Unite Foundation

Scholarship Scheme

2027/2028

This guidance provides important information.

Please read before filling out an application form.

The Unite Foundation
is a CIO registered in
England and Wales 1198601
Scotland SC051987

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Guidance and Information

1 What is the Unite Foundation Scholarship?

The scholarship gives care leaver/experienced and estranged students a free ensuite student bedroom in a university hall of residence for a maximum of 3 years of your university life. No rent, no bills; 365 days a year for up to 3 years of eligible study.

Unite Foundation scholarships are provided through a co-funding arrangement with partner universities. The Unite Foundation covers 75% of the accommodation cost, and your university covers the remaining 25%. This means the scholarship accommodation is free to you; you are not required to contribute to these costs. There may be an opportunity to 'upgrade' your standard room but be aware that this will likely require you to make a contribution.

2 Which universities are part of the 2027/28 network?

In order to apply and be eligible for a Unite Foundation Scholarship from 2027/28 onwards you must be applying to, or already attending, one of the following universities *(you must be studying/planning to study at the partner University campus and not a different location/branch/franchise or awarding body University)* If you are unsure, please contact the Unite Foundation via info@unitefoundation.org.uk

+ Aston University
+ Bath Spa University
+ Bournemouth University
+ De Montfort University
+ Edinburgh Napier University
+ Glasgow Caledonian University
+ Glasgow School of Art
+ Imperial College London
+ King's College London
+ Leeds Beckett University
+ Leeds Trinity University
+ Liverpool John Moores University
+ London School of Economics
+ Manchester Metropolitan University
+ Newcastle University
+ Queen Mary University of London
+ St Mary's University Twickenham
+ University College London
+ University of Birmingham
+ University of Bristol
+ University of Chester
+ University of Durham
+ University of Edinburgh
+ University of Essex
+ University of Greenwich
+ University of Kent
+ University of Liverpool
+ University of London
+ University of Northumbria
+ University of Nottingham
+ University of Portsmouth
+ University of Roehampton
+ University of South Wales
+ University of Stirling
+ University of Strathclyde
+ University of Sussex
+ University of the Arts London
+ University of the West of England (UWE)
+ University of Westminster
+ University of Winchester
+ University of Wrexham

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3 Who is eligible for a Unite Foundation scholarship?

Please read the descriptions below very carefully to see if you meet the principal scheme criteria of care leaver, care experienced (Scotland), OR estranged. If you are unsure of your eligibility or the evidence documentation needed, please get in touch with Unite Foundation. We will be able to offer help with this application. Please contact Unite Foundation on info@unitefoundation.org.uk

We do not provide scholarships for postgraduate courses, foundation years, second undergraduate degrees or second attempts at a first degree.

The Unite Foundation adopts the same definitions around care and estrangement that the different national governments use so that we can understand and communicate our impact in the same policy contexts.

Care Experienced (Scotland) (see appendix 1 for an example).

The Scottish authorities define a care experienced student as being aged 16 years or over and having, at any time in their lives, been looked after by a Local Authority. The Unite Foundation however has an upper age limit of 25 on the 1st of September 2027.

Share your **SAAS (Student Awards Agency Scotland) award letter confirming your Care Experience Students Bursary** or alternatively provide a Local Authority letter. Please ensure your Local Authority letter explicitly states **'care experienced' OR 'looked after' OR 'care leaver'** – if you are unsure, please send this application guidance to your Local Authority for assistance or again discuss with your University contact.

If you have applied to SAAS but not yet received the outcome of your application/confirmation of your Care Experienced Students Bursary, please instead enclose a copy/screenshot of your submitted application and the evidence you provided to SAAS of your care experience (SAAS' Evidence of Care Experience form or letter from a professional person). See Appendix 1 for an example of a submitted application screenshot. Please note, if you are awarded a Unite Foundation scholarship, you must provide evidence of you having been awarded the SAAS Care Experienced Students Bursary before 1*st* September 2027.

