

Student Loan and Grant Fund Policy

Section 1 - Purpose / Objectives

(1) The University provides loans and grants to students to assist them with meeting the cost of studying. The applications are assessed and approved by Student Engagement.

Section 2 - Scope / Application

(2) This Policy is important to:

- a. Student Engagement;
- b. Students; and
- c. Finance.

Section 3 - Definitions

(3) "Director" means Director, Student Engagement.

(4) "Fund" means the Student Loan and Grant Fund.

(5) "Loan" means borrowing from the Fund.

(6) "Grant" means a one-off monetary contribution from the Fund.

(7) "Loans Officer" means a staff member of the Student Welfare Section authorised to approve loans.

(8) "Agency" means debt collection agency.

(9) "Enrolled student" means student who has enrolled in a course of study and paid all necessary fees for that period or is provisionally enrolled and engaged in a fee payment process.

Section 4 - Policy Statement

(10) The University Student Loan and Grant Fund provides loans for unexpected living expenses; provides loans for the purchase of necessary books, equipment and other course requirements; provides loans for establishment costs associated with accommodation and study; provides one off grants in circumstances where there are no other financial support mechanisms available to students; provides one off grants in circumstances where national or international natural disasters, economic or political unrest have an impact on the capacity to study.

(11) The Fund consists of the balances in the Student Loan Funds of the amalgamated Institutes as at 1 January 1992, together with any other monies designated by the University Council, donations or accrued through investment.

(12) The Director Student Engagement is responsible for the overall management of the Fund and will provide a report

to the Principal Officer responsible for Students on the status of the Fund in November of each year.

(13) After seeking recommendations from the Manager, Student Welfare and Chief Financial Officer, the Director Student Engagement shall determine annually the proportion of the Fund that will be available for loans and grants, and that which shall be set aside.

(14) The Manager Student Welfare will provide Student Loan and Grant details to the Finance Department to accurately record and update information on the status of the Fund. This information will be reconciled on a monthly basis.

General Principles of Operation

(15) The Fund shall abide by the University's policies on privacy and on Student Equity and Social Inclusion.

(16) Loans and Grants will be offered based upon an applicant's demonstrated need.

(17) The Fund shall operate to provide the maximum benefit to the maximum number of students.

(18) All reasonable efforts shall be made to ensure loans will be repaid.

(19) In the event that the Fund has allocated all available money, new applications shall not be processed.

Development of the Fund

(20) The Director Student Engagement shall, as circumstances warrant, seek to attract additional monies in order to extend the scope and effectiveness of the Fund to address the students' needs.

Section 5 - Procedures

Administration of Student Loans

(21) The Student Loan Fund shall be administered by Student Welfare and all loan inquiries and applications shall be directed to Student Welfare.

(22) The Manager, Student Welfare will oversee the daily operation of the Student Loan Fund.

(23) All Loans Officers shall be staff of the Student Welfare Section.

(24) The Loans Officers have the authority to:

- a. assess applications for Student Loans;
- b. assess applications for Student Loan Extensions;
- c. approve Student Loans;
- d. disburse funds to successful applicants; and
- e. approve loan repayment extensions within set parameters.

(25) Finance will record all loans/grants on the University finance system and distribute reminder and overdue letters to recipients; provide reports to the Manager, Student Welfare monthly or as requested which incorporate the following information:

- a. the number of loans and grants;
- b. the average loan amount;

- c. the balance due to the Fund;
- d. the total amount of repayments received;
- e. the balance remaining in the Fund;
- f. the amount and number of overdue loans and
- g. the action taken on overdue loans.

Eligibility

(26) To be eligible for a Student Loan an applicant must:

- a. be an enrolled student (local or international) of the University in an "award course" or a course that is listed on the University scope of registration;
- b. demonstrate that the funds will assist the student experiencing financial difficulty, and
- c. demonstrate a capacity to repay the loan.

(27) International students in receipt of government sponsorship from the Australian or a foreign government, will in the first instance be directed to the University Sponsorship Officer in Victoria University International for assistance including a variation to the stipend.

