QM SU | Queen Mary Students' Union

Society Development Fund Guidance

Queen Mary Students' Union
2025/26

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qmsu.org

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We Improve Students' Lives.

Background

Previously known as the Societies Grant Fund, each year Queen Mary Students' Union receives a block grant from the University to support student activities and a proportion of this is made available to societies through an application process.

This fund has £50,000 available which societies will be able to bid for in four application rounds.

The purpose of the funding is to support societies to run activities, projects, events, or initiatives to further their aims and objectives. Applications are open to affiliated Students' Union societies only. It is an incredibly competitive fund so please read through this guidance for tips on how to write a strong application!

Deadlines

The table below shows the dates of the funding rounds, as well as the total amount of funding available for each round.

Round	Applications Open	Applications Close	Outcomes Circulated By	Total Available
1	6th Aug 2025	9:00am, 20th Aug 2025	4th Sep 2025	£15,500
2	12th Sep 2025	9:00am, 15th Oct 2025	24th Oct 2025	£11,500
3	31st Oct 2025	9:00am, 7th Jan 2026	16th Jan 2026	£13,500
4	23rd Jan 2026	9:00am 4th March 2026	13th March 2026	£9,500

Eligibility

How much money can we bid for?

Only the President or Treasurer of the society can apply – other committee members can help research and work on it, but it must be submitted by a President or Treasurer. To ensure that the fund goes to those who need it the most, societies with over £1,000 will not be eligible for grant funding, unless in exceptional circumstances.

There is also a maximum amount of funding societies can receive in any one academic year. This is based on the number of paid members a society has:

Number of society members	Maximum amount of funding
Under 10	Not eligible
10 - 24	£10 per member
25 - 49	£500
50 - 74	£800
75 - 99	£1,500
100 and over	£2,000

If you gain more members after a round and move up a category, you can then apply for the additional money. Examples:

- If you have 20 members, you can apply for up to £200 during that academic year (*10*20*).
- If a society with 28 members applied for and received £500, they can no longer apply for any more funding that year.
- A society with 72 members (*eligible for £800*) applied for and received £600 in Round 2. This means in Rounds 3 and 4 they can still apply for £200 more. However, when Round 3 closes they then have over 100 members (*eligible for £2,000*), so now they can apply for £1,400 more (£2,000 - £600).

What can we apply for?

The following criteria was discussed and agreed upon by the Societies Board, a committee made up of student representatives who will also be reading through your applications and allocate the money.

What can be funded	What can't be funded
This list is not exhaustive, if you are applying to fund items outside of this list, contact the QMSU societies team and we can advise you on your application. • Portering – If there is no free alternative • Events: E.g., venue hire, tech hire, security • A new type of activity/event- not your regular events: E.g., a dance society getting funding for an advanced dance coach for new performance classes • Entries and affiliations: Competition entries, insurance, membership to national organisations (that are not political or a charity). • Travel: Such as coach hire, travel expenses outside of London Zones 1-6 • Cultural Food: food that cannot be easily sourced from a local supermarket and is a key part of the event • Equipment: New or replacement equipment essential for society activity, hiring essential equipment • Training and development: Developmental opportunities for your members • Education: Opportunities/Resources for your members to deepen their learning either academically or in your society's interest area	*Occasional exemptions may be made, if you are applying to fund something on this list, contact the QMSU societies team and we can advise you on your application.* • Charity/Fundraising Events (this is known as ultra-vires) • Anything you have already bought/paid for (known as retrospective bids) • Donations to a charity or political body (also ultra-vires) • Affiliation Fees to a political body • Online call platform accounts – You have access to Zoom Pro, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet: *If you need to use a different platform you need to explain why these other platforms are not suitable* • Regular activities/events – societies should be able to fund this with their subs and/or be charging tickets to them • Travel within London Zones 1-6 • Food and drink, unless it is a core part to your society (e.g., Baking Society wanting ingredients for a special event). Exemptions may be made in specific circumstances, reasoning for why the food is needed at the event would be required in these cases • Single-use plastics/promotional materials: as a Students' Union we have a commitment to sustainability • Anything that only benefits the Committee such as committee merchandise e.g., hoodies

	• Gifts/Thank you presents for External Speakers • Unspecified activity: *you must detail all activity in your application* • Training where in-house training is provided • Activities not associated to your societies aims and objectives • Campaigning that would contravene charity law • Direct expenditure for the benefit of non-members that isn't in line with your groups aims and objectives

Are there any other considerations?