If you are unsure of how to apply for your Care Experience Bursary, please see website for guidance and video support on applications or Appendix 1 for an example of an application screenshot.

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Statutory Care Leaver (NI, Wales, England) (see appendix 2 for an example)

Care Leaver is a legal status that can begin at age 16 and lasts until 25 if in Higher Education. There are several different categories of Care Leaver but all legal definitions are eligible for the Unite Foundation Scholarship Scheme.

Ask your Local Authority for a letter on headed paper **confirming that you are a statutory care leaver**; ideally stating which category you fall into, i.e. Relevant, Former Relevant, Eligible or Qualifying. Ask them to include in this letter the support they will provide for you whilst you are at university. Alternatively, please provide a copy of your most recent national (Student Finance England, Student Finance Wales or Student Finance Northern Ireland) student finance award confirming explicitly you are in receipt of funds specifically for care leavers.

Estranged from family (see appendix 3 for an example).

If you are estranged from both of your biological parents, adoptive parents, or only living parent, you may be eligible to apply for the Unite Foundation Scholarship Scheme as an estranged student. Student Finance (Student Finance England, Student Finance Northern Ireland, Student Finance Wales) or Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS), considers you an independent student on the basis of being estranged from your parents if you are permanently not in contact with your parents. Please note, you are not eligible to apply if you have been assessed as an independent student due to a different category than estranged eg bereavement, marriage etc.

For guidance on how to prove estrangement to Student Finance England, visit the SFE page, for Northern Ireland, visit the SFNI enquiries page, for Wales, visit the SFW page and for the SAAS in Scotland, visit the SAAS page

Ask your student finance/award office for a document on headed paper stating that you have been assessed as an independent student on the basis of irreconcilable parental estrangement (we can accept an email copy of your confirmation of estranged status – please include the full email rather than a screenshot).

If you are unable to provide a supporting documents for estrangement as it has not yet been decided, please enclose the application and supporting documents that you have submitted to Student Finance to apply for independent status as an estranged young person. Please note you must provide evidence of successful application outcome before 1st Sept 2027 if successfully awarded a scholarship.

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Additional eligibility criteria

In addition to care or estranged status, applicants must also meet all of the following criteria:

+ Aged 25 or under on 1st September 2027 and
+ Undertaking first attempt at, and only, course of undergraduate study
+ NOT undertaking Foundation or Masters level study in year beginning September 2027
+ Studying at, or holding a firm choice offer from, a Unite Foundation university
+ UK home fee status student, i.e. not an international student
+ In receipt of, or applying for, tuition fee and maintenance loans via Student Finance reflecting care leaver/care experienced/estranged student status for the full duration of your course (or NHS funding).

Note - Students undertaking a Foundation year in 2027/28 are NOT eligible to apply for this current application cycle but should consider application in 2028/29.

Students that have had previous study at undergraduate level are not eligible. If you are unsure of your eligibility, please email info@unitefoundation.org.uk

4 What are my chances of receiving a scholarship?

In 2027/28 there are 110 Unite Foundation Scholarships available.

In the 2026/27 cycle we received 351 eligible applications and awarded 70 scholarships. Therefore, 19.9% of eligible applications were successful.

We are always oversubscribed and are not able to accurately predict the number of eligible applications we will receive. Do not rely on the Unite Foundation Scholarship for your 2027/28 accommodation provision as sadly we cannot award all eligible applications.

An application therefore represents a chance, but not a guarantee, of a scholarship.

5 How do I apply?

The application has three stages:

+ fully read this information and guidance document until you are confident you are eligible to apply

+ apply online here. You will be asked to upload evidence of eligibility so get that organised before you start. We operate a 'double submission' system – ensure you have submitted and then confirmed submission on the next page. You will receive an email confirmation (check junk and clutter folders). If unsure, email info@unitefoundation.org.uk

to confirm we have received your application. Make sure the contact details you supply in your application form are correct – if either the Unite Foundation or your University have any queries regarding your application, these will be the details used to contact you.

