

# Digital Support Fund Applications 2023/24

## Information and Guidance Notes for Applicants

### What is the Digital Support Fund?

The Digital Support Fund is a support fund to help students with the associated costs of online learning and study.

There are limited grants of £400 per student, designed to be used as a contribution to buying a laptop and peripherals (mouse, keyboard, extra monitor, router, dongle etc.) or for paying broadband bills.

The University of Reading is committed to ensuring that none of our applicants are disadvantaged in accessing our undergraduate degree programmes because of their background. We recognise that some students are more likely than their peers to face barriers to higher education, through no fault of their own.

This digital support fund is designed to provide financial support for applicants who live in areas of the United Kingdom with high levels of deprivation and low participation in Higher Education and whose assessed taxable household income is below **£27,000**.

### Who can apply?

To apply for the Digital Support Fund, you must:

- Be a first year or a returning student on any undergraduate course; and
- Be a permanent resident of the UK; and
- Live in an area with low participation in Higher Education (defined as Polar4 Quintile 1 or 2); and
- Be assessed by your Student Finance Authority<sup>1</sup> as eligible for financial support and have an assessed household taxable income of below **£27,000**.

Limited funds are available, so priority will be given to students who are estranged/care experienced, students with school aged dependants, or students whose course is known to require high specification IT.

Students who have previously received a digital support fund award in any previous or current academic year are ineligible to the Digital Support Fund in 2023/24.

### How and when to apply

Applications for the Digital Support Fund are made using the online Digital Support Fund Application Form 2023/24 link at [www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/Money\\_matters/Funding/Digital-support-fund](http://www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/Money_matters/Funding/Digital-support-fund).

### What supporting evidence should I submit?

**You will need to provide us with a copy of your maintenance loan entitlement letter from the relevant Student Finance Authority for the 2023/24 academic year.**

When assessing your application, we will also:

1. Use the postcode from your home address to check your eligibility. Date will be checked against POLAR4 Quintile 1 or 2 criteria.

<sup>1</sup> Student Finance England, Student Finance Wales, Student Finance Northern Ireland or the Student Awards Agency for Scotland

(You can use the [POLAR](#) postcode lookup tool to see if your postcode makes you eligible.)

2. Assess your household income using data supplied to the University of Reading by your Student Finance Authority.

### **IMPORTANT**

We will only be able to determine eligibility if you have:

- Made an application through the relevant Student Finance Authority for tuition fees, maintenance loans/ grants or other grants; and
- Given the Student Finance Authority consent to share your assessed household income with the University. Please note that your parent(s) or partner must also provide consent if their financial information has been included in the application.

**You must submit your student loan application (for tuition fees, maintenance loan or grants) to the relevant Student Finance Authority BEFORE you apply for the Digital Support Fund.**

### **How will I know if I have been successful?**

You will be notified of the outcome of your application via email. Applicants will be notified within 10 working days and payment will be made shortly afterwards.

### **Deadline for applications**

Applications will close at 1pm on **22<sup>nd</sup> March 2024** or once the fund is exhausted, whichever is sooner.

# How to Complete the Application Form

## Your Personal Details

Complete all sections and make sure that your contact details are correct in case we need to contact you about your application.

Your postcode is especially important as it will be used to check your eligibility for the Digital Support Fund.

## University of Reading Course Details

Complete all sections as this is used to assess if your course requires high specification IT equipment, such as Typography or Graphic Communication.

## Additional Information

For each question, write a maximum of 250 words.

- Please provide details of how you will use the funds if awarded and provide a brief breakdown of your budget. For example, you can explain:
  - Any previous research you have done, including specific IT equipment, its costs and where you would intend to purchase it from
  - If there is a shortfall, what other funds you intend to use to pay the difference between the grant and the cost of the equipment
  - How the equipment would assist you in long-term learning and study
- Please provide any other information you feel is relevant to your application that you would like the assessor to be aware of when assessing your application.

## Maintenance Loan Letter

If your application for student finance is successful, you will receive a letter from the relevant Student Finance Authority confirming what you will be receiving.

We require a copy of this letter to confirm your eligibility for the Digital Support Fund.

## Can I speak to someone about my application?

If you have any questions, please email [studentfunding@reading.ac.uk](mailto:studentfunding@reading.ac.uk) with subject header “Digital Support Fund application and include your student number” or call 0118 378 5555, and a member of the team will be able to assist you.