

Policy: Student Support Funds

Date: July 2023

Approved by: Student Support Manager

Signature: F Court

SCOPE

Students on courses that are funded by the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

POLICY STATEMENT

The College is committed to supporting students financially to assist them in achieving their course/programme, supporting them to attend well and prosper in their career and next steps.

The College is responsible for ensuring that adequate quality measures are in place, in line with the Funding Rules.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the appropriate use and distribution of the Student Support Fund. This enables us to ensure the students requiring the most support are prioritised.

AIMS

The policy aims to support students with the costs of their studies by offering financial support with course fees, travel, childcare, and other costs, which may affect their achievement of their programme.

The Student Support Fund cannot assist with tuition fees; other payment options may be available and will need to be discussed with Student Services at the time of enrolment.

OBJECTIVE

To ensure that students' applications to the support fund are assessed in line with the eligibility criteria set out in the policy.

To ensure that students are awarded financial support in line with the amounts and criteria set out in the policy, so this is applied consistently across our student body.

To ensure that students have a right to appeal to any decision made, where their individual circumstances may be taken into consideration.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The College Principal and Executive team are responsible for meeting financial regulations in line with policy.

The Student Support Manager and Student Support Co-Ordinator are responsible for managing and monitoring the use and distribution of the allocation.

The Head of Student Support is responsible for ensuring all those with responsibility for the management of the fund are trained and the work cycles are audited.

The Student Support team are responsible for gathering sufficient evidence as proof of eligibility and processing applications accurately and in line with this policy.

Students are responsible for providing evidence of eligibility and informing Student Support of any change of circumstances, which may affect their award.

Other staff are responsible for being aware of the support available to students and signposting accordingly, providing references or further detail of circumstances where required.

MONITORING PROCESS

The Student Support Fund will be internally audited throughout the academic year to ensure students are awarded in line with the policy.

PROCEDURE

1. Eligibility

- Home students enrolled on an Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) course at Gloucestershire College (as set out in the Tuition Fee Policy)
- In Local Authority Care or Care Leaver (16-18 only)
- Students who are in receipt of income-based benefits or if they are being supported by someone in receipt of income-based benefits. These benefits are:
 - o Income Support
 - o Jobseekers Allowance (income related and contribution based where student is unemployed)
 - o Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
 - o Supported under part VI of the immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - o Child Tax Credit (provided earnings are less than £25,000 per annum)
 - o Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - o Universal Credit (provided earnings are less than £25,000 per annum)
 - o Disability Living Allowance (or the new Personal Independence Payments) **and** Employment Support Allowance (or Universal Credit as a replacement for ESA) in their own right
 - o Working Tax Credit or Disabled Persons Tax Credit (provided earnings are less than £25,000 per annum)
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.
- Students whose gross household income is under £25,000 per year are eligible for a funding package. Household income refers only to adults that have parental responsibility for the students or the income of anyone else who is supporting the student for example, their partner or sibling. Income refers to the income earned from employment only.
- The support fund cannot make awards to those receiving help with travel or childcare costs from Job Centre Plus or a Work Programmed Provider in connection with pre-employment training.

2. Application

- Applications will open on Monday 6th June 2022 and will close on Friday 28th July 2023 (earlier if the funds become exhausted). Applications will be assessed in date-applied order. Our aim is to assess applications within 10 working days.

3. Awards

Band	Criteria
1	Vulnerable students (only those aged 16-18) *
2	Student/being supported by someone in receipt of income-based benefit or household income lower than £19,000
3	Household income between £19,001 - £25,000

*Eligibility listed below

Course costs

- Mandatory course costs are provided by each department. If fees have not already been waived in accordance with the Tuition Fee policy eligible students will receive the following:

Fee type	Awards		
	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3
Material fees	100%	100%	50%
Residential/Events	100%	100%	50%
Exam/Registration	n/a	100%	50%
Kit only (Hair and Beauty)	100%	100%	100%
Uniform only (Catering)	100%	100%	100%

- Funding will not be given for exam re-sits (except in exceptional circumstances).

