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HU Student Support Fund: Graduation Financial Aid

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1 Introduction

HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht (HU) offers financial aid to students who incur a delay in their studies for special reasons. This is described in the HU Student Support Fund. Who are eligible for this?

1. Students who, due to certain special circumstances such as illness, family problems, mental health issues, have incurred study delays during the period they are entitled to a student grant, may be enabled to complete or continue their studies as soon as possible.
2. Students who carry out recognised student representation activities during or within 12 months of the end of their entitlement to student grants, may be facilitated to do so from via the HU student representation fund and receive a scholarship for student representatives.
3. Students who do not meet the nationality requirement (i.e. are not from an EEA country) but are resident in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg or one of the federal states of North Rhine-Westphalia, Lower Saxony and Bremen of the Federal Republic of Germany, may receive a knowledge grant, under certain conditions.
4. Students who combine elite-level sports with their studies can claim various facilities. (For this, contact the Elite Sports Coordinator)
5. Students in acute financial distress may be able to claim support via the emergency fund.
6. In certain cases, students can claim support under the Tuition-free Representation Regulations. Students who perform representation activities may be eligible for a financial allowance. This is a scheme where students do not enrol, with a maximum of one year, but who do receive a financial allowance that they would have received had they been enrolled.

2 Graduation Financial Aid Regulations

Introduction

Pursuant to Sections 7.5.1, 7.5.1a, 7.51b, 7.51c, 7.51f and 7.51h of the 'WHW' (Higher Education and Research Act), a university of applied sciences must provide financial facilities to students who are delayed in their studies due to special circumstances. The Graduation Financial Aid Regulations, which are part of the HU Student Support Fund, regulate these facilities in more detail.

The Graduation Financial Aid Regulations were adopted by the Executive Board on 16 May 2023, with the consent of the University Council granted on 5 July 2023, and takes effect from 1 September 2023.

Article 1: Grounds

1. Eligible for graduation financial aid are: persons who are students at HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht, are enrolled in a degree programme for which they have not yet been awarded a degree and owe statutory tuition fees and who
 - a. is or has been entitled to the performance-related grant referred to in the 'Wet studiefinanciering 2000' (Student Finance Act 2000); and
 - b. incurred or will incur a delay in their studies during the period they are entitled to a student grant, this due to special circumstances as referred to in Article 2; and
 - c. is not (or no longer) eligible for the facility of extended performance-related grants by the Dutch Education Executive Agency (DUO); and
 - d. has complied with the procedural requirements.
2. Without prejudice to Paragraph 1, students who are enrolled in a degree programme that has not been re-accredited or which has had its accreditation withdrawn as a result of which the student is no longer entitled to student financing (7.51b) are also eligible for graduation financial aid.

Article 2: Special Circumstances for Graduation Financial Aid

1. The special circumstances that may be taken into account by the Graduation Financial Aid Committee when assessing an application for graduation financial aid are, exhaustively: (7.51.2b-h):
 - a. illness or pregnancy and childbirth of the student;
 - b. disability or a chronic illness;
 - c. special family circumstances, including the special circumstances of the person with whom the student lives together or maintains a long-distance relationship;
 - d. the circumstance that the degree programme is structured in such a way that the student has not been or will not reasonably be able to take the final examination within the period that they are entitled to a performance-related grant (higher education) (insufficiently studyable programme);
 - e. activities in the administrative or social field that are in the interest of the HU or of the programme the student attends. This is at the discretion of the director of Education, Research and Student Affairs (OO&S).
 - f. elite-level sports statement from the HU, in accordance with the Elite-level Athletes Regulations;

- g. circumstances other than those mentioned in this article which, if a request for financial support based thereon was not granted, would result in a case of extreme unfairness. This is at the discretion of the director of Education, Research and Student Affairs (OO&S).
- 2. Recognised special circumstances consisting of student representation activities give rise to entitlement to a scholarship for student representatives, this as regulated in the Scholarship Arrangement (the regulations for scholarships for student representatives). (7.51.2a)
- 3. Recognised work for the degree programme committee (OC), the Institute Council and the University Council (HSR) entitles you to facilitation as regulated in the individual participation regulations. (7.51.2a)

Article 3: Application Procedure for Financial Aid for Special Circumstances

1. Students who meet the criteria of Article 1 and who are subject to one or multiple special circumstances as mentioned in Article 2, Paragraph 1, must contact the student counsellor of the degree programme in which he or she is enrolled as soon as can reasonably be expected, but no later than five months after this circumstance arose. The student should take reasonable measures to minimise any delay in their studies.
2. Applications for financial aid for special circumstances are submitted by the student and consist of:
 - a. an application form that has been fully completed, dated and signed by the student, including a study plan (signed by the study coach (SLB)/learning team coach) showing how many credits the student could have attained during the period in which the special circumstance occurred, as well as the time they reasonably need to attain these credits, accompanied by the most recent notification message from the Education Executive Agency (DUO) with an overview of the student financing (to be) received.
 - b. a recommendation prepared by the student counsellor that includes:
 - the date of the first notification by the student to the student counsellor;
 - an indication of the category under which the special circumstances referred to in Article 2, Paragraph 1(a) to (g) falls, and with which written documents these have been established (as referred to in Article 3, Paragraph 2),
 - the determination of the impact of the special circumstances on the study delay and vice versa (causal link) for which financial aid is sought,
 - if applicable, whether the student has been granted an extension of the performance grant or if an application to this end has been rejected.
3. The written documents referred to in the previous paragraph which the student counsellor uses to determine the special circumstance are:
 - a. in the event of an application as referred to in Article 2, Paragraph 1(a) and 1(b), a statement by a doctor, paramedic or a recognised behavioural expert showing the period during which the special circumstances occurred;
 - b. in the event of an application as referred to in Article 2, Paragraph 1(c), documentary evidence proving the special family circumstances;
 - c. in the event of an application as referred to in Article 2, Paragraph 1(d) to (g), relevant documents to substantiate the application.