Subs: Your subs balance will be considered. This means if you have money in your account to cover what you are asking for, then it is very likely that your application will be rejected. You will need to justify why you need the funding and why you can't use the subs in your account.

Storage: If you are applying for large items that your society do not have means of storing, your application may be rejected.

Safety: For items that require careful storage and heavy oversite throughout use, we will want you to have planned for these factors before applying and, where relevant, to have contacted your university department to help ensure any activity is being safely facilitated. This is particularly relevant for medical groups requesting to use sharps at events.

Training: The President and Treasurer need to have completed the training to receive funding in Round 1 and to be eligible to apply for Rounds 2-4.

Other Funds

Societies Start Up Fund

If you are a society with less than £200 in your subs you are eligible for the Societies Start Up Fund. You will be contacted if you are eligible. With this fund you will receive £50 in total for the academic year, and the purpose of this pot is to help you run an event/activity to help drive up membership sales/run for-profit events and generate more money in your subs.

We recommend that if you are eligible, you use this funding instead of the Society Development Fund as it will be automatically allocated and you will have a shorter timeline of 2 month to utilise these funds before they are returned to the grant funding pot. There are also less restrictions on what you can buy, the only things you cannot utilise this for are:

- Things that are only going to benefit your committee (e.g., hoodies)
- Anything you have already bought/paid for
- Charity/Fundraising Events (this is known as ultra-vires)
- Donations to a charity or political body (also ultra-vires)
- Affiliation Fees to a political body
- Direct expenditure for the benefit of non-members that isn't in line with your aims and objectives

Other funding sources

For other funding sources available to societies see the Committees' Hub and link here: https://www.qmsu.org/clubs-socs/committeeshub/funding/

Application Questions

The following are the questions you will be asked in the application form:

Contact Details

Please note that only Presidents or Treasurers can submit applications on behalf of a society.

Project/Event/Activity Summary

- What is its purpose and/or aims: what it involves, how many students will benefit from it, and is it a collaboration?
- Please note that this fund should be used to help develop and grow your society, not to fund your regular activities. If you are bidding for multiple projects, please write each project in a new paragraph.

How will this project/event/activity contribute to your society's aims and objectives and benefit your members?

- Give us context on what your society already does, and how this funding will help you with what you want to do – for example do you want to grow your membership? Offer greater activities to them?

How much money are you requesting from the Fund?

- If you are requesting to fund multiple items, break each of them down here and provide a link to them if relevant: e.g., Item A (link to Item A): £54.99 (Includes £4.99 delivery), Item B: £100, Item C: £75, TOTAL: £229.99.

When will you spend the money by?

- Your application will be rejected if you need this money before when the outcomes are circulated for that round.
- We also need to know when you need it so we can set a deadline for you to use the money – if you miss this deadline the money will be recalled and put back into the fund.
- If you are applying for multiple projects, please clearly state when you need the money for each project.

Why do you want to purchase these specific items/choose this service?

- For example, if you are not asking for the cheapest option explain why you need a more expensive version of that product.
- If it is to pay for services/hire, explain why you want to use that service over others.

Please provide a full project budget, all including a full breakdown of all income and expenditure.

- Include details of how much the project costs in total if you are not asking to fully fund it and details of other income if you are using it, e.g. 'We will also be using £500 from our subs and will be making another £200 from selling tickets'.
- Alternatively, you can upload a copy of your budget plan (you need to complete one if you are planning to hold an event that costs more than £250).

Societies Board will also take in consideration how much money you have in your subs.

- Please explain why your subs cannot cover it.

Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your application?

- Use this to tell us anything that might have been missed as well as how this will be used sustainably and how it will help your events to be accessible to everyone.

Other things to consider

Does this project involve interaction with under 18s or adults at risk?

