



Emergency Food Grant Scheme

The aim of this fund

The aim of this fund is to aid our students in times of financial difficulty, whilst they wait for a more long term solution. The idea been that students who prove themselves to be under extreme financial difficult will be awarded a grant to tide them over until their University loan/grant award or other financial assistance comes through. University awards from the Access to Learning Fund (ALF) can take 21 working days to process, and knowing that students often leave things to late this could leave them struggling financially a great deal.

Other unions (i.e. University of York) also offer a similar grant scheme. These Unions mainly provide money on a repayment basis, these institutions; however, are distributing much larger quantities of money. Some Unions do deal with much smaller sums of money and award it on a grant basis. It is felt that a non-payment scheme at York St John will work better due to fund and man power constraints.

How to raise funds

Raising money for yet another financial support fund is going to be challenging. Whilst running fundraising events seems like it may hamper the excellent work that RAG it is suggested that this may be the best way to proceed. It suggested that in order to raise funds in enough time and to avoid conflict with RAGs main fundraising events that these are held early in the first semester in a one off event. Liaison and involvement from RAG and Union council would be welcome and essential to produce ideas and run a successful event.

How to distribute funds

Once funds for such a scheme have been raised it has been the topic of much conversation on how best and responsibly to distribute them and how much an award should be. After much debate it is put forward for your consideration that the best way to distribute funds would be using a supermarket voucher that student can exchange for produce, (this is not the practice of other unions where awards are monetary but will help us reasonably control the expenditure). This was considered as to deter as much as possible students from applying for money to fund a night out or other non essential items.

Belief is that more local supermarkets' should be approached rather than those at Monks Cross and Clifton Moor as travel arrangements and costs may obstruct the benefits of the food grant. Local supermarkets/stores include



Morrisons, Sainsburys, Aldi, and Spar. Sainsburys already provide a suitable scheme and have expressed interest in supporting us with this fund.

Next for consideration is the grant amount. It is the feeling that a small grant would deter time wasters as there will not be massive incentives but will be enough to actually be of use to a student. Findings have suggested that the average student spends £36.40 a week on food (£31.51, University Sussex Students' Union 2009; £50, University Edinburgh estimated living costs 09-10; £30.50, Prospects- the latest on student finance 2009; £40 UKstudentlife.com (average expenditure); £30 UKstudentlife.com ("cheap" expenditure)). This is a little higher than the NUS Student Experience Report that suggests a value of £29.52 a week on groceries. Taking this into account it is felt that, with effective budgeting an award of £25 being enough to sustain an individual until there longer term financial solution comes into effect. It is suggested that awards should be a standard payment rather than a sliding scale so to avoid accusations of bias, disagreement amount award amount and will also help speed the process up.

It is suggested that funds will be allocated under the following guidelines:

- Funds will not be distributed until the week commencing the 30th November; this is 3 weeks before the end of term to ensure that recipients are not just those that have blown all there loan in the first few weeks.
- Funds will also be distributed alongside financial advice on other funds of money that can be applied for and budgeting, thus educating our students in the hope to avoid future financial difficulties.
- This will be a one off payment and students will not be able be granted an award on more than one occasion.
- It is hoped that funds can be distributed on a 24 hour turn around. This would obviously limit who could be involved in agreeing whether a case is worthy of a grant.
- It is suggested for your approval that the Vice President Education and Welfare and President be responsible for the approval and distribution, except in cases of conflict on either party (i.e. good friends, partners or personal differences).
- In cases of dispute a chosen representative of Union Council may be contacted to make ultimate decision.



Paper number:

- Following practice by other unions it is suggested that a form would be the best way to assess the applicant's need. This must be supported by relevant evidence (i.e. bank statement). (see attached proposed application form).
- The successful applicant will be required to provide evidence of how the money has been spent, (this will no doubt be in the form of a receipt from the supermarket.) if evidence is not provided they will have to repay the grant.

I hope this document and attached information clearly outlines what we hope to achieve with this scheme. If you have any further question or comment please do not hesitate to contact me on k.knowles@yorks.ac.uk.

Proposal

- That council accepts this proposal and we implement the idea, beginning promotion during Money Awareness Week 2009

Katie Knowles
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