

FINANCIAL SUPPORT SCHEME IN CASES OF CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND ONE'S CONTROL

Adopted by the Executive Board with the agreement of the University Council on 12 May 2015 and amended on 26 June 2017.

INTRODUCTION

Articles 7.51, 7.51c, 7.51f, and 7.51h of the Higher Education and Research Act (*Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek*, WHW) contain rules relating to financial support for students who fall behind schedule in their studies due to circumstances beyond their control. The Executive Board adopted the following scheme in relation to the awarding of financial support in accordance with the Act on 12 May 2015, with the approval of the University Council, and amended it on 26 June 2017.

CHAPTER 1. GRADUATION SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH A BASIC STUDENT GRANT

Article 1 – Scope

This chapter applies solely to students meant in Article 12.14 of the Student Finance Act 2000 (*Wet studiefinanciering 2000*, WSF 2000) – that is, students who are eligible for a performance-related grant for their Bachelor's or Master's degree in the form of a basic student grant).

Article 2 – Financial support

Paragraph 1. Any student who, as a result of exceptional circumstances as meant in Article 7:

1. has fallen behind schedule in his or her studies in the period during which he or she received a student grant in the form of a basic student grant as a performance-related grant, *and*
2. was enrolled as a 'student' at Utrecht University during this period and had paid his or her statutory tuition fees,

is eligible for financial support if he or she is enrolled at Utrecht University on a study programme for which he or she has not been awarded a degree and for which he or she has paid the statutory tuition fees.

Paragraph 2. That referred to in paragraph 1 is correspondingly applicable to any 'pre-Master's student' who is enrolled at Utrecht University and who has paid the pre-Master's fees.

Article 3 – Level of financial support

The level of the financial support is equivalent to the basic student grant, the supplementary grant, and single-parent allowance (if applicable) that the applicant received in the final month of the academic year in which the exceptional circumstances occurred.

CHAPTER 2. GRADUATION SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH A STUDENT LOAN

Article 4 – Scope

This chapter applies solely to students who received a student grant for a Bachelor's or Master's degree programme for the first time after 31 August 2015 in accordance with Chapter 5 of the WSF 2000 in the form of a performance-related grant made up of a supplementary grant, a travel allowance, and a single-parent allowance (if applicable).



Article 5 – Financial support

Paragraph 1. Any student who, as a result of exceptional circumstances as meant in Article 7:

1. has fallen behind schedule in his or her studies during the period in which he or she received a student grant in accordance with Article 5.2 paragraph 1 of the WSF 2000 and, if applicable, Article 5.2b or 5.2.c of the same Act; and
2. was enrolled as a 'student' at Utrecht University during this period and has paid his or her statutory tuition fees,

is eligible for financial support if he or she is enrolled at Utrecht University on a study programme for which he or she has not been awarded a degree and for which he or she has paid the statutory tuition fees.

Paragraph 2. That referred to in paragraph 1 is correspondingly applicable to any 'pre-Master's student' who is enrolled at Utrecht University and who has paid the pre-Master's fees.

Article 6 – Level of financial support

The level of financial support is equivalent to €425 per month.

CHAPTER 3. EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND FALLING BEHIND SCHEDULE IN STUDIES

Article 7 – Exceptional circumstances: circumstances beyond one's control

1. An exceptional circumstance is defined as follows:
 - a. illness of the applicant;
 - b. exceptional family circumstances;
 - c. pregnancy of and giving birth by the applicant;
 - d. handicap or chronic illness of the applicant;
 - e. falling behind schedule in studies as a result of the way in which the degree programme was organised by the institute;
 - f. circumstances other than those listed above, if rejection would result in a manifestly unfair situation.
2. If the applicant has fallen behind schedule in his or her studies as a result of a handicap or chronic illness, then a precondition for eligibility for graduation support is that the applicant has submitted a written request for an extension of the grant period (as meant in Article 5.2b or 5.6, paragraph 10 of the WSF 2000). When financial support is awarded on the grounds of a handicap or chronic illness, account is taken of any compensation that the applicant is already receiving in the form of a waiving of study-related debt/ an extra performance-related grant.
3. If the applicant received an administrative grant from Utrecht University during the period in which he or she fell behind schedule in his or her studies as a result of exceptional circumstances, account will be taken of any compensation that the applicant received through the administrative grant when the amount of graduation support is determined.