- Adults at risk are defined as (but not limited to) those who need care because of mental health issues, disabilities, age, or illness.

How will your event be accessible and inclusive?

- This will not impact if you get the funding or not, this question has been added to get your society to consider the accessibility and inclusivity of your events. If you want to discuss how to make your group more accessible and inclusive email su-societies@qmul.ac.uk for help.

How is the item/activity/event being funded sustainable?

- This will not impact if you get the funding or not, this question has been added to get your society to consider the sustainability of your events. If you want to discuss how to make your group more sustainable email su-societies@qmul.ac.uk for help.

Anything else you would like to tell the Societies Board about your application?

- Use this opportunity to talk about your goals for your society. If you're using the money to help fund a big event this year, consider how you will fund it in future years and explain how this fund could help you this year and prepare you for future years.

Application Tips

- Check how much money you're eligible for before planning what you are going to apply for
- Be detailed and specific: outline exactly what you want, give the Board the full story
- e.g., you want to hire a karaoke room which costs £200. But you are asking members to pay £3 to go to towards part of that cost, and you will be using £50 of your subs. Meaning that you're only asking the board for £100 out of this £200.
- Link it to your aims and objectives – demonstrate how this money will help you meet your targets for the year
- Include links/your research into your costings – show that you've done everything you can to get the best deal possible
- Spend time on your application – do not leave it to the last minute!
- Contact the Societies Team if you want someone to help you with your application: whilst we sit on Societies Board, we act as an advisory role and do not have voting power, so we are available to help you.
- Explore other ways of funding this: it's never a bad idea to explore other sources of money to help fund certain equipment or activities. Check out our Sponsorships section on the committee hub. By showing that you are using other sources of income, you are being proactive and not just relying on this fund.

After you have applied

Decision making process

The Societies Board meet up, review, and allocate the funding. They will also look at the quality of your application when they make their decision. If your application is not clear what you'll be using the funding for, you are unlikely to get funding.

As the Board is made up of students who are society members themselves who will vote on funding allocations and collectively make decisions. As they are society members themselves, they cannot add any more information nor have voting power to any application submitted by their society to ensure the decision remains unbiased.

Decisions are made through a simple majority vote. You can read more about the societies board and how it works on the QMSU website.

Finding out your outcome

Once Societies Board has made their decisions, an email will be sent out to all applicants with a spreadsheet outlining if their bid has been successful or not – make sure you read the 'Money Allocated' column, not the 'Money Requested' column!

If your bid is successful

- The email will contain information on how to spend this allocated money (it is a similar process to the expense claims procedure), and the spreadsheet will also detail if there are any conditions attached to the funding including your spending deadline. You may get a follow up email from a member of staff asking for any documents we need to make your event/project go ahead – for example risk assessments and budget plans.
- The money itself will be transferred into your society's Grants Account, so when you start using it and want to claim back from it, make sure you are requesting to have the money reimbursed by your Grants Account and not your subs account.

If your bid was unsuccessful

- Have a read through the comments on the spreadsheet which will detail why your bid was not successful. You are welcome to get further information about why it was rejected from the Societies Team by emailing su-societies@qmul.ac.uk

Appeals

If your funding application is not approved, you will receive a reason why. If the reason is not clear you can request further information from the Student Engagement Team on su-societies@qmul.ac.uk or by coming in for a meeting. Sometimes applications are rejected if it was not clear enough what your group was going to do with the money. Again, you're welcome to get some feedback from the Student Engagement Team on how to improve the application. Please don't resubmit the exact same application – if it didn't get approved in the first place, it's unlikely to get approved without changes.

If, after speaking to the Student Engagement Team about the reasons why your application was rejected, you are still not satisfied with outcome you can appeal the decision by contacting an Executive Officer.
The Executive Team will then make a judgement on whether Societies Board made a fair judgement on their decision: you cannot use appeals to submit further information that was not on your initial application.

You can always resubmit an application in a later round, taking into consideration the comments that were provided to you.

Funding can only be spent on what it was awarded for. Any money unspent by the set deadline will be recalled and allocated back to further funding rounds.

