International Student Hardship/ Emergency Fund

Who is Eligible to Apply?

For non-EU students who have had a **significant life changing experience** during their current course of studies and within the last 12 months that has left them in **financial crisis.** Chronic mental / physical illness, bereavement, and sudden unemployment of a parent / guardian or partner are some of the situations where students may be eligible for this fund. **On-going low income does not, in and of itself, qualify you for the Emergency Hardship Fund.** Students are expected to demonstrate that they had a sound financial plan **and proven resources to complete their course of studies** when starting their course. Students may be deemed ineligible for funding if their costs are too high and it would not be sustainable to fund them.

To apply please ensure you have the following details:

- Details of why you need funding assistance and proof of financial need
- Your funding requirement

Key considerations in making your application:

- Students can only apply once per academic year to a fund.
- If you submit more than one application to a fund, only your latest application will be retained and assessed; earlier applications to that fund are over-written.
- By uploading incorrect or inaccurate documentation, your application will be rejected or delayed.
- From receipt of application, your application will be reviewed by the Finance Officer and a decision will be given via email within 10 working days.

Appeals Process for Economic Hardship

BCA will not re-evaluate an application just because a student is unhappy with a "nil award" (denial). The student must explicitly base their appeal on one of three strict grounds:

- **Procedural or Administrative Error:** The university staff made an error in calculating your income/expenditure, or failed to follow their own published guidelines.

- **New Evidence / Changed Circumstances:** Crucial information has come to light that was physically unavailable when you first applied (e.g., official bank or medical documents proving a sudden crisis).
- **Perceived Misinterpretation:** The assessor fundamentally misunderstood the evidence or criteria regarding your home country's situation.

2. The Multi-Stage Process

Stage 1: Intent to Appeal

Within 5–10 Working Days

The student must formally notify the Finance Office in writing. This usually requires submitting a specific Appeal Form or an Appeal Letter detailing the explicit grounds of the challenge.

Stage 2: Informal / First-Line Review

Within 10 Working Days

The initial assessment reviews the case to clarify the budget calculations and look at any newly provided documents. If an administrative error is found, it is corrected here.

Stage 3: Formal Appeals Panel

Within 15–20 Working Days

If Stage 1 does not resolve the issue, the case escalates to a committee. This panel will include the Director of Admissions and Dean of Academics who were uninvolved in the original decision offering.

3. The Final Decision & Outcomes
Once the formal panel reviews the case, they will issue a final decision in writing. The outcomes generally fall into three categories:

- **Upheld:** The panel agrees with the appeal, completely or partially overturning the initial rejection, and authorizes a payout.
- **Upheld Pending Information:** The panel believes there is merit to the case but pauses the decision until the student provides specific secondary documentation.
- **Dismissed:** The original decision stands. At most institutions, **the panel's decision is final** for that academic year. If a student still feels they were treated unfairly, their only remaining internal option is to file a formal institutional grievance or university complaint.

Where do I apply?

Initial applications and appeals must be submitted in writing to

Karen Quinn

Finance Officer

Burren College of Art

E-mail: karen@burrencollege.ie