Article 8 – Notification; limiting the extent to which a student falls behind in his or her studies

1. If a student falls behind schedule in his or her studies as a result of circumstances beyond his or her control, the student must immediately, or no later than three months after the circumstances arise, notify the study advisor, student counsellor, or student psychologist to discuss measures to limit the delay as much as possible.¹

¹ The student concerned must show 'responsible study conduct', which means that he or she must do all in his or her power to limit the extent to which he or she falls behind as much as possible. The university provides supervision for students, help with planning their studies, and, if necessary, special facilities. Any student who



If the exceptional circumstances last for longer than three months, any later notification (that is, after the three-month period) will mean that only the delay in studies incurred during the first three months and in the months subsequent to the notification will be eligible for compensation.

2. If the exceptional circumstances continue into a subsequent academic year, paragraph 1 shall apply where applicable.
3. If the fact that a student is not going to be able to actively pursue his or her studies as a result of a circumstance mentioned in Article 2, paragraph 1 for a longer period of time is foreseeable, a precondition for support is that he or she follows the advice given by the student counsellor, student advisor, or student psychologist to suspend his or her claims to a student grant.

Article 9 – Determining the extent to which a student has fallen behind schedule in their studies

The extent to which a student has fallen behind schedule in their studies is determined for each academic year. At the end of an academic year, the number of months' delay in a student's studies caused by exceptional circumstances is calculated on the basis of the nominal number of available credits and the number actually obtained by the student.

Article 10 – Minimum extent of delay in a student's studies

Students who have fallen behind schedule in their studies by less than one month are not entitled to financial support.

CHAPTER 4. PROCEDURE: APPLICATION, PROCESSING AND DECISION

Article 11 – Application

1. Applications for financial support should be submitted online using the designated form.
2. Applicants will then receive an online confirmation of receipt.
3. Applications submitted after 31 January of the academic year subsequent to that in which the exceptional circumstances arose will not be considered, unless the applicant can demonstrate that he or she was unable to make the application earlier as a result of circumstances beyond his or her control.
4. The following documentation should be submitted within three weeks of sending the online application:
 - a. a statement from a student advisor, student counsellor or student psychologist in relation to notification of the study delay as meant in Article 8;
 - b. if the application is based on any of the grounds mentioned in Article 7, first paragraph under a, c, or d: a declaration by a doctor, psychologist, or obstetrician confirming the period in which the circumstances occurred;

falls behind schedule in his or her studies as a result of exceptional circumstances must actually use this supervision and these facilities in order to qualify for graduation support. The obligation to notify the student supervisor mentioned in this article serves this purpose. The measures needed for ensuring that the delay in the student's studies is not needlessly extended are then discussed with the student supervisor.



- c. if the application is based on exceptional family circumstances, written evidence of said circumstances;
 - d. a notification from the Education Executive Agency (DUO) in relation to the level of the student grant /performance-related grant in the final month of the academic year to which the application relates.
5. If the applicant has not submitted the documentation referred to in paragraph 4 within the time stated in said paragraph, or if said documentation is not complete, he or she will be given an additional week in which to submit the application in full. If the application has not been submitted in full by the end of this period, the application will not be considered. The applicant will be notified of this.

Article 12 – Processing and decision

1. The director of the Academic Affairs Office will decide on the application on behalf of the Executive Board within eight weeks of receipt of the documentation referred to in Article 11, paragraph 4.
2. Any application as mentioned in Article 11 will be put to the student advisor for their recommendation.
3. The decision will be one of the following:
 - the application will be rejected;
 - financial support will be awarded for a period to be determined;
 - the application will be disregarded due to late submission or because the submission was not complete by the end of the applicable period.
4. The decision will be delivered to the applicant in writing, and will include the reasons for the decision. In the decision, the applicant will be informed that he may lodge an objection to it with the Executive Board, in accordance with Article 7.1 of the General Administrative Law Act (*Algemene Wet Bestuursrecht, Awb*). The ruling on the objection will state that the applicant may lodge an appeal against it with the Higher Education Appeals Board, in accordance with Article 7.66 of the WHW.

Article 13 – Payment of graduation support

The financial support will be paid in equal monthly instalments. The amount for each period will be paid at the end of the period in question. The first period starts from the month subsequent to the month in which the application is received, unless the applicant has requested that the payments be made at a later time.

