

Vacation Scholarships for Undergraduates

Background

The Vacation Scholarship Scheme is open to eligible students from low-income households undertaking a degree course at an eligible Scottish Higher Education Institution (HEI) who wish to develop skills and knowledge beyond their course curriculum by undertaking a programme of independent research during the summer vacation. The scheme aims to encourage students to learn how to design and execute a small-scale research project gaining experience that will be of value whether they choose to pursue further (postgraduate) study or enter the workplace.

Criteria for support

To be considered eligible for the scheme applying students and prospective supervisors must be able to satisfy the following criteria.

Applicant (student) eligibility

1. At the time of applying applicants must be:
 - a. An undergraduate student at one of the eligible Scottish Higher Education Institutions listed under §2; and
 - b. Enrolled for the entirety of their degree at that institution or have transferred from a Scottish college to the eligible institution after completing a HNC or HND; and
 - c. Either:
 - in the third year of a four-year degree, **OR**
 - in the third or fourth year of a five-year degree **OR**
 - in the second year of a three-year degree (e.g. BA Nursing, BA Acting, BA Production and Design etc.)Part-time students must be at an equivalent stage of studies to the above.
2. The eligible Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are: University of Aberdeen, Abertay University, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands & Islands, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling, University of Strathclyde, The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the University of the West of Scotland.
3. Applicants are required to be ordinarily resident in Scotland (under the definition employed by the Student Awards Agency Scotland) at the time of applying, i.e. have their **permanent** home located in Scotland and have either:
 - a. undertaken **at least two full years of secondary education in Scotland** (full-time college education is also acceptable, but time spent at university is not).

OR

 - b. be able to demonstrate (to the Trustees satisfaction) **a substantial connection with Scotland** on the basis of factors such as residency, education (excluding university level education) family or working life. Applicants wishing to be considered eligible based on a substantial connection must contact the Trust to confirm their eligibility **before** applying.
4. Applicants must possess the right to work in the UK at the time of applying. The Trust is unable to award Carnegie Vacation Scholarships to students whose immigration status prohibits them from taking up employment.
5. Applicants must reside in a low-income household and all applications will be subject to a financial means

test (the indicative thresholds for support employed by the Trust can be viewed in the Annex at the end of these regulations).

6. A student may only be awarded a single Carnegie Vacation Scholarship during their studies.
7. Students on intercalated years forming part of a medical degree will be considered eligible provided they are able to meet the above criteria.

Project eligibility

8. Carnegie Vacation Scholarships are to support students who intend to carry out a discrete research project, either at the institution they are attending (Home university) or at another research organisation (Host Institution). Projects that are not laboratory based may involve work in libraries or museums, visits to fieldwork sites, stakeholder organisations or to any other location that holds resources, materials or data relevant to the subject of the proposed research.
9. The topic and nature of the research will vary according to the field of study, but it should engage the candidate in a programme of personal research over the period specified in the application.
10. Project proposals must focus on a clear research question(s) or research aims and should provide the student with sufficient scope for the development of ideas and initiative as well as research and analytical skills. The minimum length of a Vacation Scholarship Project is four weeks and the maximum length twelve weeks.
11. The following activities are **ineligible for support** under this scheme:
 - a. projects that form part of the student's normal degree course (e.g. final year dissertation)
 - b. participation in group expeditions
 - c. projects that consist solely of a literature review
 - d. work placements (whether paid or unpaid) or a volunteering opportunity
 - e. attendance at summer schools, language schools or any other training course.
12. The project description within the application form and the research proposal must be written by the applying student. Applicants will be disqualified if a project proposal appears to have been authored by the supervising academic, any other individual or entirely by Generative AI technologies.

Project supervision

13. The project must be supervised by an academic researcher at the institution at which the applicant is enrolled (the Home Institution). A supervisor may be a group leader, lecturer, reader or professor (including emeritus) but not a graduate teaching assistant or hourly paid tutor. Supervisors are permitted to enlist post-doctoral research assistants or postgraduate research students in the day-to-day supervision of the project.
14. The supervisor is expected to be familiar with the applying student's academic record and with the topic of the proposed project. Supervisors are asked at the time of application to comment on the suitability of the project and on their own availability and willingness to supervise the student's progress during the period of award. It is the supervisor's responsibility to ensure that the project is completed within the timescale agreed at the time of applying.
15. Supervisors may only endorse one Carnegie Vacation Scholarship applicant in a given academic year.
16. Where an application is successful, the supervisor must ensure that the student will:
 - a. have access to the necessary equipment, consumables or any other resource needed to conduct their research project; and
 - b. receive all required training to operate said equipment and/or undertake the proposed research

