



Department
for Education

Urgent Capital Support (UCS)

How to apply: advice for applicants

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1. Things to know before you start

1.1 Introduction


This guide is for academy trusts, not in receipt of [School Condition Allocation](#), and sixth-form colleges that want to apply for funding assistance to address **urgent** building condition issues that threaten the closure of the whole, or a significant part of the school.


Applications are subject to a financial assessment, using the core financial returns shared with the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). For all academy applications, financial health is considered at academy trust level and not against the individual school. Please note that most successful applications will be funded through loan arrangements. You can see more about our current [loan arrangements](#) on our website. In addition, where it is determined that a trust can afford to fund the work via reserves, they will be expected to fund urgent projects independently, and are likely to have their applications declined.

In the event of an emergency, we would expect the institution to have checked the position with its insurers to see whether a claim is possible or with the Department for Education's academies Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA), if it is a member (see section 3 for more details).


If you wish to apply for funding, you should first familiarise yourself with the information in this document. It explains what Urgent Capital Support (UCS) is, who is eligible to apply, what types of projects are eligible and the criteria against which applications are assessed. Applications can be made at any point throughout the year.

1.2 Who can apply for Urgent Capital Support?

Eligible to apply?	Eligibility details
	<p><u>Academies and sixth-form colleges that are eligible for main round CIF funding</u>: Applications will only be accepted for schools that are open as academies (includes free schools) or sixth-form colleges.</p>

Eligible to apply?	Eligibility details
	<p>Voluntary aided non-diocesan schools, not part of a group receiving school condition allocation funding are also eligible.</p> <p>A signed academy order or proposed conversion does not make a school eligible for urgent capital until it is fully operational as an academy.</p> <p>Please note if you are an academy or college in receipt of funds or support from another capital programme (e.g. free schools, Priority Schools Building Programme), please contact your Project Director in the first instance to avoid duplication of works and cost.</p>
	<p><u>Schools in receipt of School Condition Allocation (SCA):</u> If you are part of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) that receives a formulaic school condition allocation (SCA) you are not eligible to apply for Urgent Capital Support. The SCA is to be used strategically across all the schools in the MAT. MATs in receipt of SCA are responsible for funding all capital maintenance and emergency needs across academies in their estate¹. However, where a MAT takes on a new school (which is CIF eligible) during the year and is not yet in receipt of SCA for that school, it will remain eligible to apply for UCS for that school, until such time that they receive school condition allocation for that school. The trusts finances as a whole will be considered as part of the application assessment process.</p> <p>As autonomous institutions with responsibility for managing their own finances, we expect MATs to manage this through</p>

¹ Enrolment in SCA is automatic for larger MATs. MATs cannot choose to opt out of receipt of SCA and opt in to the CIF bidding round instead.

Eligible to apply?	Eligibility details
	<p>a combination of their annual condition funding, reserves and insurance arrangements.</p> <p>In highly exceptional circumstances (for example, where there is a threat of closure, and all other routes have been exhausted), the department may work with MATs to identify an appropriate solution for urgent needs. MATs can follow the guidance on capital funding for MATs.</p>
	<p><u>Local Authority Maintained Schools:</u> SCA funding is provided to local authorities (LAs) as the responsible body for community schools, foundation schools and voluntary controlled schools in the LA area. The LA has to decide how to spend across its estate and is expected to use SCA strategically amongst all the schools for which it is the responsible body. LAs are expected to find funding for emergencies from their own budgets and the relevant combination of annual SCA grant payments, reserves and insurance arrangements. Any group in receipt of SCA is not eligible for UCS, unless the institution with the emergency has recently joined the group and does not yet receive SCA.</p>

1.3 What constitutes ‘urgent’ capital funding?

Applications can only be considered from eligible institutions where there is a genuine need for urgent support that cannot wait until the next CIF main round. The application will need to provide evidence:

- of a significant health and safety risk in relation to the building condition
- that the condition issue has already resulted in, or represents an imminent threat of school closure

- that the condition issue has resulted in or risks imminent closure of a significant part of the school building which would prevent the curriculum from being delivered
- that the urgent works cannot be funded by the trust independently or through a [CIF loan](#)

We will not consider retrospective applications, where the work is already underway or completed. We also expect trusts to evidence whether the issue could be resolved through RPA or their insurance provider.