- If a student withdraws or is withdrawn from a Hair and Beauty course, they will be expected to return their kit to Student Services so it can be used by other funded students.

Bursary Payments

Enhanced Bursary (Band 1)

- Aged 16-18
and
- Studying a full-time course (minimum 12 hours a week for at least 10 weeks)
and
- in a vulnerable group
 - o In care or a care leaver
 - o Receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them such as a child or partner
 - o Receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in their own right **as well as** Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right.

Awards (only one option applies)

Payment per week (dependant on attendance)	Criteria
£35 this includes support with meals	This applies to students in care or a care leaver.
£40 this includes support with meals unless student is in receipt of Universal Credit/income support	This applies to students living in supported living or living independently.

Discretionary Bursary (Bands 2 and 3)

- Eligible students can only apply for a discretionary bursary if they are:
 - o Aged 16-18
Or
 - o Aged 19-25 with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
Or
 - o continuing the programme of study, they started aged 16-18, if their eligibility continues
And
 - o Studying a full-time course (minimum 12 hours a week for at least 10 weeks)

Awards (only one option applies)

Criteria	Awards	
	Band 2	Band 3
Uses bus or train (cost of weekly ticket) Cheltenham/Gloucester	£14	£10
Uses bus or train (contribution to weekly ticket) West	£17	£12
Uses other travel to get to College (self-driven/ lift/ other)	£10	£8
States mode of transport is walking or cycling	£0	£0

- Payments will be made weekly by BACS, which will be paid directly into the student's own bank account. To receive payment students will need to have **80%** attendance each week. Authorised absences and sickness allowance will be taken into consideration. Behaviour will also be monitored, and payments will be held if appropriate. Further details can be found in the Bursary Guide.

19+ Travel Payments

1. Awards

- Travel payments for 19+ students will be paid to those studying a full time programme
- Students will be awarded the following:

Distance	Award
1-9 miles (one way)	£4 per day
10+ miles (one way)	£5 per day

- Payments will be made weekly and attendance will be monitored. If overall attendance falls below 80% payments will be held and students will need to appeal to the Student Support Manager or coordinator.

19+ Progressing Enhanced Bursary

1. Awards

- Students who were previously receiving the Enhanced Bursary but who are now eligible for 19+ funding will be awarded the following:

Award	Amount
Course fees	100%
Travel	£20 per week
Meals	£4 per day

20+ Childcare

My Ohana Nurseries (Cheltenham and Gloucester Campus) – paid directly to childcare provider

- A maximum of £63 per full day session for Cheltenham and Gloucester. Half day sessions will be funded at £31.50 each.

Other Private Nurseries (OFSTED registered) – paid directly to childcare provider

- A maximum of £43 per full day session
NB Childcare will only be granted for days timetabled in college, planned work placement days or exams that fall outside of the timetabled hours.

NB: Childcare providers must be able to produce their fee policy upon request. Prices may be compared with other local providers and if the college deems the prices to be illogical, funding may be adjusted or declined.

- To receive childcare funding students must complete an online application via Pay My Student and then provide the following to Student Support:
 - o Providers OFSTED registration number
 - o Provider charges
 - o Days using the provider
 - o Dates of work placements / additional hours in college required
- Funding will only be approved for providers who have an OFSTED inspection grading of good or outstanding. If the provider has recently received an overall grading of requirements improvement or inadequate, time will be allowed for required action to be taken and a decision regarding funding will be delayed until after the re inspection has taken place. If a provider has not been inspected then funding will be approved. Annual checks of inspection reports will be conducted by the Student Support team. If a student would still like to use a provider graded requires improvement or inadequate they will need to appeal.
- Childcare will only be granted for days timetabled in college, planned work placement days or exams that fall outside of the timetabled hours.
- All childcare funding is based on attendance and will be monitored. A minimum attendance level of 80% is required to receive funding for childcare costs, should attendance fall below this level funding may be reduced or held until the absence is authorised.