- activities; and
 - c. satisfy all statutory requirements (including, where applicable, gaining ethics committee approval, obtaining animal licences and meeting the requirements of regulatory authorities) for the work they will undertake, and
 - d. follow the relevant health and safety policies of their institution and where applicable any Host Institution.
17. When a project is to be conducted at a different research organisation (the Host Institution) to the applicant's own university/HEI, the applicant must be supervised on-site by an academic researcher employed by the Host Institution. In such instances, the supervisor at the applicant's Home Institution must ensure that suitable supervisory arrangements are in place at the host organisation and that Health & Safety or any other statutory requirements will be met. Regarding fieldwork, applicants are expected to work under the supervision of a local researcher or research team and adhere to their institutions regulations.

Application process

The Carnegie Trust will only accept applications submitted through our online portal which is accessible via the Trust's website. The application process is divided into two sections; the first must be completed by the student after which the project supervisor is invited to complete and submitted the second part. Please note that an application will only be deemed complete once both parts have been received.

The on-line application portal will open approximately 10 weeks before the **closing date of 13th February 2026, 5PM**. The on-line application form will be available through this link:

<https://www.carnegie-trust.org/award-schemes/vacation-scholarships/>

Applications are assessed to ensure they are eligible and of a fundable standard. When assessing applications the following factor are considered:

- a. Academic standing of the student
- b. Quality of the project
- c. Feasibility of the project

Outcomes of the selection process will be communicated to applicants, supervisors and institutions by early April.

NOTE: Awards are non-transferable between students or projects.

Scholarship value

Carnegie Vacation Scholarships are calculated using the Scottish Living Wage rate. Consequently, the value of awards increases each year in line with adjustments to this hourly rate. Prior to selecting the successful projects for 2026, the Trust will check for any increase in the Scottish Living Wage rate and adjust the scholarship value accordingly. Presently, the hourly rate is **£12.60**, which equates to a Scholarship value of **£441 per week** based on a 35-hour full-time week.

Please note that while scholarship value is calculated based on a full-time 35-hour working week, the research activity does not necessarily need to be completed on a full-time basis. Applicants are expected to indicate the duration of the project in full-time weeks, however, the research may be undertaken non-consecutively or part-time over a longer period. For example, an applicant may wish to undertake a project equivalent to 4 weeks (20 days) of full-time activity but complete the research over an 8-week period, which would equate to 0.5 FTE. In this case the applicant would indicate a project duration of 4 weeks but provide start and end dates spanning an 8-week period. For further guidance on this please contact the Trust at Vacation-Scholarships@carnegie-trust.org.

It should also be noted that scholarships can only be employed purely as stipends to cover the living costs (accommodation, travel, subsistence) of successful students while undertaking the research project. No additional funding is available for other costs or items such as equipment, consumables, or overheads. The host HEI must cover all the research costs (e.g. consumables, equipment, or any overheads) necessary for the student to conduct the proposed research.

Reporting

Students are required to submit an end report on their project to the Trust in early September using a supplied template. Further details regarding this will be provided to successful applicants.

Managing the awards

Vacation Scholarships are **not** paid directly to the student by the Carnegie Trust. Instead, the student's HEI is expected to distribute the scholarship to the recipient at regular intervals (as agreed with the student) over the period of the scholarship.

Reimbursement of distributed funds will be made directly by the Trust to the HEI on receipt of an invoice. A single invoice should be issued for all Vacation Scholarships held by students at the same HEI once all project end reports have been received.

A scholarship may be cancelled if a student fails to demonstrate satisfactory progress during the project period, abandons it, or fails to take up the scholarship.

Should a project be cancelled or abandoned after the start date, the amount invoiced to the Trust will be adjusted based on the number of full weeks completed by the student.

Revised July 2025



Annex: Indicative Thresholds for Support

| Household | Dependents | Indicative Income Thresholds |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Single person household | No children | £30,000 |
| | 1 child | £35,000 |
| | 2 children | £40,000 |
| | 3 children | £45,000 |
| | Per additional child | £5,000 per additional child |
| Couple | No children | £35,000 |
| | 1 child | £40,000 |
| | 2 children | £45,000 |
| | 3 children | £50,000 |
| | Per additional child | £5,000 per additional child |