CHAPTER 5. FINAL PROVISIONS

Article 14 – Power of derogation

The director of the Academic Affairs Office acts on behalf of the Executive Board in the case of applications for financial support under this scheme, unless this could have consequences for any of the parties involved that due to exceptional circumstances would be disproportionate in relation to the objectives of the scheme.

Article 15 – Entry into force

The version of the scheme amended on 26 June 2017 shall enter into force on 1 September 2017.



EXPLANATORY NOTES

General

This scheme provides for 'graduation support' for students who fall behind schedule in their studies as a result of circumstances beyond their control. The scheme is intended for students with a student grant. This involves two groups:

- students who are covered by the Student Loans (Higher Education) Act (*Wet studievoorschot hoger onderwijs*); the rules for this group are included in Chapter 2;
- students who are still eligible for a basic student grant as a performance-related grant on account of their being enrolled before 1 September 2015 for a Bachelor's or Master's programme: the rules for this group are included in Chapter 1.

Explanatory notes for each article

Chapter 1

Article 1

The Student Loans (Higher Education) Act entered into force on 1 September 2015. The Act includes transitional arrangements in Article 12.14 for the WSF 2000: it states that anyone who was enrolled for a Bachelor's or Master's programme before 1 September 2015 shall continue to be subject to the old rules: students in this category retain their right to a performance-related grant in the form of a basic student grant.

Article 2

A condition for receiving support is that the student has fallen behind schedule in his studies as a result of circumstances beyond his control during the time he was receiving a basic student grant. The student in question must also be liable to pay statutory tuition fees to Utrecht University. If a student is also enrolled at another university and has paid statutory tuition fees there, he will have to apply for graduation support from that university.

Article 3

The level of graduation support is equal to the student grant components received: the basic student grant, any additional grant, and single parent allowance.

Chapter 2

Article 4

Students covered by the Student Loans (Higher Education) Act are not eligible for a basic student grant.

Article 5

A condition for receiving support is that the student has fallen behind schedule in his studies during the time he was receiving a student grant. The time for receiving a student grant is equal to the duration of a Bachelor's or Master's programme, and is awarded subsequent to said time by DUO. Here is an example for clarification purposes:

For students with a supplementary grant who are taking a Bachelor's degree followed by a one-year Master's, student grants are awarded as follows:

academic year 1	enrolment on Bachelor's programme	student grant with supplementary grant
academic year 2	enrolment on Bachelor's programme	student grant with supplementary grant
academic year 3	enrolment on Bachelor's programme	student grant with supplementary grant



academic year 4	enrolment on Bachelor's programme	student grant with supplementary grant
academic year 5	enrolment on Master's programme	student grant (no longer receives a supplementary grant: 4-year period has been used up).

Article 5.2 paragraph 1 of the WSF 2000 states that students are eligible for a performance-related grant (that is, a supplementary grant, travel allowance, and single-parent allowance, if applicable) for the nominal duration of their study programme. To be eligible for support, students must demonstrate that they have actually received a student grant, even if it is only the travel allowance. For the period for which entitlement to graduation support exists, reference can therefore be made to Article 5.2 paragraph 1.

It is possible that the period covered by the Student Loans (Higher Education) Act can be extended by one year, on request, due to a handicap (Article 5.2b of the WSF 2000) or to taking a university teacher training programme (Article 5.2c of the WSF 2000). Referring to these articles means the students concerned are eligible for this extra year's graduation support as well.

Article 6

The amount is set at 425 euros a month. There is no supplementary reimbursement for students who receive a supplementary grant / single-parent allowance.

Chapter 3

Articles 7 and 8

Articles 7 and 8 specify the exceptional circumstances that are taken into consideration. A requirement is that the student in question reported them in time and displayed 'responsible study conduct'.

Articles 9 and 10

The extent to which a student has fallen behind schedule in their studies is determined for each academic year on the basis of the number of credits that should nominally be gained and the actual number gained. A condition is that the student must have fallen behind schedule by at least one month.

Chapter 4

Articles 11, 12, and 13

The procedure relating to applications and how they are processed and decided upon is described in Articles 11, 12, and 13.

Chapter 5

Article 14

The scheme includes a hardship clause, which allows the director of the Academic Affairs Office to derogate from the terms of the scheme to prevent a manifestly unfair situation.

Article 15

The amended scheme shall enter into force on 1 September 2017.