Condition issues that may be in scope for funding include:

- structural issues
- urgent health and safety (H&S) or insurance compliance issues
- urgent asbestos issue
- fire protection
- leaking roofs
- boiler and pipework failure
- electrical issues

Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and applicants are able to specify the detail of their urgent capital need(s) within their application.

Applications may not be considered for funding if:

- the works could be addressed from revenue maintenance funding or trust reserves
- the works are already captured through a successful main CIF round application or other DfE-funded capital programmes unless the situation has deteriorated into a closure situation
- there is an operational solution that can be implemented pending an application to the main CIF round. For example, where there is surplus capacity within the school and classes could be timetabled in different parts of the building
- the application is to cover cost overruns associated with projects previously given grant funding²
- the application does not demonstrate cost effectiveness or value for money
- the works are covered by insurance or RPA

² Where this applies, we recommend applicants contact the grant team to discuss in the first instance.

- the works include longer-term solutions rather than the immediate problem to be solved
- subject to a financial assessment it is felt that the trust should be in a position to meet the costs³
- it is a retrospective application – if an application is received prior to essential work having commenced the application will be considered against the criteria. If the application is received after works have commenced, it will be deemed retrospective
- it is an expansion project – these are not eligible for urgent capital funds and should be submitted to the main CIF round

1.4 Summary of funding streams available to schools

Academies and sixth-form colleges are expected to manage their funds appropriately and plan contingencies to manage any unexpected issues. We expect responsible bodies to have a good understanding of the issues presented by the condition of their estate and be in a position to plan and prioritise the works accordingly. Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) and the main annual round of CIF or SCA (depending on eligibility) are the correct routes to address these issues. Please visit [School Capital Funding Allocations](#) for detailed guidance – summary below.

Route	Details
Devolved Formula Capital (DFC)	All schools are provided with a devolved formula capital (DFC) allocation, calculated as a lump sum plus a per pupil rate. DFC's primary purpose is to provide a source of capital funding for schools to address minor capital and condition issues and it can be saved for up to three years, or pooled with other schools, in order to fund larger projects.
Condition Improvement Fund (CIF)	The CIF's core priority is supporting condition projects, keeping academy and sixth-form college buildings safe and in good working order. CIF funding is for smaller MATs, single academy trusts and sixth-form colleges and is allocated on the basis of a bid-based process.

³ Apart from in exceptional circumstances, trusts are expected to make a contribution to the cost either directly or through loan repayments. We review financial returns to understand the best option for each application. See section 2.1 'project finances' for further details.

Route	Details
School Condition Allocations (SCA)	School Condition Allocations (SCA) are funding for organisations responsible for a number of schools, such as local authorities and large MATs.

2. Application process

2.1 Application requirements

Detailed guidance on what information is required can be found in the [application document](#) itself.

Project details

You will be required to provide sufficient evidence and a strong rationale for why your project requires urgent financial support as part of your application. In all cases, you will need to provide an independent report from a suitably qualified professional, setting out the condition, the urgency of the situation and a minimum of three competitively priced quotes or tenders. The table below provides prompts for what we would expect to see in your application along with supplementary evidence required.

<u>Project categories and details required</u>	
Category A: Structural issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• provide a structural engineer's report of the affected area from an appropriately qualified professional⁴• demonstrate how you have considered the ongoing teaching and learning within your school pending a bid for urgent capital. The extent of the disruption will be considered as part of the assessment process• provide site and floor plans, which highlight the affected areas and illustrating the impact of safety restrictions
Category B: Urgent health and safety compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• non-urgent issues should form part of a bid to the main round of CIF. We will not support applications for H&S improvements that are deemed a statutory duty of the responsible body.• provide a report from an appropriately qualified professional⁵ setting out the specific issue to be addressed, its impact and the reason for the urgency of resolution.

⁴ The trust/college needs to satisfy itself that the chosen professional has sufficient technical expertise to carry out the works.

