

Warm Welcome Scholarship Scheme

Programme Guide for Higher Education Providers

Version Control

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Contents

Version Control.....	1
1. Objectives	3
1.1 Objectives	3
1.2 Funding	3
1.3 Administration of the scheme	3
2. The Scholarships.....	4
2.1 Duration and number of scholarships	4
2.2 Eligibility	4
2.3 Priority courses	6
2.3 Stipend amounts and payment schedule.....	6
2.4 Deferrals and withdrawals	8
2.5 Conditions of scholarship	8
3. HEP responsibilities	10
3.1 Financial responsibilities	10
3.2 Other responsibilities.....	10
3.3 Incident management and disciplinary procedures.....	11
3.4 Requirements of participation.....	11
4. Application Process	12
4.1 In Year award.....	12
4.2 Full Degree awards	13
4.3 Application timelines.....	14
5. Grant Management and Reporting	16
5.1 Confirming Expressions of Interest and the Grant Agreement	16
5.2 Reporting	16
5.2 Stipend payments.....	17
5.3 Audits	17
5.4 Freedom of Information Requests	17
6. Branding and Communications.....	18
7. Contact Information	19

1. Objectives

1.1 Objectives

On 1st September 2021, a significant UK cross-government effort was announced, dubbed 'Operation Warm Welcome', to ensure Afghans arriving in the UK receive the vital support they need to rebuild their lives, find work, pursue education, and integrate into their local communities.

As part of this support package, a Department for Education (DfE) 'Warm Welcome' scholarship scheme has been created to support those affected to access undergraduate and postgraduate university places in the UK.

The Warm Welcome Scholarship scheme seeks to meet the needs of different groups who have links to Afghanistan in the UK and who have been affected by the change of regime in Afghanistan, through scholarships providing access to higher education.

The scheme will target a selection of those for whom an undergraduate or postgraduate degree will help rebuild their lives and use their skills to fully contribute to life in the UK or where desired, to support an eventual return to Afghanistan.

This scheme will contribute further to the cross-government commitment to Operation Warm Welcome.

Eligibility will be determined by the immigration status of applicants, targeting those with resettled status under ARAP and ACRS¹, current students with ties to Afghanistan or Afghan British Nationals evacuated during or after Operation Pitting.

1.2 Funding

The Warm Welcome Scholarship Scheme is co-funded by the DfE and participating Higher Education Providers.

The DfE funds a maintenance stipend for scholars for the duration of their studies. This is paid quarterly, in advance, by the British Council to HEPs who administer the payment to scholars.

Participating HEPs must agree to waive tuition and other course costs for scholars for the duration of their studies.

1.3 Administration of the scheme

The British Council is managing the scholarship grant on behalf of the Department for Education

¹ ARAP – Afghanistan Relocation & Assistance Policy. ACRS – Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme
www.britishcouncil.org

2. The Scholarships

2.1 Duration and number of scholarships

The scheme will fund up to 300 postgraduate and undergraduate degree scholarships. Within the up to 300 total, the scheme will support up to 100 In-Year awards for existing students currently undertaking HE courses in the UK who have lost access to funds due to the situation in Afghanistan and around 200 full scholarships to commence in the 2022/23 academic year.

Scholarships are available for three levels of study:

- Undergraduate,
- Taught master's,
- PhD.

The scheme will run for a single cohort only and will be split into two separate awards:

- In-Year awards: For current students experiencing financial hardship,
- Full Degree awards: For students beginning their studies in the 22/23 academic year.

The duration of In-Year awards is for the remainder of the current academic year until the completion of the course with the following limits

- Undergraduate awards: 2 further years maximum, or 3 further years maximum in Scotland
- Taught master's: no further funding beyond current academic year
- PhD: 2 further years maximum

The duration of Full Degree awards is for the duration of the course with the following limits

- Undergraduate awards: 3 years maximum, or 4 years maximum in Scotland
- Taught master's: 1 year maximum
- PhD: 3 years maximum

The scholarship offer will be available at participating HEPs across the UK.

2.2 Eligibility

2.2.1 Immigration status

Eligibility will be determined by the immigration status of applicants, targeting those with resettled status under ARAP and ACRS² or Afghan British Nationals evacuated during Operation Pitting and current students with ties to Afghanistan.