+ your current university will check elements of your eligibility and also connect you to university staff dedicated to supporting you in achieving your potential in Higher Education.

Your application will only be considered if it is complete, eligible and confirmed by your university by the specified deadline (see Section 8).

6 How are the scholarship awards decided?

The Unite Foundation Scholarship Scheme is sadly not able to provide awards for every eligible young person and applies scheme priorities to decide how awards are allocated each year. These priorities are to:

+ balance scholarships between estranged and care leaver students
+ reflect a range of academic ability and course choice
+ balance scholarships throughout the partner university network.

This means that an eligible application offers only a *chance* and not a guarantee of a scholarship award. No single scheme priority carries greater weight than another and applicants cannot influence the outcome of the award in any way. If your eligible application is unsuccessful initially, you will be put on the reserve list and can go through the adjustment and clearing process. You can also reapply the following year if you still meet the eligibility criteria.

7 Reserve list, adjustment and clearing process

+ Scholarships made vacant for any reason will then be made available for students in the 'reserve' list category from the same city.
+ Where multiple candidates exist, the Unite Foundation will select replacement scholarship students.

8 Timeline of application process

The timeline and important dates for the 2027/28 application process:

1 January 2027 – 11 June 2027	Scholarship applications can be completed, evidenced, and submitted. Each university will need time to review your application and support you if you have any queries.
Application Deadline – 23:59 on Friday 11 June 2027	You must submit a complete and properly evidenced application before 23:59 on Friday 11 June 2027.
11:59 on Friday 25 June 2027	Deadline for applications to have been approved by universities (incl all supporting evidence approved by the Unite Foundation).
Tuesday 6 July 2027	Confirmation of awards and reserve list detail communicated directly to student applicants and university partners by 3pm
July – August 2027	Accommodation arrangements made for awarded students.
August 2027	Exam results released.
Until 1 September 2027	Reserve list, adjustment and clearing process period.

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9 Benefits of the Unite Foundation Scholarship Scheme

+ If awarded a scholarship, and on becoming a Unite Foundation Scholarship Student, you will be entitled to up to a maximum three years of free accommodation in a designated halls property.

+ The standard of free accommodation is a single occupancy, en-suite, bedroom in a university halls often with a communal fitted kitchen; the flat will be shared with a mixture of other students. There may be an opportunity to 'upgrade' your room but be aware that this will likely require you to make a contribution and is not always an option.

+ Tenancy contracts include all utilities, have wi-fi throughout and are served by maintenance and on-site support teams. Some buildings have other facilities like a laundry, fortnightly cleaning and bike storage. Flats are furnished and the buildings plus campus locations have areas suitable for both study and leisure.

+ For each year that you take up the free accommodation offer, your accommodation will be available for the full calendar year; 365 or 366 days on leap years. Occasionally you might need to move flats temporarily to allow for maintenance and redecorating etc.

+ You will not require a rent guarantor or an advance deposit.

+ Once you become a Scholarship Student you can choose annually if you would like to take up the free accommodation offer. Your award entitles you to up to three years accommodation. These do not need to be consecutive but you do need to remain eligible each year. Years of study that are excluded from support are:

    - Foundation year
    - years involving study credits toward a Masters whether that be post graduate or integrated with a Bachelors
    - resit years
    - repeat years arising as a result of changing courses
    - years in which you are aged 26 or older on 1st September

Miscellaneous support:

Where appropriate the Unite Foundation will make available opportunities or benefits provided by our donors and supporters. This may include products, activities or other items geared toward making the most of your university experience.

10 Responsibilities of Foundation Scholarship Students

10.1 Administration

+ Each year that you take the benefit of free accommodation you must sign the normal rental agreement for your room and abide by the standard terms and conditions of the tenancy. Breaking the tenancy agreement will most likely result in loss of your scholarship.

