



Emergency Fund Policy

1. Scope and Purpose

1.1 The Emergency Fund is designed to support students facing immediate financial issues & crises, to the extent that essential costs cannot be fulfilled on an urgent basis without additional support via funding.

1.2 It's understood that financial circumstances can change drastically in a short period of time. Therefore, provision has been made for this fund to be made available to students where unforeseen & sudden financial pressures leave them with no other option but seek urgent financial help from the university.

1.3 The criteria and guidance below can be consulted on how the AECC University Emergency Fund is managed, how applications are assessed, and how funds are disbursed.

1.4 The fund operates all year round, and should students require additional support due to knock-on effects to their mental health, then the Student Services team can be consulted on-site who provide counselling & one-to-one sessions to help students cope and handle themselves going forward.

2. About the Fund

2.1 The award from the fund is in the form of a single non-repayable grant designed for resolving immediate & urgent financial crisis circumstances that the receipt of this money would seek to resolve in a timely manner.

2.2 The Fund is to be used when there are no further financial avenues available that would react with the speed required to clear the specified urgent essential payment(s). Students must demonstrate that they have utilised all funding available to them, which the application form process will reiterate.

2.3 To apply to the fund, applicants will need to book an initial financial assessment meeting with a Student Finance Adviser. The assessment will indicate whether you are eligible for an award from the Fund (see point 10).

2.4 The fund is not designed to provide support with tuition fees.

2.5 Students enrolled on AECC University College undergraduate and postgraduate courses, and postgraduate research students are eligible to apply for the fund. Students studying part-time may be eligible to apply to the fund, eligibility depends on the level of Course Intensity, which relates to the contact hours of the course. Contact the Student Services Team for information if you are studying part-time and wish to apply to the fund.

3. Provision

3.1 The amount awarded to eligible students is on a case-by-case basis, but current provision will see payments of up to £250 awarded for emergency funding further to a successful assessment.

3.2 If the student has already been awarded funding through the Student Support Fund, then the amount of emergency funding available to them will be reduced by that amount. £500 is maximum award divided between the two funds as the total provision per student per academic year.

3.3 Any agreed award will be paid within the timescale of the next working day once the financial assessment is completed, and all required evidence is submitted.

3.4 For students experiencing exceptional circumstances, an award can be made from the emergency fund of over £250 provided there is sufficient justification for the amount and further to managerial approval.

4. Priority funding

4.1 We are aware that some students are studying with additional responsibilities that go beyond their course. The following student groups are designated to be in *priority groups* and are assessed in light of this. The priority groups include:

- Students with children
- Students from a low-income household
- Students with a disability
- Care Leavers
- Final year students
- Mature students
- Estranged students
- Students with caring responsibilities

5. Eligibility

5.1 To be considered for the fund you must:

- Be fully enrolled on your chosen course before application to the fund, i.e. you cannot be withdrawn or on a study break
- Be designated as a 'home student' in relation to your tuition fees
- Be studying on an undergraduate or postgraduate course, or be a postgraduate researcher enrolled at AECC University College, full or part-time
- Be currently in receipt of:
 - 1) the full entitlement of funding available to you from Student Finance for your region, or equivalent. This could be the combination of your student loan plus a maintenance loan as a typical example
 - 2) any eligible statutory benefits, such as Universal Credit or childcare grants etc., and you must:

3) declare if you are in receipt of an AECC University College bursary or scholarship.

6. Studying part-time

6.1 If you are studying a course on a part-time basis, there is an expectation that you are earning a minimum amount in paid work before you will be deemed eligible for the fund.

6.2 The difference from full-time study is that there is an understanding that you have made adequate provision to earn via paid work to help pay for your expenses. To be eligible for the fund, your net income per year is required to be above £9,988 as the minimum required provision (MRP).

7. International Students

7.1 As set out in student visa requirements, there is an expectation that you have sufficient finance in place from the outset of your course. Therefore, it is only under exceptional circumstances that international students can be considered for the Student Support Fund. The following are examples of potential circumstances that could warrant support from the fund:

- Unforeseen medical costs of the student or dependant of the student
- Emergency situations that necessitate the need for flights home
- Emergency situations that necessitate a need to relocate
- Unforeseeable costs related to a visa extension (e.g. costs incurred due to delays in the process outside the student's control)
- Internationally recognised crises directly affecting the student.