² ARAP – Afghanistan Relocation & Assistance Policy. ACRS – Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme
www.britishcouncil.org

The scheme is designed to be flexible and is available for all those eligible for a UK university place and who fall into one of the following categories:

- Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy (ARAP) resettlement route.
- Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) resettlement route.
- Those who are already registered at a UK university and are experiencing financial hardship that impacts their ability to complete their course of study.
- Those who are currently registered at a UK university and wish to stay on in the UK and pursue further study if it is not safe to return to Afghanistan.
- Afghan British Nationals (ABNs), described for these purposes as those that were evacuated during Operation Pitting and who entered bridging accommodation or who presented as homeless to a council, but hold British citizenship or some other status that permits them to remain and reside in the UK without the need to be granted leave to remain.

Please note that the Home Office has indicated that some potential students with ARAP and ACRA settlement status may have ALES on their British Residence Permit (BPR) and as long as they came to the UK during or after Operating Pitting, they are eligible.

2.2.2 Student status

The Scheme is for full-time study that is undertaken in-person at institutions in the UK. Awards will not be made to students on or considering part-time study, or distance or remote study.

In-Year scholars must be currently enrolled as full-time students on their course of study.

2.2.3 Financial eligibility

The Warm Welcome award cannot be held by scholars who are also recipients of other government funding or scholarship funding that provides for maintenance and living allowances. For further information see “Terms and Conditions for Scholars”

Scholars who are in receipt of other funding will be required to declare this at the point of application. They are likely to have to withdraw from any scholarship/funding programme or terminate any pre-existing scholarships as a condition of acceptance of a Warm Welcome award. Special cases will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In-Year scholars who are in receipt of government-funded maintenance awards will be required to cease claiming further awards for the duration of their studies. Full Degree scholars will not be eligible to apply for these awards.

2.2.4 English language ability

All Applicants must meet the relevant HEP's English Language requirement. It is the responsibility of the applicant to research the requirements of universities and to meet those requirements.

2.3 Priority courses

Scholarship applications for Full Degree awards will be prioritised (but not limited) to the following list of subjects, which are associated with good outcomes for students in terms of employment and earnings potential, and/or target skills shortages in the UK:

Recommended subjects to prioritise
Agriculture, food and related studies
General, applied and forensic sciences
Health and social care
Education and teaching
Biosciences
Materials and technology
Mathematical sciences
Computing
Engineering
Chemistry
Pharmacology, toxicology and pharmacy
Physics and astronomy
Medical sciences
Allied health
Nursing and midwifery

Applications for In-Year awards will not be prioritised according to subject area.

2.3 Stipend amounts and payment schedule

The following amounts will be paid as the maintenance stipend

	Undergraduate	Taught master's	PhD
London	£12,667	£16,068	£16,068
Non-London	£9,706	£12,984	£12,984

Scholars will receive their stipends quarterly in advance. Participating HEPs will request funding from the British Council. On receipt of funds, HEPs will be responsible for making payment to individual scholars.

The indicative payment schedule for Year 1 of the programme is below

Funding period	HEP requests funds	HEP receives funds	Scholars receive stipend
May 22 – Aug 22 (In-Year scholars only)	July	July/August	August/September
Sept 22 – Dec 22	Aug	Sept	Sep/Oct (at beginning of course)
Jan 23 – Mar 23	Oct	Nov	End Dec
Apr 23 – Jun 23	Jan	Feb	End March
Jul 23 – Sep 23	Apr	May	End June

Maintenance stipends are for the sole benefit of the individual scholar and must be paid into a bank account in the individual name of the individual scholar. They cannot be transferred or paid to any other dependent or nominated representative of the scholar. In exceptional circumstances, if a scholar has not been able to open a bank account in time for the commencement of their studies, an alternative mechanism for fund transfer may be used (for instance, a pre-paid payment card or a transfer via an agency). However, such a method must be for a limited period only and must be made in the name of the scholar as the beneficiary of the funds.

Scholars may receive and apply for state benefits for which they and any dependents are eligible without effecting their scholarship award. Scholars can contact the Department for Work and Pension to confirm eligibility for any state benefits.