4. The student counsellor keeps a confidential archive of notifications processed. In connection with the protection of the student's personal privacy, the student counsellor is obliged to keep all information he receives confidential, unless otherwise decided in consultation with the student.
5. If the criteria in all previous Articles are met, an application for financial aid must be submitted as soon as possible after the end of the delaying circumstance and determination of the study delay, but no later than 31 December after the end of the academic year in which this circumstance occurred.

If the extent of the study delay cannot be determined within this period, the application must be submitted at a later time, but as soon as possible after the end of the delaying circumstance and the determination of the study delay. The student is required to ensure the timely delivery of the documents to the student counsellor.

6. A delay in studies caused by special circumstances that totals less than one month does not qualify for financial relief.

Article 4: Application Submission Process for a Decision on Financial Aid

1. The Graduation Financial Aid Committee issues an advisory opinion to the director of Education, Research and Student Affairs (OO&S) no later than four weeks after receiving the application.
2. Before preparing an opinion, the Graduation Financial Aid Committee may request further information from third parties that it considers relevant to the opinion to be prepared.
3. The director of Education, Research and Student Affairs (OO&S) shall make a decision within two weeks of receiving the opinion of the Graduation Financial Aid Committee. This deadline may be extended once, by a maximum of one week. The student and the relevant student counsellor will be notified of such an extension.
4. The director of Education, Research and Student Affairs (OO&S) shall give the reasons for his decision, taking into account the opinion issued by the Graduation Financial Aid Committee.
5. If the application is granted, the decision of the director of Education, Research and Student Affairs (OO&S) shall in any case include:
 - a. the amount of the monthly allocated graduation financial aid;
 - b. the time at which the graduation financial aid starts;
 - c. the duration of the graduation financial aid;
 - d. a reference to the possibility of appeal, in case the applicant does not agree with the decision of the director.

6. Graduation financial aid is granted as a gift, under the condition that the student is actually studying during the period such aid is paid out. If the student does not meet this condition, the graduation financial aid may be converted into a loan by the director of Education, Research and Student Affairs (OO&S).
7. The decision of the director of Education, Research and Student Affairs (OO&S) will be sent to the student, the relevant institute director and the student counsellor.

Article 5: Duration and Amount of Financial Aid for Special Circumstances

1. The financial aid applies for the period of the study delay which is causally related to the personal circumstances. This duration refers to the number of months during which the special circumstances occurred, as well as the time needed to remedy the study delay and for which the student counsellor gives a recommendation based on the study plan.
2. Graduation financial aid will be granted for no more than 12 months throughout the entire term of study, regardless of whether disenrolment took place mid-term or not.
3. Graduation financial aid is paid in equal monthly instalments at the end of the month to which it relates. The first instalment shall commence from the month following the month in which the student was last entitled to the performance-related grant as referred to in the '*Wet Studiefinanciering 2000*' (Student Finance Act 2000). The student indicates this point in time on the application form. The student must be enrolled at HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht during the payment period. Furthermore, in consultation with their study coach/learning team coach, students are expected to commit to their study progress in terms of effort.
4. For students who have submitted an application after 1 September 2023 which was approved by the director of Education, Research and Student Affairs (OO&S), the amount of the financial aid shall be equal to the amount of the performance-related grant (grant for students living at home or away from home) for which the student is eligible under the '*Wet Studiefinanciering 2000*' (Student Finance Act 2000) in the last month of the academic year in which the special circumstances occurred. This financial aid may be supplemented by an amount equal to the supplementary grant for which that student is eligible under the '*Wet Studiefinanciering 2000*' (Student Finance Act 2000) in the last month of the academic year in which the special circumstances occurred.
5. Graduation financial aid ends:
 - a. on the first day of the month following the passing of the final examination of the degree programme for which the support was awarded; or
 - b. with effect from the first month after the student has ended their enrolment at the HU; or
 - c. at the end of the period for which graduation financial aid was awarded.

Article 6: Hardship Clause

The director of Education, Research and Student Affairs (OO&S) is authorised to deviate from the provisions of these regulations if their strict application would lead to a case of extreme unfairness.

Article 7: Changes in Circumstances

1. Those who receive financial aid under the Graduation Financial Aid Scheme must inform the Graduation Financial Aid Committee or, as the case may be, the director of Education, Research and Student Affairs (OO&S) of a change in circumstances that have consequences for the amount and/or duration of the financial aid.
2. The director of Education, Research and Student Affairs (OO&S) may decide to discontinue financial aid under the Graduation Financial Aid Scheme if continuation is no longer considered reasonable.

Article 8: Transitional Arrangement

If your request regarding the recognition of study delays was submitted before 1 September 2023 and approved by the director of Education, Research and Student Affairs (OO&S) before 1 September 2023, you must apply for Graduation Financial Aid on the basis of the old regulations for graduation financial aid [[LINK to the old regulations](#)].