

# University of Essex Digital Support Fund 2024-25

The University is offering a Digital Support Fund for students who are experiencing financial difficulty, to contribute to the costs of equipment required to support University studies, such as (but not limited to), laptops, headphones, and specialist IT equipment, where all other options have been exhausted, such as University equipment use on campus or loan.

The fund will take the form of an e-voucher of up to £350 to contribute to the purchase of digital equipment on the [Essex Aspire Platform](#). In the event that the platform is not available, a monetary value of the amount awarded to you, will be transferred to your nominated bank account.

## Terms and conditions

### Eligibility

Below is a list of the full eligibility criteria for each element of the Digital Support Fund. You must meet **all** conditions to be considered for an award:

- You are an undergraduate or postgraduate (including postgraduate research) student and;
- You are studying a full-time course or substantial part time\* course and;
- You are a registered student (home or overseas fee payer), including provisionally or conditionally registered, at the University of Essex for the current academic year 2024-25.
- International students who hold a student visa are required to have enough money to pay for their course and support themselves while they are studying in the UK. This is a requirement of the student visa. International students can apply to the Digital Support Fund for support with one-off costs caused by an unexpected, exceptional change in circumstances that cannot be met from any other source.
- You made realistic provision for all digital-related costs, before starting your course but are now in demonstrable need of financial support because of an unexpected, exceptional change in circumstances.

- Your unexpected, exceptional change in circumstances must occur after the start of the course, and in the same academic year that you are applying for the fund.
- You are currently in financial difficulty, and can provide evidence to show that the cost of digital equipment would not be possible or that it would impact other outgoing immediate costs.
- You have accessed all funding opportunities and other forms of income available, including employment and welfare benefits that you may be entitled to. You have also accessed all personal savings available to you.
- You are fully engaged in the full range of academic activities and are attending and engaged with all timetabled teaching events and other scheduled activities.
- You must submit your Digital Support Fund application and evidence in line with the [Digital Support Fund closing dates](#).

\*Substantial part time refers to a student who is registered on a part-time programme that is at least 50% of the full-time equivalent programme.

### **Students who are not eligible**

The following students are NOT eligible for this Fund regardless of meeting the above criteria:

Students whose financial difficulty is a result of high levels of non-essential expenditure associated with lifestyle choices, including sending funds to third parties that were intended to be used for university related costs, living costs and/or tuition fees.

- Students who are not in attendance, and on an assessment only programme.
- Students whose course is sponsored by an employer.
- Students who are on a distance learning programme.
- Students who are on unsubstantial part-time or short courses.
- Students who are studying through a University of Essex Partner (e.g. Kaplan, University of Essex Online, Tavistock, etc.).
- Students on Higher/Degree Apprenticeship courses.
- Students who submit their application after the applicable [Digital Support Fund closing dates](#).
- Students with a continuously low or very low record of engagement with their studies (as recorded via [LEAP](#)) will not normally be considered for an award. If you can provide evidence that your low or very low engagement is the result of your short-term financial difficulty, this will be considered before making a decision on whether you are eligible for an award.

- Students who have access to suitable digital equipment.
- Students who have submitted an application for financial support from the university for any fund in the current academic year and who have been declined due to the provision of fraudulent, incorrect or false information or evidence.

## Evidence

To support your Digital Support Fund application, you must provide accurate, up to date and relevant evidence to support your eligibility for an award. Some examples are provided below, though this list is not exhaustive. Please be aware that you may be asked to provide further evidence if it is necessary to assess your application.

Failure to provide the requested evidence after **three** requests, will result in your application being declined. All evidence provided must be clear enough to read, in accepted formats (pdf, jpg, doc, xlsx, png, txt) and **in English**. You must ensure that any evidence displayed in a language other than English, is translated **before** submitting it as part of your application.

You are required to provide the following evidence to support your application.