+ You consent to data sharing once you join the scholarship (read our Privacy Policy here) and must ensure that the Unite Foundation team and your university always have up to date mobile and email contact details for you that you respond to.

+ The Unite Foundation uses DocuSign. This is a service for digital signature of documents that many of you will already be familiar with. We will be using DocuSign to record that you have read our privacy policy (linked here) which explains how and when we share your information with other people. Your signature will also confirm you have read, understood and accept the terms of the scholarship award in the event of you being selected. You, the Unite Foundation and your university will receive a copy of this document for future reference. If the privacy policy or terms of scholarship are updated you will be notified.

+ You must respond to deadlines that you'll be given for annual room bookings.

+ Any refunds or credit occurring on a tenancy account will remain the property of the Unite Foundation and your university as co-funders of your room unless specifically captured in writing.

10.2 University experience

+ You should stay in regular touch with your university named contact; – they are a brilliant source of information and support for all your academic, social and financial questions whilst at university. The Unite Foundation University Partners can also manage queries about your scholarship.

+ You should respond to termly communications from the Foundation. These will be a mix of meeting the Unite Foundation team, small surveys, a competition or two and chances to take part in Unite Foundation activities like media or events. You can also get in touch with us for any questions related to the scholarship.

10.3 Scholarship scheme evaluation

+ As a registered charity we are continuously seeking to improve the way that we work so as to have a better impact on care leaver and estranged young students. In addition to tracking

student outcomes nationally, each year we will conduct a survey that collects numeric and qualitative data. Fill this in and should be completely honest so that the feedback can lead to improvements. We hope to keep in touch with you for up to two years after you graduate. Your feedback and progress can help improve the scheme and is invaluable to our development as a charity.

11 About the Unite Foundation

The Unite Foundation is a charitable incorporated organization, registered with the Charity Commission in England and Wales and the Scottish Charity Regulator. The Unite Foundation is an independent registered charity offering a unique accommodation scholarship for care leaver/experienced and estranged young people at university.

There are 110 places available on the Unite Foundation scholarship this year. Education is for everyone and our vision is that free accommodation for estranged and care experienced students is provided as standard support across all UK universities. Share this message and help us make this a reality.

The Unite Foundation Scholarship Scheme provides free accommodation for a maximum of three years of undergraduate study. So far 953 young people have been awarded a Unite Foundation scholarship with 517 having already graduated. In 2027/28 a further 110 scholarship places will be available through our national network of partnership universities.

The Foundation itself was established in 2012 by Unite Students, a developer and manager of student accommodation. Unite Students remains the principal donor and makes an annual donation to the Unite Foundation having gifted a total of £18 million since inception.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Example for Care Experienced applicants (Scotland).

The Scottish authorities define a care experienced student as being aged 16 years or over and having, at any time in their lives, been looked after by a Local Authority.

Ask your **Local Authority for a letter on headed paper** confirming that you are care experienced or the **letter from SAAS confirming your Care Experienced Students Bursary.** Alternatively if you have submitted your application for Care Experience Students Bursary but awaiting confirmation, please submit your completed application and attached evidence as per below (example 2)

- **Example SAAS Award Notice**

SAAS Student Awards Agency Scotland
Funding your future

Student Awards Agency Scotland
Saughton House,
Broomhouse Drive,
Edinburgh, EH11 3UT

t / 0300 555 0505
w / www.saas.gov.uk

03 September 2020

Award Notice 2020 – 2021

SAAS reference number: [redacted] **(you will need this number to contact us)**

College or University:
Course:
Year of course:

SAAS payments

We will pay the following amount of tuition fees directly to your college or university

You are entitled to the following bursary/grants:

Care Experienced Student Bursary

We will pay the total amount of bursary/grants as follows:

07/10/2020	Sort code	Acc
06/11/2020	Sort code	Acc
07/12/2020	Sort code	Acc
07/01/2021	Sort code	Acc
05/02/2021	Sort code	Acc
05/03/2021	Sort code	Acc
07/04/2021	Sort code	Acc
07/05/2021	Sort code	Acc

If you change your bank details please tell us immediately through your online account. You must tell us at least 3 weeks before your next payment is due to ensure it is paid into the correct account.

