



Grants to Individuals Programme (Education)

Each year, The Bedford Charity is able to make a small number of awards to individuals to assist them with the costs of undertaking continuing and further education courses leading to career development.

Many of the candidates who have received awards in recent years are returning to study or training after some time away from full-time education, and almost all are over the age of 21.

Our emphasis is on exploring with candidates the vocational nature of their chosen course of study – what has led them to undertake the course, what skills and experience it will provide, what they plan to do afterwards, and where the benefit may lie.

Another factor that we may take into consideration is how a chosen candidate's course of study will help the candidate to develop skills and experience that can be used to address local or general needs that fall within our charitable objects and community interests.

Please note that the sum of money allocated to this particular programme is relatively small, and the majority of The Bedford Charity's grant giving is targeted at organisations. Competition for individual grants is considerable and, even if an application is successful, it is likely that only a modest contribution towards the costs of study can be made.

Restrictions and exclusions

Candidates should be resident in the Borough of Bedford (which comprises the Town of Bedford and North Bedfordshire), although their studies may take place outside the area. Candidates who have moved to the Borough to undertake college courses or other full-time study are unlikely to be eligible.

Applicants seeking support for full-time first degrees are highly unlikely to be successful unless there are exceptional circumstances. In such cases grants can only be made towards the cost of books and equipment, and applicants must prove that they are ineligible for statutory support. Grants are not made for professional training in Medicine, Accountancy and Law.

All applicants must determine their entitlement to statutory funding (eg from the Local Education Authority) before making an application for a grant.

The application process

We welcome telephone calls or letters from potential applicants before they submit a form. We can usually provide early guidance on specific requests.

The majority of the applications we receive are from candidates seeking financial assistance for courses starting in the autumn term. Applications receive preliminary consideration by members of The Bedford Charity Grants Committee from the early summer onwards.

We encourage early applications; the majority of candidates will have submitted their forms well in advance of the closing date in early July. Shortlisted candidates are invited to an Interview Panel.

For courses starting at other times of year, we recommend the application form be submitted well before the course commencement date.

Guidance on completing the application form

Please read through these notes carefully before completing the form. You are required to fill in all sections of the form. The decision whether to short-list your application for further consideration will be made on the information you provide.

Although our Trustees will see your completed application form and curriculum vitae, usually they will not see any other information you send to us at this stage of the assessment process. We encourage you strongly, therefore, not to refer in your application to other papers, such as a covering letter.

Specific guidance on particular questions:

• Question 4

The space for you to respond to this question (asking you to outline your longer-term objectives, and how your proposed course will help you to fulfil them) is deliberately restricted. We want you to think very carefully about this question, and provide us with a concise answer. We will **not** consider information provided on additional sheets.

• Question 5

- a) Please let us know if these are actual or estimated costs;
- b) Please provide brief information here on how you have arrived at these sums for accommodation, travel arrangements or other additional costs.

• Question 6

- a) If you are not in work, please let us know what statutory benefits you are receiving, or what other financial support you have available to you.
- b) Grants cannot be made in relief of rates and taxes. All applicants, therefore, must determine their entitlement to statutory funding eg Local Education Authority and other government programmes, before making an application for a grant. Trustees will be looking for evidence of your efforts to secure other sources of funding towards the costs of your study. Please provide full details. If you have been successful in securing an award from the Bedford Charity previously, please provide the date and sum.

• Question 7

Please provide details here of any savings you have accumulated towards the costs of your study, money you are able to (or have) borrowed for this purpose or gifts from families or friends that will help with your planned expenditure.

• Question 8

Even if an application is successful, The Bedford Charity is usually only able to make a modest contribution towards the costs of studying.

Questions 5, 6 and 7 will enable our Trustees to know what will be the total expense to you of undertaking the course, and how you plan to meet these costs from a variety of sources. If there is too great a shortfall between the two sums, however, it may suggest that a modest contribution from The Bedford Charity would be insufficient to enable you to undertake your studies. In this case, your application is unlikely to succeed.