Scholars are not barred from taking on part-time work in addition to their scholarship. It is important that scholars do not take on too much work to the detriment of their studies. HEPs should direct scholars to the institutions' careers service, or relevant lead, to discuss and agree working commitments which would not be an impediment to studies.

2.4 Deferrals and withdrawals

Applications from scholars to defer their scholarship will only be granted in exceptional circumstances on grounds of ill-health or pregnancy. The maximum extension that will be granted is 1 year. During the period when the scholar is not studying, the maintenance stipend payment will not be paid.

All applications for deferrals must be referred by the HEP to the British Council, to be agreed in advance with the DfE through us.

For In-Year scholars, applications for deferrals can only be considered after an award has been confirmed.

For Full Degree scholars, applications for deferrals can only be considered after an applicant has been sponsored in their application to a participating HEP and submitted their application for a scholarship.

Scholars who withdraw from their course of study for any other reason except an agreed deferral, will have their scholarship award revoked and all future stipends cancelled. HEPs will also be required to make reasonable efforts, as set out in the Grant Funding Agreement, to recover any unspent funds from the previous stipend payment.

Scholars are not permitted to switch their course of study except for in exceptional circumstances which must be agreed in advance with the British Council. The initial evaluation of scholarship applications takes into consideration course choice and motivation for pursuing a particular path. It is highly likely that a course change will lead to a revocation of the scholarship.

2.5 Conditions of scholarship

Scholars will be required to comply with ongoing academic and attendance requirements for their course. HEPs must provide adequate support to scholars to give them the best opportunity to comply with course requirements and complete their studies. This might include, but is not limited to

- Ensuring scholars can access English language support if appropriate
- Ensuring scholars can access support to develop academic skills
- Agreeing and monitoring a development plan for scholars who are struggling with academic attainment.
- Ensuring scholars have access to well-being and mental health support if required.

Where scholars are not able to fulfil the academic requirements for their course despite the support offered to them, and have their studies terminated by their HEP, their scholarship will be revoked, and the maintenance stipend cancelled.

Scholars will be required to comply fully with the HEPs code of conduct. Where a scholar has their place on a course suspended or terminated as a result of a breach in this code of conduct, the scholarship will be revoked, and the maintenance stipend cancelled.

Scholars will also be required to comply with additional terms and conditions. These are set out in the “Terms and Conditions for Scholars”. They include

- a. Not engaging in political activities or in any other activities of a public nature likely to affect the UK Government adversely.
- b. Acknowledging that views expressed online are personal and do not represent the Warm Welcome Scholarship Scheme, the DfE or the British Council.
- c. Not serving as an official representative (whether diplomatic, consular or otherwise) of any government during the course of studies.
- d. Adhering to the British Council policies on diversity and inclusion, fraud and corruption, child protection and safeguarding.
- e. Remaining in the UK for the period of their studies, notwithstanding permitted short absences for holidays, family visits or for the purposes of conducting their studies.

A disciplinary procedure will be established to assess any breaches by scholars of the Terms and Conditions for Scholars which extend beyond the scope of individual HEP regulations. HEPs, other scholars, or other individuals and third parties will be able to report suspected breaches of these terms and conditions to the British Council and these will be investigated.

Scholars who are found to be in breach of the terms and conditions will have their scholarship revoked and maintenance stipend cancelled.

3. HEP responsibilities

3.1 Financial responsibilities

For Full Degree awards, participating HEPs are required to waive the tuition fees of scholars for the duration of their studies.

Most participating HEPs are encouraged to offer to support scholarships that have a combined total of at least 6 years-worth of tuition fees. This is an indicative ambition, and a reduced offer will not prevent an HEP from participating. Where HEPs wish to support 1-year taught masters scholarships predominantly, they are also encouraged to support at least one additional 3- or 4-year programme (undergraduate or PhD). This is to encourage a range of scholarship offers across all levels of study.

Small or specialist HEPs who wish to participate can support a reduced number of scholarships. These should, ideally, have a combined total of at least 3 years-worth of tuition fees and should include either at least one undergraduate award or one PhD award.