- If a student withdraws from their course after enrolling, the college has no responsibility for future fees and charges. However, we will provide the provider with a month notice before withdrawing the funding.
- If a student wishes to transfer providers during their course, they will either need to keep attending the first provider for the months' notice and transfer after or if they wish to transfer sooner, they will need to pay a month themselves at either provider. The college will not pay two providers for the same month. The only exception to this would be if the parent had made a formal complaint against the provider and have provided evidence.
- If the student does not attend from the start of the course funding will not be paid.

Further Education Free Meals

1. Eligibility

- Eligible students can only apply for the Further Education Free Meals scheme if they are:
 - o aged 16-18
 - or
 - o Aged 19-25 if they have an EHCP
 - or
 - o continuing the programme of study, they started aged 16-18, if their eligibility continues.
- and**
- enrolled on a further education course funded via the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
 - and**
 - in receipt or being supported by someone in receipt of the following benefits:
 - o Income Support
 - o Income based Jobseekers Allowance
 - o Income related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
 - o Supported under part VI of the immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - o The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
 - o Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more that £16,190 as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
 - o Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - o Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum

2. Awards

- Each successful application is awarded £4.00 per day for each day they attend college.

Extended Work Experience Placements

Students undertaking an extended work placement as part of their programme of study can appeal for support for any additional travel expenses incurred as well as any additional costs for essential equipment, clothing and meals required to complete their placement. This will be assessed based on need and course requirements. Students can apply for additional funding using the Extended Work Placements Form via a member of the Student Support team.

Additional support could include, but is not limited to; clothes vouchers and supermarket vouchers for food and clothing where required. Where possible, payments will be made in-kind for example food vouchers, clothes vouchers, kit, DBS, and equipment. Only in exceptional circumstances will support be given in cash. Additional support for travel costs will be paid by BACS direct to the student. Any support should be agreed in advance of any expenses being incurred.

Advanced Learning Loan Bursary Fund

1. Eligibility

- Students must have been approved for an Advanced Learning Loan for a level 3 or above course before applying to the bursary fund.

- If the application is in progress funding will not be awarded until it is approved.
- Students will need to meet the same eligibility as the Discretionary Support Fund (i.e. be in receipt of an income-based benefit or on a low income)
- Students who require support with Additional Learning Support (ALS) may be able to access funding through the bursary fund. ALS covers support such as teaching assistants, learning resources or necessary adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. ALS will be available on a need assessed basis, not income based.

2. Awards

- All awards will be made in line with the 19+ award structure for childcare and kits. Childcare payments will be paid directly to the student and it will be their responsibility to pay their provider. Monthly checks will be made to ensure the student is still using the same provider and attending, and that the student's attendance is over 80%.
- Funding can be provided for other specific items required to complete a course. This includes (but not limited to) books, progression opportunities, trips, and equipment. Students will need to complete an appeal form and provide costs.

Payments

- Payments are made either directly to the department, the childcare provider, or direct to the student. If fees have been paid in full prior to the funding application a refund will be paid directly to the student.

Back payments

- Applications submitted after half terms / end of terms will have travel payments backdated to the start of the term / half term in which they submitted their completed application.
- Students who apply for funding mid-year due to changes in circumstance will be backdated to when the circumstances changed.

