

Bursary policy

Institute for Optimum Nutrition

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Institute for Optimum Nutrition (ION) is committed to training highly qualified Nutritional Therapists who can empower individuals to take control of their health. The Institute's vision is to promote optimum nutrition for all throughout life, and its mission is to educate and inspire, making personalised nutrition the foundation of health for all.
- 1.2 The principal purpose of the bursary scheme is to ensure that talent, passion, and potential are not hindered by financial constraints. By providing financial support, ION aims to help students who may face barriers to attending education, enabling them to access a qualification at ION.
- 1.3 In addition to providing financial assistance, the bursary scheme aims to foster collaboration with external companies and organisations within the nutrition industry, expanding opportunities for bursary support for students.

2. Purpose and scope of this policy

- 2.1 This policy outlines the principles and procedures for administering the bursary scheme, which provides financial support to eligible students. The bursaries are funded either through contributions raised by the Institute or through external sponsorships from companies or organisations. In the case of external sponsorship, additional selection requirements may be applied as specified by the sponsor.
- 2.2 This policy provides guidance to prospective students regarding bursaries available through ION and the process by which these funds are awarded.
- 2.3 This policy applies to all ION employees responsible for administering the bursary scheme, external partners, and any prospective students applying for or in receipt of financial support from ION.
- 2.4 This policy is non-contractual and may be updated from time to time to reflect codes of practice and overall effectiveness in helping to deliver ION's strategic objectives.

3. Roles and responsibilities

- 3.1 The Bursary Panel is responsible for internally monitoring and reviewing this policy annually, as well as monitoring the impact of financial support awarded.
- 3.2 The Bursary Panel makes decisions on which students will be awarded a bursary based on eligibility criteria outlined in section 8 of this policy. The Finance Officer oversees the implementation and administration of the bursary scheme.

- 3.3 The eligibility criteria for financial support are recommended by the Bursary Panel to the Finance, Audit and Technology Committee for approval and are provided to the Education Committee for information.
- 3.4 The Board of Trustees will oversee the effectiveness of financial support through its monitoring of progress against ION's strategic objectives.

4. Types of bursaries

- 4.1 ION offers bursaries to support students with the cost of their tuition fees. These may cover the full tuition fee or a partial amount, depending on the level of financial support available at the time of the bursary application.
- 4.2 Details of available bursaries are published on the ION website.

5. Funding sources

- 5.1 ION-funded bursaries: funds raised directly by the Institute through fundraising events, donations, or other initiatives.
- 5.2 Externally sponsored bursaries: funds contributed by external companies or organisations. Sponsors may attach specific conditions or criteria to their contributions, which will be clearly outlined during the selection process.

6. Principles of bursary

- 6.1 Information about available bursaries, including eligibility criteria and funding amounts, is published on the ION website.
- 6.2 ION will conduct equality impact assessments to ensure that the bursaries serve a legitimate aim. These assessments will be repeated annually when the Board of Trustees reviews the effectiveness of the bursary scheme against ION's strategic objectives.
- 6.3 Students whose tuition fees are fully or partially paid by a sponsor not related to ION bursary scheme will not be eligible for a bursary. If a student secures sponsorship during their studies, their eligibility for bursary support will cease from that point onward.

7. Deadlines and timings

- 7.1 The deadlines and response dates for bursaries are published on the ION website.
- 7.2 ION reserves the right to amend any bursary deadlines depending on ION's operational needs and resourcing considerations. Any changes to deadlines will be clearly communicated to eligible candidates.

8. Eligibility criteria

- 8.1 ION's bursary eligibility criteria align with relevant laws, including equality, diversity, and non-discrimination regulations, particularly under the Equality Act 2010 (UK). The criteria must be fair, transparent, and non-discriminatory, ensuring that financial aid is awarded based on financial need, merit, or other justifiable criteria without bias.
- 8.2 To be eligible for a bursary, applicants must meet the following general eligibility requirements:
 - 8.2.1 Applicants must have applied for a course covered by the bursary scheme, as detailed on the ION website.