For In-Year awards, participating HEPs must ensure that scholars are not prevented from completing their studies due to their ability to pay tuition fees. This is likely to require a commitment to waive fees in most cases. In some cases, eligible students may have qualified for on-going financial support to meet tuition costs. They may also be self-funding and meet eligibility requirements due to their inability to return to the Afghanistan rather than through their economic need. In cases like these, tuition fee waivers from HEPs may not be required. However, HEPs are required to support scholars to the end of their course regardless of any changes to other financial support for tuition; they must ensure that the maintenance stipend can be used for supporting living costs and is not diverted towards paying tuition fees.

3.2 Other responsibilities

In addition to financial support, participating HEPs are required to provide additional administrative and well-being support including the following:

- Designate one single Focal Point to act as point of liaison with the British Council for the duration of the programme.
- Ensure well-being support is in place for scholars throughout their studies.
- Review In-Year applications received by the British Council, confirm eligibility of applicants, and confirm number of awards that can be supported.
- Guide potential applicants for Full Degree scholarships in course options and applications. Review applications, confirm eligibility and “sponsor” an appropriate number of eligible applicants in advance of their application to the British Council for a scholarship.
- Review provisional allocation proposals following evaluation by the British Council prior to final award allocations.

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- Respond to applicants regarding the status and success of their application.
 - Confirm final acceptance of scholarship award with scholars through signature of scholarship agreement.
 - Administer scholarship stipends at quarterly intervals, including requesting funding requirements in advance from the British Council and payment of stipends to individual scholars in advance.
 - Report on progress of scholars, in particular any withdrawals from the programme or any incidents or breaches of terms and conditions.
 - Manage applicant and scholar data in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the data-sharing requirements for retention and storage established in the Grant Agreement signed with each HEP.
 - Ensure safeguarding requirements are fulfilled, including identifying a named Safeguarding Officer for scholars and reporting safeguarding incidents to the British Council.
 - Ensure a designated person or team to support those students who have a disability.

3.3 Incident management and disciplinary procedures

HEPs are required to have clear procedures to enable scholars to report incidents and concerns relating to well-being or the student code of conduct. HEPs must make scholars aware of the institutional procedures in place to manage, amongst other things,

- Safeguarding concerns
- Fraud, bribery and corruption incidents or concerns
- Breaches of the code of conduct

HEPs must inform the British Council within 48 hours of any concerns raised by or concerning Warm Welcome Scholars relating to their well-being or code of conduct. This includes cases where disciplinary procedures are initiated involving Warm Welcome Scholars, or any cases referred to the police for investigation.

3.4 Requirements of participation

Participating HEPs must be a Higher Education Provider in the UK with degree-awarding authority and so have Recognised or Listed Body status.

Other requirements for participation include the following. HEPs will confirm these on signature of the Grant Agreement once scholarship funding is confirmed

- A scheme of delegation / authority with financial limits
- A whistleblowing policy
- A risk management policy and register

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- A business interest policy and register
 - A gifts and hospitality policy and register

4. Application Process

4.1 In Year award

4.1.1 Applications

Current students submit applications via the British Council online portal. Information requested limited to personal and course information and self-declarations of eligibility.

British Council contacts HEPs to confirm student status and eligibility.

4.1.2 Assessment

Applications are assessed in chronological order of submission.

No priority will be given to applicants based on academic merit, programme of study, level of study, duration of studies or any other criteria.

Once eligibility is confirmed, the HEP will confirm their acceptance to support each scholar in-turn, and therefore confirm their award.

HEPs can limit the number of In-Year scholarships that they support, but must review in order of submission and cannot prioritise based on duration of studies or any other criteria.

4.1.3 Allocations

Applications are allocated in order of submission and based on capacity of participating HEPs to support.

4.1.4 Appeals

There is no appeals process

4.2 Full Degree awards

4.2.1 Applications

HEPs respond to the British Council indicating their Expression of Interest to support Full Degree scholarships.

Potential applicants first apply to participating HEPs, guided by the availability of scholarships at each level of study. Applicants indicate to each HEP that they are seeking a Warm Welcome Scholarship. Applicants can apply to more than one HEP.