Evidence type	Student type	Conditions and examples
<p>Bank statements for <u>every</u> financial account that you and your partner/spouse hold.</p> <p>This includes savings accounts, overseas accounts, ISAs, Binance and investment accounts.</p>	<p>All students</p>	<p>We require your bank statements to assess your income and expenditure and fully understand your financial circumstances. If you have high levels of non-essential expenditure (associated with lifestyle choices and including sending funds to third parties), your application may be declined.</p> <p>All financial statements must be in a clear readable format, containing the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Account holders name and address</li> <li>■ Bank account details, including sort code and account number</li> <li>■ Opening and closing balance</li> <li>■ Transactions covering the last 30 days up to the date you submitted your application to the Digit Support Fund</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Notes must be added to all transactions going <b>into and out</b> of your accounts over £50 and must explain the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Who the transaction is from/to</li> <li>○ What the transaction is for</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Individual screenshots will be accepted but must be combined into one Word document or PDF document, in date order, to avoid delays.</li> </ul>
Evidence that you made realistic provision before starting your course, for all digital equipment.	All students	<p>Provide evidence of any Student Loan/Grant, NHS or other funding bodies, external bursaries, scholarships you are in receipt of, including a list of payments you have already received and are yet to receive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evidence of adequate funds at the start of the course and a supporting statement as to why this provision is no longer available.</li> </ul> <p>Examples of provision may include permanent employment, a suitable level of savings or agreed sponsorship.</p>
Evidence of the unexpected, exceptional change in circumstances	All students	A written statement and where applicable, relevant supporting evidence of the unexpected change in circumstances.
Evidence that the financial difficulty is short-term.	All students	A written statement and where applicable, relevant supporting evidence of your plans to improve your financial difficulty long term to pay your tuition fees and living costs for the remainder of the academic year.
Evidence of broken/lost Laptop or digital equipment essential for your studies	All students	<p>Quote from a repair shop.</p> <p>Laptop repair quotes must:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Include a date and company logo or address.</li> <li>■ Include your name and details of the laptop.</li> <li>■ Provide details of the damage.</li> <li>■ Show the full cost of the repairs or replacement.</li> </ul> <p>A meeting may be required with a member of the funding team to verify the broken equipment.</p> <p>Loss or theft of equipment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Police reference number and application notification/email.</li> <li>■ Notification/email/application of loss to relevant location, e.g. airport, shop, cafe, etc.</li> </ul>
Specific laptop or digital equipment	All students	<p>If the specification of the laptop or digital equipment does not meet the requirements for your course, you must provide evidence from your department, outlining the requirements in your statement.</p> <p>Letter/email from department:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Include department details.</li> <li>■ Equipment required.</li> </ul>

In addition to the evidence in the above table, you may be asked to provide additional evidence, including bringing a broken laptop to the Student Services Hub, if the assessor deems it necessary or appropriate, based on your personal circumstances.

A meeting with a Financial Support Officer in the University Funding Team, may be required to verify evidence and your circumstances.

## False or fraudulent evidence and information

Please be aware that providing misleading, plagiarised, false or fraudulent information or evidence or withholding evidence to access financial support from the University is taken very seriously and **will not be tolerated**. Any attempt to access university funds in this way, may lead to your case being referred to Student Conduct and your application to the Digital Support Fund will be declined. You will have also forfeited your right to apply to the fund again during your academic year and any further applications will be declined.

## How to apply

To apply for financial support from the Digital Support Fund, you will need to do the following:

1. Ensure that you meet the eligibility criteria
2. Create an account with [Blackbullion](#), if you do not already have an existing account
3. Select the *Funds* tab and select the Digital Support Fund button
4. Follow the instructions to complete the application form, upload the required evidence and submit your application

We aim to complete the assessment and provide an outcome of a **full** and **complete** application and evidence within **3 weeks**. If you are required to provide further evidence as part of your application, the **3 weeks** will only start from the point we have received **all** necessary evidence.

You will be notified of the outcome of your application via your Essex email account.