⁵ See Footnote 4 – same principle applies

<u>Project categories and details required</u>	
Category C: Asbestos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a recent detailed asbestos report from an appropriately qualified professional⁶ • they will need to include an illustration of the grade of the asbestos and how that is to be managed • this should include clear categorisation of the individual issues and only those that require immediate removal will be considered for funding
Category D: Fire protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a survey from an appropriately qualified independent professional⁷. They will need to clearly illustrate the specific issue to be addressed and the urgency of its resolution. The issues should be prioritised, as only the most urgent will be addressed. • evidence of need must also include communication from the fire authority, giving their view on the fire protection measures at the school, which set out that the building is not safe for occupation. This could be an official email, letter or enforcement notice.
Category E: Leaking roofs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a condition report for the roof from an appropriately qualified and independent professional⁸ • provide evidence of the extent of the disruption caused, the frequency and the impact of the leaks
Category F: Boiler and pipework failure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide a report on the boiler condition from an appropriately qualified Mechanical Engineer • heating or boiler replacement requests will only be considered for boilers which have failed and are beyond economical repair, and where this is no alternative or back-up boilers • the application will need to illustrate the extent of the disruption, the specific areas affected and the proportion of the school the affected areas represent

⁶ See Footnote 4 – same principle applies

⁷ See Footnote 4 – same principle applies

⁸ See Footnote 4 – same principle applies

<u>Project categories and details required</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • replacement boilers will frequently require consideration of asbestos. The application should illustrate that this has been appropriately identified, the requirement for its removal illustrated and how it has been costed and scheduled • these applications should consider heating systems as a whole and be mindful of the impact of any changes that improvements to component parts make. This may help avoid situations such as new boilers not working because of leaking pipework or incompatible control systems • you should model energy usage and likely savings to support any application for such projects
Category G: Electrical issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an appropriately qualified Electrical Engineer to provide a report of what is needed • they will need to use the accepted classifications of urgency of issues such as C1, C2 and C3. The issues need to be split in this way and only the most urgent will be considered • electrical issues can also frequently require consideration of asbestos. The application should illustrate that this has been appropriately identified, the requirement for its removal illustrated and how it has been costed and scheduled

Project finances

The finance section of the application form is in two parts:

- Institution's finances
- Project costs

Institution finances

The default funding model for urgent capital support projects is to provide a loan. You may also be required to contribute from trust reserves. In exceptional circumstances, grants may be offered, but this is unlikely in most cases.

For academies, financial assessment for all urgent applications will be considered at academy trust level, not individual school level. We expect trusts to allocate resources strategically to address urgent condition issues. This may include reprioritising non-urgent works elsewhere in the trust.

As part of your application, you should provide details about your academies and trust's finances, including reserve/contingency funds and details of any outstanding loans. Please note, as part of the assessment process, we review the latest copies of your core financial returns shared with the ESFA. However, recognising that these documents do not always reflect the current financial situation and therefore it is vital that you provide up to date financial information. This should be in the form of a revised budget forecast, which you should attach with your application. There should be no need to do this if you have just formally submitted your budget forecast return to the ESFA. Please do also provide written commentary to accompany new financial data and provide details of reserves already committed including the nature of the commitment for example where a contract has been signed.

The same principles apply for sixth-form colleges and eligible VA schools.

If it is determined that the trust can afford to fund the works from reserves, the application will be declined.

Project costs

Articulating your project finances, making it clear how it is deemed value for money, is a critical part of your application and likely to increase its chances of being approved. It must be evident that these works are being prioritised over non-urgent investments and budgets reallocated on that basis. Please ensure that you take the time to complete this section of the application, providing as much detail as you can and making reference to quotes/tenders received and professional survey/report recommendations. You must also supply at least three competitively priced quotes/tenders to enable us to make a value for money judgement. All quotations and tenders should be for the same scope of works.

Cost plans should also be realistic about the level of fees and allowances. This should be appropriate to the scale and type of the project, and the level of work already undertaken to establish price certainty.

We expect academies to exclude VAT from all project costs in their UCS application. Sixth form colleges and eligible VA schools must include VAT in the project cost, as they cannot reclaim it.

Any cost overruns will be at the expense of the trust/college. Generally, contingency funds will not be considered and should not be included. If the circumstances are exceptional and can be fully justified, we have requested applicants provide a full explanation in the value for money section of the application form. Where there are local features, which may lead to costs being outside of industry benchmarks, you should clearly explain why this is the case and provide supporting evidence.