HEPs consider applications received and sponsor applications of those who meet the course entry requirements, meet the scholarship eligibility for immigration status, and whose application they would like to support. HEPs typically sponsor twice the number of applicants than the maximum number of scholarships that they can support but can sponsor a more limited number of applicants.

Sponsored applicants submit the scholarship application via the British Council online portal. Information requested includes background to previous academic results, course selection and personal statement detailing motivation for studying. Applicants who have been sponsored by more than one HEP indicate their institutions in order of preference.

4.2.2 Assessment

Applications are assessed by external reviewers who score each application based on the evaluation criteria.

Assessment criteria include:

- Alignment of chosen course with published programme priority areas
- Academic merit
- Post-work plans
- Motivation to study

Applications are ranked in order of assessment score.

Undergraduate, taught master's and PhD applications are assessed against the same criteria with different scoring rubrics. Each level of study is assessed independently.

4.2.3 Allocations

Allocations for each level of study are conducted separately. PhD applications are allocated first, followed by undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses.

Applicants are matched to their HEP. In the case of having more than one sponsored offer, applicants are matched to their first preference initially.

Where a well-ranked applicant is unsuccessful in being matched to their first choice HEP due to other better-ranked applicants securing available spaces, this applicant will be allocated to their subsequent HEP by preference.

Scholarships are allocated until all available awards are filled, or until there are no further applications to consider, or no further available scholarship spaces remaining based on HEP indications of offers. Scholars will only be considered for allocation to an HEP which has confirmed its willingness to sponsor them, and that they listed on their application.

4.2.4 Appeals

Initial allocations are reviewed by participating HEPs.

HEPs can query the allocations based on the assessment score for their sponsored applicants.

An appeal panel, comprising representatives from the DfE and British Council will review any assessment scores that are queried and either confirm or amend the score.

Following the review, the allocation process will be re-run.

The resulting allocations is final, and scholarships are confirmed.

4.3 Application timelines

4.3.1 Promotion and confirmation of participation

To 15 May	HEPs support with communication of the scheme to current scholars eligible for in-year scholarships
By 11 May	HEPs submit initial indication of their participation for the scholarship programme, including numbers of scholarship places that they can support
By 23 May	HEPs confirm their participation in the programme

4.3.2 In-Year Scholarships

9 – 20 May	Application period for in-year scholarships
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23 May – 3 June	In-year scholarships confirmed with HEPs. HEPs sign agreements to confirm funding and receive payment of In Year scholar stipends.
By 25 June	In-year scholars receive first stipend payment from HEP (back-dated to application)

4.3.2 Full Degree Scholarships

9 May – 17 June	Eligible applicants apply to HEPs
17 Jun- 15 Jul	HEPs confirm offers to scholars and select to “sponsor” those that they would be happy to see awarded a scholarship.
4 July – 15 Jul	Sponsored undergraduate, masters and PHD scholars submit application to British Council
03 Aug	Full Degree scholarships allocated and confirmed with HEPs for undergraduate, masters and PHD’ scholars
03-10 Aug	HEP review and can appeal
16-19 Aug	Full Degree scholarships final allocation confirmed to HEPs
22 Aug – 02 Sept	HEPs sign agreements to confirm funding for scholars
From 5 Sep	HEPs receive first stipend payments
September	HEPs process stipend payments for scholars - to be received before courses begin

5. Grant Management and Reporting

5.1 Confirming Expressions of Interest and the Grant Agreement

HEPs will confirm their readiness to participate in the Scheme by completing the online Expression of Interest form. The information provided in this form by the final confirmation date (23 May 2022) is expected to be a secure commitment to offer the number of scholarships indicated. The information will be used to guide applicants towards participating HEPs, to inform the number of applicants sponsored by each HEP, and to guide the allocation process for awards.

Following confirmation of scholarship awards, HEPs will be asked to sign the Grant Agreement which confirms and governs the administrations of the awards and enables the funding to be released to the HEP to administer stipend payments to scholars.

The Grant Agreement is signed between the British Council and the duly authorised representative of the HEP. (This is likely to be a different officer to the designated Focal Point).

No changes or amendments for individual institutions are possible. When HEPs confirm their final Expressions of Interest, they are also asked to confirm their acceptance of the Grant Agreement.

