

Quality Controlled Document

Policy: Student Support Funds

Date: July 2024

Approved by: Student Support Manager

Signature: F Court

SCOPE

Students on courses that are funded by the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and meet who meet the residency criteria set out by the ESFA.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Student Support Fund Policy is to establish guidelines and procedures for the allocation and disbursement of funds to support students pursuing further education. This fund aims to assist eligible students in overcoming financial barriers that may otherwise hinder their academic progress.

For tuition fee funding please refer to the Tuition Fee Policy.

OBJECTIVE

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

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

The Student Support team are responsible for gathering sufficient evidence as proof of eligibility and processing applications accurately, allocate funding to students 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.

MONITORING PROCESS

The Student Support Fund will be internally audited annually through process auditing and individual performance checkpoints.

PROCEDURE

1. Eligibility

In Local Authority Care or Care Leaver (16-18 only, including unaccompanied asylum seekers)

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:

- Income Support
- Jobseekers Allowance (income related and contribution based where student is unemployed)
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Supported under part VI of the immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Child Tax Credit (provided earnings are less than £25,000 per annum)
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit (provided earnings are less than £25,000 per annum)
- 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
- Working Tax Credit or Disabled Persons Tax Credit (provided earnings are less than £25,000 per annum)

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.

16 – 19 Bursary Fund

This applies to students aged 16-18 or aged 19-25 with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or continuing the programme of study, they started aged 16-18, if their eligibility continues and studying a full-time course (minimum 12 hours a week for at least 10 weeks)

Enhanced Bursary (Vulnerable groups)

This applies to students who are:

- In care or a care leaver
- 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. We would need evidence to show that they are living independently.
- 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.

Further Education Free Meals

Eligible students can only apply for the Further Education Free Meals scheme if they are aged 16-18 or 19-25 if they have an EHCP or 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:

- Income Support
- Income based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Supported under part VI of the immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- 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 His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum

Advanced Learner Loan

- Students must have been approved for an Advanced Learning Loan 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.

In addition to the above criteria applications are assessed based on actual financial need. The application will be used to identify individual need in order to attend their course.

2. Application

Applications will open on Monday 3rd June 2024 and will close on Friday 28th June 2025 (earlier if the funds become exhausted). Applications will be assessed in date-applied order. Our aim is to assess applications within 10 working days.

Progressing students who are aged between 16-18 (or 19-23 with an EHCP) will only have to supply evidence of eligibility at the start of their study programme. At the start of subsequent years, students will be asked to confirm that their circumstances remain the same. If circumstances have changed, the student will need to supply new evidence.

3. Awards

Band	Criteria
1	Vulnerable students (Enhanced Bursary)
2	Supported by someone who is not working or has a household income lower than £16,190
3	Household income between £16,191 - £25,000

Course costs

Mandatory course costs are provided by each department.

Fee type	Awards		
	Band 1	Band 2	Band 3
Material fees	100%	100%	0%
Residential/Events	100%	100%	100%
Exam/Registration	n/a	100%	100%
Kit only (Hair and Beauty)	100%	100%	100%
Uniform only (Catering and Motor Vehicle)	100%	100%	100%

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

Weekly Bursary Payments

Criteria	Awards				
	Band 1	Band 2		Band 3	
	Enhanced	3 days	4+ days	3 days	4+ days
Uses bus or train and lives more than 3 miles away Cheltenham/Gloucester	£17.50	£12	£16	£8	£12
Uses bus or train (contribution to weekly ticket) and lives more than 3 miles away West	£23.50	£16	£20	£12	£16

NB The above awards are based on the cost of bus travel in the county and some of the amounts are a contribution.

Weekly Rider is £17.50 for Cheltenham / Gloucester and £23.50 for West travel.

Day Rider £4.75 Cheltenham / Gloucester and £7.75 for West travel.

Payments will be made weekly by BACS, which will be paid where possible 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.

Further Education Free Meals

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

This award is made up of a £2.53 contribution from the ESFA and £1.47 from the discretionary support fund. This is calculated on students being able to purchase a healthy option or hot meal from the outlets available on campus.

Students who are eligible for Band 1 funding will be awarded free meals from their overall vulnerable bursary allowance if they identify this as a need in their application.

19+ Travel Payments

Students will be awarded the following:

Distance	Award
3-9 miles (one way)	£6 per day
10+ miles (one way)	£8 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

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 £66.78 per full day session for Cheltenham and Gloucester. Half day sessions will be funded at £33.39 each.

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

A maximum of £60 per full day session

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.

Funding will only be approved for providers who have an OFSTED inspection grading of good or outstanding or satisfactory. 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. An 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.

Advanced Learning Loan Bursary Fund

All awards will be made in line with the 19+ award structure for childcare and kits.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. Appeals

Every student has the right to appeal against the amount of support offered. This process will open after the first half term. Exceptions will be made for students who are open to Safeguarding. 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 may also be referred to our Executive team in the event of safeguarding cases, specific amounts requested or in the event of limited funds being available. Appeals will be processed within 10 working days of the date received.

The college is able to provide emergency support to students for food without them being formally assessed if we determine them to be in real need. This would only relate to one off support. If the student requires ongoing support they would need a full assessment.

Additional Funding support

Additional Support	Responsibility	Storage
Laptop loan 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 Services safe
Free Meals	Student Services	N/A
£300 grant towards purchasing a laptop (19+ funded through DLS only)	Student Services	N/A
Books and Registration	Student Services	N/A
UCAS Application Fee	Student Services	N/A
£400 grant toward personal counselling (Level 4 Counselling only) ASF Funding only	Student Services	N/A
Costs to support with work placements	Student Services	N/A

7. 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.

8. Complaints

If a student would like to make a complaint about the service they have received or the award they have been given from the Student Support Fund they can follow our college complaints process through Talkback.

9. Higher Education Funding

Student Opportunities (Higher Education)

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.

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:

- Full time - £1,000
- 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.

10. Betaris Training (ASF Funding)

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.

Awards

Award type	Amount	Payment
Travel	GC - £10 per day GLA - £12 per day	Weekly for duration of the course
Food	£4 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	Version	Policy Ref. No.
Tuition Fee Policy	-	POL – 20
Funding Rules 2024/25	1	External
16-19 Bursary Fund Guidance 2024/25	1	External
Student Bursary Guide	1	Internal