Restrictions of the Fund

(28) Money cannot be borrowed or grant made from the Loan Fund as payment or part payment for VE/FE or Higher Education Tuition materials or auxiliary fees.

(29) Loans will not be approved for fines of any kind.

(30) A subsequent loan cannot be issued whilst an outstanding loan exists.

(31) Approval of a Loan Extension must meet set criteria as outlined in the procedural manual.

Interest

(32) The Director, Student Engagement shall determine annually whether an interest rate will be applied to loans. The interest rate will be no more than 10% per annum.

(33) The Director, Student Engagement shall determine this rate after seeking recommendations from the Manager, Student Welfare and the Director, Finance.

Guarantors For Student Loans

(34) Guarantors shall be required for student loans when:

- a. the loan amount is greater than \$300, or
- b. the applicant is younger than 18 years of age.

(35) A guarantor must be a permanent resident of Australia or an Australian citizen.

(36) A person shall not be acceptable as a guarantor if they:

- a. are a member of staff at the University except where they are a relative of the applicant; or
- b. are under 18 years of age

Maximum Loan

(37) The maximum loan allowable shall be determined according to the capacity of the Fund.

(38) The Director, Student Engagement shall on an annual basis set the maximum amount for an individual loan and review this amount on a regular basis, taking into account funds available and changing student need.

Maximum Loan Exceptions

(39) Loans exceeding the set maximum amount may be granted in exceptional circumstances with the approval of the Director, Student Engagement or nominee.

Appeal

(40) Where an application for a loan or loan extension is refused or varied by a Loans Officer, the applicant may seek an independent review of the decision by referring to the Manager, Student Welfare or nominee, who shall have the discretionary right to vary or uphold a Loans Officer's decision.

Debt recovery

(41) Finance will refer overdue loans to and liaise with the University debt collection agency for collection.

(42) The Agency will determine the debt recovery strategy and applicable interest. This may be in consultation with the Manager, Student Welfare.

Administration of Student Grants

(43) Student Grants will only be made available to students who have no other alternate financial support; and, in circumstances of a major national and/or international disaster of political unrest, at the direction of the Vice Chancellor.

(44) At the discretion of the Director Student Engagement, a total of \$5,000 from the Student Loan and Grant Fund may be made available annually, for disbursement to currently enrolled students experiencing extreme financial hardship.

(45) All grant enquires and applications will be directed to Student Welfare.

(46) The Student Welfare Officers have the authority to:

- a. assess applications for Student Grants;
- b. provide a written recommendation to the Manager, Student Welfare for final approval; and

(47) The Director, Student Engagement has the authority to approve grants.

(48) Student Welfare will work with Finance to facilitate payment to recipients.

Eligibility

(49) The provision of the grant will assist the student to continue their enrolment in their current course.

(50) Other sources of financial assistance will have been sought by the student and confirmed as being unavailable or inappropriate.

(51) A student must have not accessed a grant previously in the case of clause 44.

(52) Provision of supporting documentation may include any of the following:

- a. Statutory Declaration outlining the nature of the impact of the hardship;
- b. Copies of medical/hospital/death certificates where applicable;
- c. Letter or fax from Bank Manager in home country, and / or
- d. Any other documentation that supports the application.

(53) In the case of an international student in receipt of government sponsorship from the Australian or a foreign government, they will in the first instance be directed to the University Sponsorship Officer in Victoria University International for assistance including a variation to the stipend.

Grant Amount

(54) The maximum grant allowable shall be determined according to the capacity of the Fund.

(55) The Director, Student Engagement shall on an annual basis set the maximum amount for an individual grant and review this amount on a regular basis, taking into account the funds available and changing student need.

Section 6 - Guidelines

(56) Nil

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	17th September 2014
Review Date	17th May 2017
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor
Approval Date	17th September 2014
Expiry Date	8th October 2017
Responsible Officer	Yvonne Rolley Associate Director, Student Life and Wellbeing
Enquiries Contact	