7.2 Provision with separate criteria exist for International students facing immediate financial crises. This is the International Emergency Fund for which full policy information can be found at - <https://libguides.aecc.ac.uk/wellbeing/Finance>

8. How to Apply

8.1 To arrange your financial assessment meeting with the Student Finance Adviser, email StudentServices@aecc.ac.uk and include:

- Your name and student number
- Your upcoming availability for a financial assessment appointment. This can be face to face, on the phone, or by video link.

9. Number of Applications

9.1 The Emergency Fund can only be successfully claimed from once per academic year per student.

9.1 Additional applications to the fund beyond the first require managerial approval before the student can proceed. The limitation above is intended so that the available budget for the fund can be spread amongst more students.

10. What is required

10.1 Information for the financial assessment:

Evidence:

- The most recent month's bank statement from what would be considered your 'main' bank account. This would be used to determine eligibility based on activity on the account as well as the balance.

Income & Expenditure:

- The vast majority of income & expenditure will be assessed through the 'assumed income' calculations of the spreadsheet that the Student Finance Advisor will use during the assessment to aid in their decisions.
- Specific elements of income & expenditure will be asked to support the application which are detailed below:
 1. Grants or bursaries that they are currently in receipt of
 2. Any applicable Government benefits (such as universal credit)
 3. The yearly income of the students' partner, if applicable and only if they live with them.
 4. The amount yearly that the students' parent(s) provide towards them and their living costs, only if declared as a regular amount and only if applicable to them.
 5. The cost of the council tax but only if their partner pays this and only if they live with them.
 6. The cost of the rent or mortgage
 7. The regular cost of insurance apart from insurance taken for their car or place of residence
 8. The amount the student pays towards regular health costs, which could be via prescription or other required medication as examples.
 9. The repayments towards any secured debts if applicable. Examples include hire finance / hire purchase on vehicles repaid monthly, or mortgage repayments on a property.

10.2 For the application form:

- The application form will require the latest monthly statement uploaded for evidence if not supplied at the financial assessment.

Please note that if any of the above evidence cannot be gathered together in time for your appointment, then please arrive to the meeting with the Student Finance Adviser with as much information of your current finances as possible. Should the bank statement be missing for the appointment, this would then subsequently be required to be evidenced through the application form.

11. Description of your current situation

12.1 A brief summary of what has caused you to be in the position of requesting support from the Emergency Fund and what support you require from the fund. This would arise from the discussion at the financial assessment, but also reiterated in your own words on the application form.

12. Timescales

- Further to the latest months' bank statement being received and any pertaining queries answered sufficiently, the expectation would be the next working day to receive payment from the Emergency Fund.

13. Declaration

- The declaration at the end of the application form will need to be complete before your application can be moved forward for processing.

14. Outcome

15.1 We will endeavour to ensure that students applying to the Emergency Fund are kept informed throughout the process. The following touch-points are key:

- Amount awarded from the fund: A decision will be made at the financial assessment phase to accept or reject an application and what amount would be required to support the described emergency.
- Receipt of the funds is expected to be the next working day, following the application being submitted and the bank statement either attached or received separately.
- Outstanding evidence required: Students are informed during the assessment meeting or by email following the financial assessment, any queries relating to their submitted bank statement that would need addressing before their application can be processed.
- Award: Students who have completed and submitted their application form and were informed that they are eligible for an award should check their bank account for receipt of funds within the next working day.

The online application form via email link will be given either at or after the financial assessment, but only if the outcome of the meeting resulted in agreement for the student to apply & receive funds.

In the instance that further information is needed to determine eligibility, then an email explaining the application is 'on hold' will be sent to the student, detailing what is required to move the application forward. Examples could include: bank statement missing from the form, or unanswered queries relating to transactions on their bank statement that need addressing.

In the event of a decline, an explanation would be provided verbally prior to the conclusion of the financial assessment meeting, but also an email would be submitted to the student detailing the reason(s) why they have been rejected funding and appropriate other avenues that could be used to gain additional support.

15. Appeals and Reassessments

16.1 You may request a review of the decision. The following may be reasons for an appeal or reassessment:

- Your financial circumstances have changed following the financial assessment meeting.
- The required bank statement was unable to be provided, for valid reasons during the application process.
- You have evidence that a procedural error has occurred.

16. Questions and Support

17.1 Should you wish to talk with someone about wellbeing, do remember you can speak with a Wellbeing Adviser. To book an appointment just email StudentServices@aecc.ac.uk

17.2 For any further questions related to applying for the Emergency Fund, or to book your financial assessment meeting, please email StudentServices@aecc.ac.uk

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Target:	Staff, students
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Equality analysis:	This policy has been developed in due regard to the University College's equality duty.