You may choose to appoint technical advisors to help you develop and deliver the project. Most projects that qualify for funding support are straightforward and do not warrant professional fees charged at a percentage rate. The fees, if required, should be proportionate to the work involved; if used, we do not expect these to be above 10%. Please note that the quantification of staff time or internal re-charges within a trust do not qualify as either professional fees or school contributions.

You will be required to complete the financial template and submit this along with the application form, providing the most up to date financial data for your trust.

Project management

We would expect applicants to have received outline programme plans whilst acquiring quotes/tenders and consulting with potential suppliers on deliverability of schemes. We therefore request applicants provide these details within their application. We also expect applicants to submit detailed risk assessments, ensuring that risks have been adequately identified with appropriate mitigation plans in place.

Project monitoring

If your application is approved, you will be required to complete monthly monitoring returns, providing updates on project progress and spend to date. Failure to comply with the monitoring process may result in payments being stopped.

Project completion

When your application is approved, a proportion of the approved funding will be withheld by the department until after the project has completed and you have provided satisfactory completion documentation. You will be required to fill out a completion form and provide an itemised final account of the project expenditure. Failure to provide the necessary documentation may result in the clawback of any funding provided.

Good Estate Management for Schools (GEMS)

Effectively managing your estate will help you make the most of your resources. You should have the [fundamentals of good estate management](#) to do this.

We expect trusts to have plans for Good estate management for schools in place.

Further information on that is available [here](#).

2.2 Submitting your application

Please complete **all** details on the application form. An incomplete or inaccurate application can delay a decision on whether to approve your funding request.

Please also complete the financial template and submit this along with your application.

The application must be submitted by the responsible body (the academy trust or college) rather than by a professional adviser. You need to:

- submit your application and financial template by email to academy.questions@education.gov.uk
- title your email as follows: **Urgent Capital Support Application – [insert Institution Name]**
- ensure that the size of your email does not exceed 9MB, as anything larger will not be delivered⁹

2.3 Assessment of your application

Your application and all submitted supporting evidence will be assessed against the urgent capital criteria. This is not a competitive process, applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis on merit and awarded on a genuine urgency need basis only. We may contact you for additional information to support your application. Any delays to providing additional information will ultimately delay the assessment of your application and allocation of any approved funding.

2.4 Decisions

Assessment duration varies and is dependent on having a full suite of all the necessary information from the applicant to allow us to assess the application at pace. Additionally, certain applications may require ministerial approval, and may take longer. Decisions are final and there is no appeals process.

You will be notified via letter of the outcome of your application. If your application is successful, the letter will include details of next steps.

⁹ If the application is larger than 9MB, please split the documents and send 2 (or more) emails, ensuring to note (for example) “email 1 of 3” in the subject line or body of the email

If you wish to make a complaint about the way your application has been processed please refer to the Department for Education's complaints procedure -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education/about/complaints-procedure>

2.5 Conditions of Funding

UCS funding may be provided with conditions if it is deemed appropriate.

All successful applicants will be expected to complete regular monitoring returns so that we can track expenditure and progress on the project. If these are not completed funding will be withheld until we receive them.

3. Information library for applicants

- Academies Financial Handbook
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academies-financial-handbook>
- Asbestos in schools
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/asbestos-management-in-schools--2>
- British Standards
- <https://www.bsigroup.com/>
- Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) main round guidance
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/condition-improvement-fund>
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/cdm/2015/summary.htm>
- Funding for schools buildings and land
<https://www.gov.uk/education/funding-for-school-buildings-and-land>
- General Education Health and Safety Advice
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/index.htm>
- Good Estate Management for Schools (GEMS)
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/good-estate-management-for-schools>
- Guide to Essential School Maintenance
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/essential-school-maintenance-a-guide-for-schools>
- Health and Safety in Schools
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-advice-for-schools>
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/>
- Procurement & financial regulations
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/buying-for-schools>
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/managing-public-money>
<https://www.ojec.com/?aspxerrorpath=/thresholds.aspx>
- Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA)
- <https://www.rpaclaimforms.co.uk>
- Emergency response planning
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/emergencies-and-severe-weather-schools-and-early-years-settings>



Department for Education

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