- 8.2.2 Applicants must meet the course entry requirements and have received an offer to study from ION's Admissions team.
- 8.2.3 Applicants must be UK residents without any immigration restriction on the length of their stay.
- 8.2.4 Applicants must demonstrate a household income below £43,000 for partial funding and below £36,000 for full funding.
- 8.2.5 Applicants must comply with the Institute's code of conduct and academic policies.
- 8.3 If the bursary is sponsored by a company or external organisation, additional eligibility requirements may apply, provided they comply with equality laws and do not result in unjustifiable discrimination. Full eligibility criteria relevant to each bursary are available on ION's website.
- 8.4 Students currently enrolled in an ION course are not eligible to apply for a bursary unless they are applying for a separate, subsequent programme.
- 8.5 Students who fall under the conditions outlined in section 6.3 of this policy are not eligible for a bursary.
- 8.6 Some bursaries may be specifically aimed at individuals from underrepresented backgrounds in higher education, including but not limited to:
 - 8.6.1 First-generation university students
 - 8.6.2 Students with disabilities
 - 8.6.3 Ethnic minorities or other groups facing systemic barriers
 - 8.6.4 These criteria must comply with positive action provisions under the Equality Act 2010, ensuring they address genuine disadvantage rather than unlawfully discriminating.

9. Application process

- 9.1 Applicants should review the bursary eligibility criteria outlined in this policy and on the ION website to ensure they meet the requirements before applying.
- 9.2 The ION's Admissions team will provide a bursary application form to applicants who:
 - 9.2.1 Have received an offer to study on an eligible course.
 - 9.2.2 Believe they meet the bursary eligibility criteria.
- 9.3 The application must include:
 - 9.3.1 Applicant's personal details.
 - 9.3.2 Proof of financial circumstances (e.g. household income evidence, tax credits, or benefits statements).
 - 9.3.3 A personal statement explaining why they are applying for the bursary and how it will support their career in the nutrition industry.
 - 9.3.4 Any additional documentation required by ION or the bursary sponsor.
- 9.4 Applicants must complete and submit the official bursary application form along with all required supporting documents by the specified deadline, as outlined on the ION website. Late applications may not be considered.

10. Selection process

- 10.1 The Bursary Panel will assess applications based on financial need, eligibility criteria, and available funding.
- 10.2 If the bursary is sponsored by an external company, the sponsor may nominate one representative to join the Bursary Panel and participate in the selection process.
- 10.3 Where bursary funding is limited, recipients will be selected on a competitive basis. All applicants who meet the basic eligibility criteria will be considered. The Bursary Panel recognises that applicants have diverse skills, attributes, and experiences, and will assess each application holistically and fairly.
- 10.4 If no suitably qualified candidates are identified, ION reserves the right not to allocate all available bursaries.
- 10.5 Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application in writing by email within the timeframe specified on the ION website.
- 10.6 Successful applicants will receive details of their bursary award, including the amount granted and terms of support.
- 10.7 Applicants must formally accept the award, agree to the general terms and conditions and sign their bursary agreement by the deadline specified in the offer (normally within 10 working days of receiving the offer). If the offer is not accepted within the specified timeframe, ION reserves the right to reallocate the bursary to a reserve candidate.

11. Bursary payment

- 11.1 Bursary awards will be applied directly toward the recipient's tuition fees and will not be paid to the student as a cash amount.
- 11.2 The bursary amount will be deducted from the student's tuition fee in accordance with the agreed payment schedule outlined in the bursary agreement.
- 11.3 If the bursary covers only part of the tuition fees, the student will be responsible for paying the remaining balance. Payment must be made according to the schedule specified in the bursary agreement.
- 11.4 If a bursary recipient withdraws, suspends, or defers their studies, their bursary award may be revoked. In such cases, the student may be required to repay part of the bursary award, as stipulated in their bursary agreement's terms and conditions. Any outstanding tuition fees will remain the student's responsibility, and ION reserves the right to take legal action to recover unpaid amounts.
- 11.5 Bursaries awarded on a multi-year basis are subject to an annual review. Recipients must meet any renewal criteria as outlined in their bursary agreement.
- 11.6 ION reserves the right to withdraw bursary support if a recipient fails to meet the agreed conditions.

