forms	Student Finance Officer	7 years
Application for Emergency Aid	Finance L drive>Finance>Student Loans>Forms	Student Finance Officer	7 years
Banking details form for Student Loan application	Finance L drive>Finance>Student Loans>Forms	Student Finance Officer	7 years
Guarantee Form	Finance L drive>Finance>Student Loans>Forms	Student Finance Officer	7 years
Student Loan Agreement	Finance L drive>Finance>Student Loans>Forms	Student Finance Officer	7 years