Appeals

- Every student has the right to appeal against the amount of support offered. Appeals must be made through Student Services. The application will then be reassessed by the Student Support Manager, Student Support Co-ordinator, or Head of Student Support. Appeals will be processed within 10 working days of the date received.
- In the instance where an appeal is for an increase towards travel payments, this will be capped at £35.00 per week (except in exceptional circumstances which will need approving by all three of the above).
- Students who require support with purchasing meals in college will be awarded £4.00 per day if approved
- Students who are require travel payments will be awarded the following:

Distance	Award
1-9 miles (one way)	£4 per day
10+ miles (one way)	£5 per day

Additional Funding support

1. Awards

Additional Support	Responsibility	Storage
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6-week counselling course provided by Teens in Crisis	Student Officers, Student Welfare officers or Learning Mentors to arrange	N/A
Counselling sessions run by HE students for 19+ students	Self-referral	N/A
Laptop and carry bag	IT Support	IT Support offices
£20/£10 food voucher	Procurement	Student Services safe
£20 clothing voucher	Procurement	Student Services safe
£4 GC Food Vouchers	Student Services	Student Officers, Student Services safe
Free Meals	Student Services	N/A
£300 grant towards purchasing a laptop (AdLL only)	Student Services	N/A
Books and Registration (AdLL only)	Student Services	N/A
UCAS Application Fee	Student Services	N/A
£500 grant toward personal counselling (Level 4 Counselling only)	Student Services	N/A

Withdrawals

- If a student withdraws all payments will cease as of the withdrawal date. All equipment that has been funded will remain the property of Gloucestershire College and we reserve the right to reclaim any funds and equipment that the student has been awarded, including funding paid to academic departments.

Student Opportunities (Higher Education)

1. Eligibility and application

- Students will need to complete an application form available from Student Services detailing what support they require and declare any household income and expenditure.
- Students are required to provide additional evidence to support their application, for example bank statements or proof of benefit.
- Students can only apply to the Student Opportunity fund if they have applied for and taken out a loan or grant from Student Finance England
- Students studying a course provided by a partner university are not eligible to apply for the Gloucestershire College fund; the partner university will provide information regarding their own hardship fund.

2. Awards

- Payments can be made for emergencies or exceptional circumstances e.g., household bills, rent, travel, and food. Awards will be based on individual circumstances, considering the type of support the student needs, their income/expenditure, and the intensity of their course.

Limits

- The maximum amount that can be awarded per student per year is:
 - o Full time - £1,000
 - o Part time - £500

Progression Bursary (Higher Education)

- All students (existing or previous learners) that are **progressing** from a **GC** qualification achieved at the college to a **full-time, Level 4 HE course at the College** are offered a bursary of £1,000 in their **first year of HE Study at the college**. This includes progression onto all HNCs and foundation

degrees. For some subject areas, a proportion of the bursary is specified to fund the purchase of equipment/materials for use throughout the course.

- All **existing Level 4 students** that progress to their second year of **full-time study at Level 5 with the college** will receive a bursary of £500.

Betaris Training

1. Eligibility and Assessment

- Students need to meet the same eligibility as the Discretionary Support Fund (i.e be in receipt of an income based benefit or on a low income)
- Eligibility, including intention to enrol onto the course (prior to it being input onto unite) will be confirmed by Betaris Training
- Awards will be allocated by Betaris Training using the Request for Funding form and sent to GC for payment.

2. Awards

- Awards will be allocated using the table below:

Award type	Amount	Payment
Travel	GC - £10 per day GLA - £12 per day	Weekly for duration of the course
Food	£3.50 per day for the day they attend the learning centres	Weekly for duration of the course
SIA License	£220	One off payment to be made upon completion of course

- Any other support needs will be considered by the Business Support Manager at Betaris Training and additional requests sent to the Student Support Manager and the Student Support Coordinator at Gloucestershire College

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

All Student Support Fund documents will have a declaration or privacy notice approved by the GC Data Protection Officer. An annual review will take place via the Student Support Data Protection Register. All application forms will be saved securely online via Pay My Student in line with the Gloucestershire College Data Protection Policy.

RELATED POLICIES

Related Policies and Procedures	Policy
Tuition Fee Policy	Internal
Funding Rules 2023/24	External
16-19 Bursary Fund Guidance 2023/24	External
Student Bursary Guide	Internal

Date for Review: July 2024