

RSC Chemists' Community Fund Student Hardship Grants

Purpose: To raise awareness of the RSC Chemists' Community Fund Student Hardship Grants.

1. Background

The Chemists' Community Fund is the working name of the RSC Benevolent Fund, a linked charity to the RSC with a different charitable remit of preventing and alleviating poverty amongst members, past members, their partners and dependents. Supporting people at times of need.

In April 2019 we introduced Student Hardship Grants from the Chemists' Community Fund for RSC student members with less than three years membership.

The Student Hardship Grants will offer support to all RSC student members, including those studying at undergraduate and postgraduate level, as well as those following a vocational route. This is the largest group of RSC members that fall outside of the normal Chemists' Community Fund criteria for support of having at least three years RSC membership.

A number of other occupational benevolent funds offer hardship grants to their student members and we have benchmarked our criteria with some of these.

In 2017, the Fund received 16 student member enquiries, seven of these members had less than three years membership.

2. Support available

The Fund can now offer support to RSC student members facing exceptional circumstances or an unexpected change in circumstances (such as illness, disability, estrangement from parents, bereavement or caring responsibilities), irrespective of their membership length.

Grants will not cover normal student fees or debt experienced by many students.

Packages of support can be offered for up to 12 months and are capped at £45 per week. They can be paid with some flexibility, as a monthly, termly or one off payment, depending on an individual's circumstances.

Student members facing exceptional circumstances would also be eligible to receive support from the Fund for services such as counselling, specialist bereavement support or a legal advice referral if applicable.

All student hardship grants will be assessed on each individual's circumstances.

3. Eligibility and Criteria

To be eligible for support, applicants must:

- be a RSC student member who is facing exceptional circumstances or unplanned financial hardship due to unexpected circumstances outside of their control

- demonstrate to the Fund that they have spoken with their student support services, applied for any available assistance from their university and ensured that they are receiving all the statutory assistance available to them (the Fund staff can offer signposting if required)

These grants may be used for living costs, travel, accommodation, equipment or course materials but not used to clear debt or pay fees.

Hardship grants will not be offered to students who have not yet started their course, or those pursuing part-time study but choosing not to work. This non-working exclusion for part-time students would not apply to those who have caring responsibilities or a disability.

Where students have mismanaged their finances, advice and signposting will be given, and only in exceptional circumstances would financial support be considered.

As state funding for students in each country varies, applications from RSC student members based outside of the UK will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Grants will not exceed the capped amount agreed for UK applications.

4. Next Steps

In the coming few months the grants will be advertised directly to Student Hardships Offices, via the RSC student newsletter and on student pages of the RSC website as well as to those working in the Education sector who support chemistry students. Resources will be available from the Fund to promote these grants.

*Anna Dearden, Chemists' Community Fund Manager
May 2019*