Frequently Asked Questions

Writing our application

There is an example grant form application uploaded on the committee hub for groups to look at if they are unsure about how to write an application.

We do not know our society's aims & objectives

It is listed in your society handover document that you received over the summer: if you can't find it anymore, please contact su-societies@qmul.ac.uk.

We want to apply for portering but don't know how much that will be

Email the Societies Team on su-societies@qmul.ac.uk for a quote but if you're not sure we will go through the applications before we send to Societies Board to read and we will make an estimate for you.

Funding Allocation

What has been successfully funded in the past?

- The most impressive applications we have seen are those who have provided a full budget plan of what they want to buy, and how the fund plays a role in that – we have a blank budget sheet you can use and submit in your application. These budget plans map out different scenarios, and clearly demonstrates exactly how much it would help them.
- Good applications also show that the society has a desire to grow and offer more for their members. For example, we have had performance societies who offer weekly beginners and intermediate classes but wanted to offer performance level classes for those who are more advanced. Whilst funding cannot be used for their usual classes, the funding helped them find an instructor to deliver a special series of advanced classes.

Is there a chance we will get less money than we have requested for?

- To be able to give more societies money, you may find that Societies Board decides on only subsiding costs for things rather than fully covering it. For example, a society may request £200 to pay for 20 tickets to an external event. If Societies Board does not have £200 to give, they may only give them £100. Therefore, it is important that you've modelled different scenarios of how you plan to spend things, with and without the fund. Remember to not spent or promise any money until you have received the funding decision.

What are the main reasons applications get rejected?

The Grant Fund is competitive, and this can mean that some societies get some of the funding they wanted, or they may get rejected.

Some reasons why groups get rejected that groups should bear in mind are:

- It was a late application
- The society is applying for more money than they are eligible (though Board may allocate the society the maximum amount they can get)
- Could not see how it fit in with your society's aims & objectives
- The society wanted to use it for a charity event: this fund cannot cover anything that is not for the purpose of the society.
- Felt like it was only benefitting a small proportion of your members – the fund should be to boost the experience of all your members. Exceptions may be made if you're sending a team on competitions, but it's more likely that they'll agree to subsidise the costs but not completely cover it.
- It was not sustainable (e.g., asked for plastic cutlery and flyers to promote only one event)
- Lacked information/too vague/not a lot of research was done when submitting the application: whilst you can have some flexibility in dates, you need to show that you've done your research and know what this project/event will look like.

Spending your fund money

What we wanted to buy has now become more expensive! Can we get more money?

Unfortunately, Societies Board allocates every single penny, so there will be none left after it is all allocated. Because of this, make sure that you account for all costs such as delivery. You may request for more money, but it will mean it will reduce the overall pot for the next round: to do this email su-societies@qmul.ac.uk.

What we wanted to buy ended up being cheaper, can we use the money on something else?

No. Funding can only be spent on what it was awarded for. Anything left will be recalled so it can be bid for again in future rounds. When listing what you want to purchase, list the item's cost before VAT as societies are exempt from paying VAT (VAT is covered in Finance Training).

My plans have changed, can I spend the money on something else?

No. Funding can only be spent on what it was awarded for. Exceptions can be made if they are small changes (e.g. Video Gaming asking money for a specific game, but then later asks if they can use on another game) – if you are planning to purchase something that is different to what was outlined in your application, please consult the Societies Team first on su-societies@qmul.ac.uk.

Can our money be taken away?

Only if you missed your spending deadline. Once you are given the money, we will not take it away from you before your spending deadline, even if you applied in Round 1 for an event that is happening in April.

When is the latest we can spend the money?

All grant funding across the Students' Union needs to be spent by 31st July 2026 as this is the end of our financial year. Any unspent money will be recalled.

Can we request to change our spending deadline?

If the money is for an event/activity that has been delayed, email su-societies@qmul.ac.uk with proof that this has been delayed and we will work with you to set a new deadline.

Additional resources

Check out the finance training for more tips and tricks.

If you have any other questions – now or after you've submitted your application, you can contact the Societies Team on su-societies@qmul.ac.uk. Please note that it may take us a few days to get back to you.

Good luck with your application!