If you require support or assistance with your application or have any questions, please feel free to contact the funding team at [funding@essex.ac.uk](mailto:funding@essex.ac.uk).

## Payment arrangements

The fund will take the form of a virtual credit of up to £350 (depending on equipment) to contribute to the purchase of digital equipment on the [Essex Aspire Portal](#). The credit cannot be redeemed for a monetary cash value and can only be used to purchase equipment as specified by the Funding Team.

Equipment purchased via the [Essex Aspire Portal](#) can only be shipped within the UK.

Credit for this fund is awarded under the assumption that you have an immediate or urgent requirement for digital support where you do not have the financial means to do so in line with the T&Cs, therefore **you must claim your credit and purchase your digital equipment within 10 working days of notification of your award.**

Any unspent funds remaining on your [Essex Aspire Platform](#) account after this time will be deemed as no longer required and will no longer available be to you.

If you wish to purchase equipment to a value that is higher than amount awarded, your family, friends or you can top up credit onto your personal [Essex Aspire Platform](#) account. Any additional credit that has been topped up onto your personal [Essex Aspire Platform](#) account that you do not spend during the academic year, can be refunded. Please contact [funding@essex.ac.uk](mailto:funding@essex.ac.uk), who will provide you with further instructions.

The Digital Support Fund **can** be held in conjunction with other university awards that you may be eligible for/apply for.

In the event that the [Essex Aspire Platform](#) is not available, the university will contact you to provide further information on how to purchase equipment.

## **When will I receive my equipment?**

Some items can be shipped immediately or the next working day.

This includes items which Aspire usually have available but are temporarily out of stock, as well as items that must be ordered specifically for you. Shipping times for unavailable items can range from a few days to several weeks, depending on the product.

For more information, please visit our [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

## **Can I apply for the Digital Support Fund more than once?**

You can apply for the Digital Support Fund more than once in the same academic year, if you have not already exceeded the maximum award **and** if your circumstances have changed **and** you are experiencing financial difficulty.

You will be required to submit a new application and evidence via [Blackbullion](#) to support your new application.

## Fund closing dates

The Digital Support Fund closing dates are outlined below, however please be aware that these dates are subject to the availability of funds and the University reserves the right to bring forward these deadlines if necessary.

Course type	Date
Standard length Undergraduate and Postgraduate course (39 weeks)	Friday 30 May 2025
Postgraduate course (52 weeks)	Friday 22 August 2025
Undergraduate long courses (52 weeks) E.g., Healthcare courses	Friday 22 August 2025
<a href="#">Courses with non-standard term dates 2024-25 - October and Jan start</a>	4 weeks before the course end date
January 2024 start courses	13 <sup>th</sup> December 2024
January 2025 start courses	12 <sup>th</sup> December 2025

## Award termination

If you withdraw from your studies, or are required to withdraw, no further scheduled e-vouchers/payments will be made. Your award will be terminated if you cease to be registered as a student with the University, or for good cause at the discretion of the Student Services Manager, or their nominee for this purpose.

The University of Essex reserves the right to recover funds where a Digital Support Fund has been awarded under false pretence.

## Appeals

If you are dissatisfied with the decision of your outcome of your application, you can appeal within **2 weeks** of your outcome email to the [Funding Team](#).

Your appeal will be considered at the discretion of the Student Services Manager or their nominee.



## Resolution of disputes

Acceptance of this award constitutes acceptance of these terms and conditions. Registered students should contact the [Funding Team](#) in the first instance for guidance regarding this award. In cases not covered by the above T&Cs, or where a student claims exceptional circumstances, or disputes a decision not to make payments due under an award, final appeals on decisions regarding eligibility must be made via the [Student Complaints process](#). The Academic Registrar or their nominee will review the case and their decision will be final.

*These terms and conditions apply to the Digital Support Fund awarded to students for the academic year 2024-25. The University of Essex reserves the right to update these terms and conditions as necessary.*