5.2 Reporting

HEPs are required to report quarterly to the British Council to confirm the on-going student status of each scholar, and to submit a funding request for the forthcoming period.

In cases where a scholar has withdrawn from the programme, or a scholarship has been revoked, the HEP is required to reconcile any unspent or recovered funds against the funding request for the forthcoming period.

HEPs will submit a simple Funding Request Form and submit to the British Council within the stipulated timeframe for each quarter.

HEPs are required to report the final degree results for each scholar completing their degree at the end of each academic year. They may also be required periodically to submit details of academic progress to the British Council on request.

As mentioned above in Section 3.3, HEPs are required to inform the British Council of any breach by a scholar of the scholarship terms and conditions, or any disciplinary action taken against a scholar.

Any breaches of personal information or data relating to scholarship applicants or scholar must be reported to the British Council within 48 hours, as set out in the Grant Agreement.

5.2 Stipend payments

HEPs must be able to provide clear accounting records of the receipt of funds for the maintenance stipends, and the subsequent disbursement of funds.

Scholars are required to hold an individual bank account in the UK under their name. Stipend payments must be paid directly into the bank account of each scholar. In exceptional circumstances, if a scholar has not been able to open a bank account in time for the commencement of their studies, an alternative mechanism for fund transfer may be used (for instance, a pre-paid payment card or a transfer via an agency). However, such a method must be for a limited period only and must be made in the name of the scholar as the beneficiary of the funds.

HEPs are required to support any scholars who have difficulty opening a bank account. Where an account has not been opened within one month of the scholar's enrolment on the course, the HEP must inform the British Council and confirm measures being taken to address the problem.

Stipend payments must be made to scholars in advance of the stipulated quarterly period. The expected advance period is 3-5 working days.

5.3 Audits

The British Council will conduct audits of stipend payments, surveying random selection of scholars periodically to check the correct payment amounts and timings of stipends.

If any issues are found as a result of these audits, HEPs will be requested to provide more detailed information and accounting evidence for their stipend payments.

5.4 Freedom of Information Requests

Any Freedom of Information Requests from scholars for their personal information should be treated as a Subject Access Request under GDPR. Requests should be made to the British Council as described online [Requesting information | British Council](#)

Similarly, requests from a third party should also be directed to British Council via the same mechanism and they will be processed in the normal way

6. Branding and Communications

HEPs must follow the guidance set out in the Communications Toolkit available via the British Council website ([Warm Welcome Scholarship Scheme information for UK higher education providers | British Council](#)) or on request via scholarships_HEPs@britishcouncil.org

The “Warm Welcome Scholarship Scheme” should be used in full in reference to the Scheme in external publications and promotions, and scholars should be referred to at all times as “Warm Welcome Scholars”. Reference to the Department for Education as the Scheme funder, and the British Council as the Delivery Partner should be made where appropriate, together with the correct use of each institution’s logos, as linked to in the Communications Toolkit.

The British Council will obtain the consent of scholars should we wish to feature individual case-studies of scholars or publish images or recordings of events or activities at which scholars are present.

HEPs are required to obtain consent from scholars for the publication of any case-studies or promotional material about the Scheme that contains images or recordings of them.

HEPs are required to obtain the prior approval from the British Council of any marketing, promotional or communications material that is produced in relation to the Scheme, featuring Scholar case-studies or other information about the Scheme.

HEPs are required to get clearance from the British Council prior to the publication of any press releases, and to inform the British Council in advance of any press or media activity undertaken that involves beneficiaries of the Scheme or concerns the Scheme directly.

HEPs are required to inform the British Council in advance of any event or activity involving third-parties external to the HEP that is planned concerning the Scheme or any scholars.

HEPs are requested to inform the British Council of any internal award of merit or distinction that is given to a scholar. HEPs are also requested to inform the British Council of any external awards of merit or distinction awarded to scholars in the case that the HEP is aware of any.

7. Contact Information

For further details about the Warm Welcome Scholarship Scheme contact

General Enquiries from HEPs

Scholarships-HEPs@britishcouncil.org

Interested applicants and scholars

Scholarships_info@britishcouncil.org