- **Example 2 – Application screenshot**

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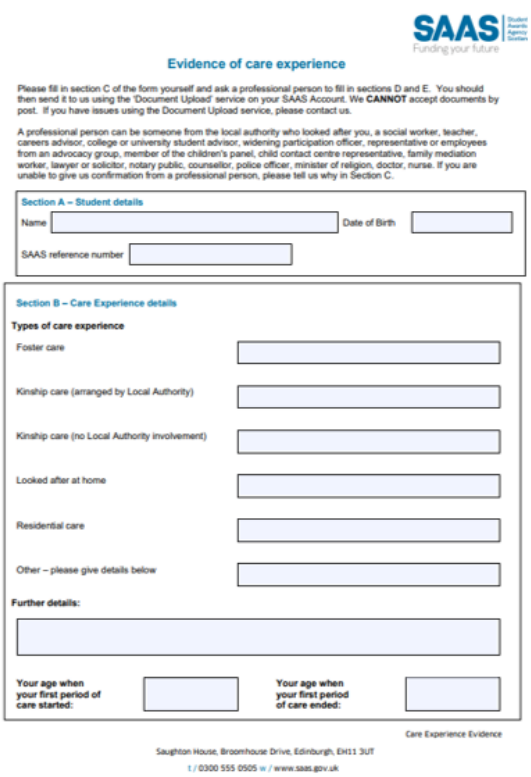

SAAS
Funding your future

Evidence of care experience

Please fill in section C of the form yourself and ask a professional person to fill in sections D and E. You should then send it to us using the 'Document Upload' service on your SAAS Account. We **CANNOT** accept documents by post. If you have issues using the Document Upload service, please contact us.

A professional person can be someone from the local authority who looked after you, a social worker, teacher, careers advisor, college or university student advisor, widening participation officer, representative or employees from an advocacy group, member of the children's panel, child contact centre representative, family mediation worker, lawyer or solicitor, notary public, counsellor, police officer, minister of religion, doctor, nurse. If you are unable to give us confirmation from a professional person, please tell us why in Section C.

Section A – Student details

Name | Date of Birth

SAAS reference number

Section B – Care Experience details

Types of care experience

Foster care

Kinship care (arranged by Local Authority)

Kinship care (no Local Authority involvement)

Looked after at home

Residential care

Other – please give details below

Further details:

Your age when your first period of care started: | **Your age when your first period of care ended:**

Care Experience Evidence

Saughton House, Broomhouse Drive, Edinburgh, EH11 3UT
t / 0300 555 0505 w / www.saas.gov.uk

Section C – Student declaration

Have you given us confirmation of your care experience from a professional person in Section D?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If 'no', please briefly explain why:

SAAS will use the information you have given us in this form for the purpose of processing this claim. Further information on how we collect, hold and process your information can be found at http://www.saas.gov.uk/privacy_data_protection_index.htm. We have a duty to appropriately manage public funds and we will use the information provided on this form for the prevention, detection, investigation and reporting of crime, including Fraud. We will share this information with other bodies for these purposes.

- All the information I have given on this form is complete and accurate, to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- I will give SAAS any additional information or documents it may request to enable SAAS to exercise its functions.
- I understand that if I give SAAS false, incorrect or incomplete information or my conduct is otherwise unsatisfactory, SAAS may withdraw my funding and I may be prosecuted and SAAS would seek overpayment of any sums received to which I am not entitled.
- I will repay any amount which I have received, or had paid on my behalf, which is more than the award that was due to me.
- I understand that the information I have provided will be used for the prevention and detection of crime and I understand SAAS will share this information with other bodies for these purposes.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the details I have given on this form are full and accurate.