12. Ongoing requirements

- 12.1 Bursary recipients must maintain good academic standing and comply with ION's code of conduct and academic policies. Failure to do so may result in the withdrawal of bursary support.
- 12.2 Bursary recipients must notify ION of any changes in their circumstances that may affect their eligibility. Failure to disclose relevant changes may result in the withdrawal of bursary support, and the student may be required to repay any bursary funds received after their change in circumstances.

13. Appeal process

- 13.1 Applicants who are unsuccessful in their bursary application may submit a written appeal within 10 working days of receiving the decision.
- 13.2 Appeals may be submitted on one of the following grounds:
 - 13.2.1 The applicant can provide evidence that the Bursary Panel did not consider all the information provided in their application when processing the application in line with the requirement for the selection process.
 - 13.2.2 The applicant believes they were treated unfairly due to bias or prejudice.
- 13.3 Appeals should be submitted in writing to complaints@ion.ac.uk, copied in studentfinance@ion.ac.uk and must include:
 - 13.3.1 Applicant's name
 - 13.3.2 Applicant's address
 - 13.3.3 A written statement clearly outlining the grounds for appeal, along with any appropriate documentation to support the claim.
- 13.4 Applicants who are concerned about how their bursary application was handled may use the Complaints Procedure outlined in the ION Student Regulations Handbook.
- 13.5 Current students with concerns regarding their bursary may also use the Complaints Procedure outlined in the ION Student Regulations Handbook.
- 13.6 Appeals will be reviewed by an independent panel, and the final decision will be communicated in writing by email.

14. Process for sponsoring a bursary

- 14.1 Companies interested in sponsoring a bursary can do so by contacting marketing@ion.ac.uk. In their inquiry, they should specify the purpose of the sponsorship, any additional eligibility criteria beyond those outlined in this policy, and any other conditions to be considered.
- 14.2 ION's Marketing team provides details about the bursary scheme, including available funding options and potential benefits for the sponsor.
- 14.3 The company confirms its level of financial commitment, whether it is funding a full or partial bursary, and any specific preferences regarding eligibility criteria or applicant selection.
- 14.4 The Bursary Panel reviews the sponsorship proposal. On review, they can either reject a sponsorship if they believe that the proposal does not align with ION's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, or approve the proposal.

- 14.5 If approved, a formal agreement is drawn up detailing the sponsorship amount, duration, terms of contribution, and any expectations regarding reporting or collaboration. Both parties must sign the agreement to finalise the sponsorship arrangement.
- 14.6 The company transfers the agreed funds to ION, which will then be used to offset tuition fees for eligible students.
- 14.7 ION allocates the bursary based on its selection process, standard eligibility criteria, and any additional criteria agreed with the sponsor.
- 14.8 Where applicable, ION will provide sponsors with anonymised reports on how their contributions have been allocated and the impact of their support.
- 14.9 Sponsors may nominate one representative from their company to join the Bursary Panel during the applicant selection process.
- 14.10 If agreed, sponsors may be acknowledged on the ION website or in other communications.

15. Monitoring and reporting

- 15.1 The academic progress of bursary recipients will be monitored to ensure they continue to meet the eligibility criteria.
- 15.2 The Institute will provide sponsors with anonymised reports on the allocation and impact of their contributions, where applicable.
- 15.3 The Bursary Panel will be responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and for reporting its findings to the Finance, Audit and Technology Committee at the end of each academic year.
- 15.4 Data on bursaries awarded will be reported to the Education Committee, which is responsible for monitoring our access and participation goals in line with ION's strategic objectives. The committee's findings, along with any recommendations for remedial action, will be presented to the Board of Trustees.

16. Confidentiality and data protection

- 16.1 All application materials and supporting documents will be handled in compliance with the Institute's policy for data protection and processing.
- 16.2 Personal information will only be shared with external sponsors where necessary and with the applicant's prior consent.