The Bedford Charity – Guidelines for Grant Seekers

We want to see evidence that you are planning carefully for the financial implications of your study. Think carefully about the sum you put here.

- **Question 9**

The Bedford Charity is a local, general charity with three areas of activity: the promotion of education; the promotion of any charitable purpose for the relief of people who are sick or in need, hardship or distress; and the provision in the interest of social welfare of facilities for recreation and other leisure-time occupations. You can find out more about our work by visiting our website (www.befordcharity.org.uk) or we can send you a copy of our annual review.

We will be interested to know if you feel the skills and experience you hope to develop by undertaking your chosen course of study will complement The Bedford Charity's other community activities, or our charitable objects more generally. This is usually something our Trustees will take into consideration when looking at an application.

You may want to include here some other information that you feel is relevant to your application. There may be particular personal circumstances, for instance, that have informed your decision to return to study to further your career. Although this may be related to the information you provided when responding to Question 4, please do not use this space simply to continue that answer.

- **Question 11**

Please provide us with the names and full contact details for two referees. Only one should be able to comment on your academic suitability for this course of study. We would strongly advise that this person should not be the course organiser or supervisor for your proposed future studies. Please contact us if you would like further guidance on appropriate referees, particularly if you have not been in education for some time, and you are not able to think of anyone to suggest.

Additional items to include with your application form:

- your current **curriculum vitae** (CV), including your full employment history;
- **brief details** from the course provider **of your proposed course of study** (eg copy of the relevant information from the prospectus or brochure, which should include details of course fees, examination fees, enrolment fees and, where relevant, other additional costs such as accommodation or equipment);

We recommend sending these additional items, where relevant:

- copy of **letter of offer** from College/University (or other course provider);
- copies of letters with details of **the outcome of requests and applications** made to other funding bodies (eg LEA);
- copy of confirmation of **Subject and Honours Class of first degree** (postgraduates);
- priced **book/materials list**, if available.

Information on our grants programmes for the last year:

Total grant giving July 2004 to June 2005:

- Sum of awards made to **organisations**: £443,816 (96% of total)
- Sum of awards made to **individuals**: £ 16,274 (4% of total)

Continuing, vocational education and postgraduate awards

- Sum of awards made to individuals: £7,774
- Number of awards made: 7

Award levels (numbers of awards made) for these programmes

- Over £2,000 0
- Between £1,000 and £2,000 4
- Under £1,000 3

Some examples of successful applications from individuals:

- Contribution to the cost of course fees for a part-time Diploma in Social Work. Candidate returning to further education after starting a family. Volunteers with a local organisation that works with families with young children, and aims to apply the experience and skills to voluntary sector work in the locality.
- Contribution to travel costs for attendance on an advanced level British Sign Language Course. Applicant undertakes voluntary work which involves the use of signing, and aims to develop skills to meet a local need for qualified interpreters.
- Contribution to the costs of books and materials for a Postgraduate Diploma at the Royal College of Music. Candidate has expressed a keen interest in contributing to music education outreach projects aimed at local schoolchildren.
- Contribution towards the cost of course fees for a candidate to continue a part-time research PhD, focusing on practical musical activities that have yielded promising improvements in literacy and numeracy levels of children with mild learning difficulties.

An important final point...

If your proposed studies are not due to start until some months ahead, we encourage you to write to us informally first with details of your plans. We can usually provide you with some early guidance on how a formal application to us may fare.

Many successful applicants have benefited from seeking this early guidance well ahead of a formal submission.

Other candidates, on being told that an application would be unlikely to fare well against strong competition, have had the opportunity to focus their efforts on securing funding elsewhere rather than wait for a formal decision on their request.

For more information on our community grant programmes, please contact:

Lucy Bardner, Grants Manager, The Bedford Charity

01234 369500