Signature | Date D D / M M / Y Y Y Y

Section D – a professional person must fill in this section

By completing and signing the form, you are confirming that you know the student and that the information they have provided in Section B is correct. If you are confirming that the type of care is Kinship where the child was not placed by the Local Authority, to be eligible for the Care Experienced Students Bursary please be aware that there needs to have been some sort of Local Authority/Social Work contact in the past regarding the placement, however they do not need to have arranged the placement.

We ask for your contact details and in some circumstances may contact you to clarify the information you have provided. Please note that there is no requirement for you to request/obtain any supporting evidence/documentation in relation to the care as part of this process.

Full name

Occupation/Job Title

Relationship to student/capacity student known to you

Address of employer

Work phone number/Phone number of employer

Section E – Professional person declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the details provided by the student in Sections A and B and the information I have provided in Section D on this form are full and accurate and I understand SAAS may contact me if they require further information.

Signature | Date D D / M M / Y Y Y Y

Example 3 – Local Authority Letter

EAST RENFREWSHIRE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PARTNERSHIP

East Renfrewshire Council

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

Our Ref:
Contact:
Tel:
Date:

Health and Social Care Partnership
Eastwood Health and Care Centre
Drumby Crescent
Clarkston
G76 7HN

To Whom It May Concern,

Re:

I can confirm that is a care experienced young person who was looked after by East Renfrewshire's Youth Intensive Support Service and continues to live in supported care at the above address.

will be able to access an Aftercare service under Part 10 of The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, until is 26 years of age.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Unite Foundation

Appendix 2 – Example for Care Leaver applicants (England, Wales, Northern Ireland).

Statutory Care Leaver (NI, Wales, England) (see appendix 2 for an example)
Care Leaver is a legal status that can begin at age 16 and lasts until 25 if in Higher Education. There are several different categories of Care Leaver but all legal definitions are eligible for the Unite Foundation Scholarship Scheme.

Ask your **Local Authority for a letter on headed paper** confirming that you are a statutory care leaver; ideally also stating which category you fall into, i.e. Relevant, Former Relevant, Eligible or Qualifying. Ask them to include in this letter the support they will provide for you whilst you are at university.

A letter from a local authority confirming Care Leaver status (England, Wales, Northern Ireland).

Lambeth

Leaving Care Team
Lambeth Children Social Care
2-8 Gracefield Gardens,
London. SW16 2ST
Duty Tel number 0207 926 6315/66325
Fax number 0207 926 6331

RE:

To whom it may concern,

This letter is to confirm that is a former Looked After Child and was in the care of the London Borough of Lambeth under the Children Act 1989 up until 18th Birthday on

has now left the care of the Local Authority and is a Care Leaver as defined by the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 under Lambeth.

has been a Lambeth resident for and has been placed at the following accommodation by the London Borough of Lambeth: and continues to be supported by the Leaving Care team.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours Sincerely

Appendix 3 – Example for Estranged applicants.

If you are estranged from both of your biological parents, adoptive parents, or only living parent, you will be eligible to apply for the Unite Foundation Scholarship Scheme as an estranged student. Student Finance (SFE, SFI, SFW) or Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS), considers you an independent student on the basis of being estranged from your parents if you are permanently not in contact with your parents.

For guidance on how to prove estrangement to Student Finance England, visit www.sfengland.slc.co.uk/estrangement.aspx

Ask your student finance/award office for a document on headed paper stating that you have been assessed as an independent student on the basis of estrangement

If you are unable to provide a supporting document for estrangement
Please enclose a copy of your student finance arrangement AND copies of the supporting documents you supplied to them as evidence of your estrangement.

A letter from Student Finance confirming the Independent Student Status of an Estranged Person.