

STUDENT SUPPORT FUND POLICY AND PRINCIPLES 2011/2012

Policy statement

1. It is the policy of the College to optimise the use of Discretionary Adult Learner Support and 16-19 Bursary funding to provide support to adult students who have a specific financial need which could prevent them participating in learning and to those young people facing the greatest financial barriers to continuing in education.

Context –other sources of financial support for students

2. Schedule 19 of the Education Act 2002 placed a duty on local authorities to develop collaborative, integrated transport policies. Many, but not all, local authorities (LAs) make arrangements in respect of transport costs for students under 19 at the start of their course, often in the form of free or subsidised travel, subject to the following conditions:
 - Student lives over 3 miles from college
 - Student attends nearest college/school which offers their chosen course.
3. Education Maintenance Allowances are no longer available for new students not previously in receipt of EMA. However there will be transitional arrangements to support students currently in receipt of EMA. Those who first started receiving EMA in 2009/10 will continue to receive the same amount in 2011/12 under the EMA guarantee. Those students who first received EMA in 2010/11 at the maximum £30 rate will receive £20 EMA in 2011/12, however those who received £20 or £10 in 2010/11 will not be eligible for any transition payments.
4. It has also been announced that the Adult Learning Grant will be closed to new applicants from July 2011. Again there will be transitional arrangements for students currently in receipt of ALG. Those students who are continuing on the same level of course in 2011/12 will continue to receive ALG at the same rate. Any student progressing to the next level will no longer be able to receive ALG.
5. Care to Learn covers childcare costs for students under 20 at the start of their course.
6. We are pleased to work in partnership with the Harpur Trust who provide funding to enable us to support students living in their area of benefit.

Criteria for 2011/2012

Eligibility

7. Applications will be judged in line with YPLA, SFA and HEFCE funding guidance for 2011/2012.
8. The Bedford College Student Support Fund is open to students aged 16 or over studying at Bedford College if they (or their parents/ partner/ spouse) are on:
 - income-related benefits
 - low income.
9. In relation to payments from 16-19 Bursary and Adult Learner Support funds, all students who have been accepted onto, and are studying on, a funded FE course are eligible with the exception of:
 - asylum seekers aged 19+ who have made a claim to the Home Office less than 6 months ago
 - Adult Safeguarded Learning (ASL) or University for Industry (UFI)-funded learners
 - waged apprentices
 - learners on learning aims wholly funded from other sources.
10. The guidance specifies that Adult Discretionary Learner Support funds should be targeted at those with specific financial hardship needs which could prevent them participating in learning.
11. The 16-19 Bursary aims to eliminate the gap in attainment between young people from poorer and more affluent backgrounds. It provides for:
 - a. guaranteed bursaries of £1200 for young people in care, care leavers, in receipt of income support or in receipt of Employment Support Allowance AND Disability Living Allowance
 - b. discretionary payments to young people facing financial barriers to education, such as transport, books and equipment.
12. The College will therefore take into account the following indicators of financial hardship:
 - a. young people in care, or who are leaving or have recently left care
 - b. those on probation or supervised by the Youth Offending Service
 - c. those eligible for fee remission on grounds of active means tested benefits
 - d. those meeting conditions for fee remission on grounds of first full level 2/3/Skills for Life
 - e. those with learning difficulties or disabilities
 - f. young people who are homeless and/or on Income Support

- g. those recently made redundant or supported through a 6 month unemployed training package
 - h. those who experience a sudden change in circumstances, such as redundancy.
13. Students who have been mandated to training (full- or part-time) by Jobcentre Plus will have their travel and childcare costs met by Jobcentre Plus where required.
 14. Learning Centre students are supported in exceptional circumstances only, subject to payment of the College membership fee.
 15. International students are not eligible for any support funding.
 16. The Chair of the Student Support Fund Panel will have the right to waive criteria in cases of extreme hardship.

Levels of support

17. Levels of support awarded are assessed against household income. Students under 19 and living at home and/or supported by parents are assessed against their own and their parents' income, except in exceptional circumstances. Students aged 19+ are assessed as independent.
18. Means-testing will be rigorous but not excessive and evidence from other recent income assessment will be used wherever possible.
19. Payment will be to a maximum of 90%, as approved by the College Executive, 28 January 2005, except for childcare where the student contribution will be £1 per session.

Conditions

20. The above payments will be subject to the following conditions:

General conditions

21. Applications will be accepted during the following periods:
1 July 2011 – 21 October 2011
9 January 2012–10 February 2012
- and from 16 April 2012 subject to availability.
22. The panel will reserve the right to make awards outside these application periods in cases of emergency or extreme hardship.
23. The £20 college resources will not be reimbursed. Tuition and external fees will be funded only in exceptional circumstances (see below).
24. Wherever possible, payments will be made direct to a supplier, including internal transfer.
25. Students may receive financial help towards the cost of specific items but not normally towards general living costs. The exception to this is

the payment of bursaries in specific circumstances (see 'Bursaries' below).

26. Payment is subject to satisfactory attendance of minimum 85% and students withdrawing from their course may be required to repay all or part of any payment received and/or return equipment provided. Students may be asked to return books or equipment at the end of their course.
27. Students may make more than one application to the fund in an academic year.
28. Students on Bedford College HE courses may only be given awards from the HE Access to Learning Fund or, exceptionally, from the College's own fund. Students on franchised courses should apply to the appropriate university Access to Learning Fund. Higher education students will be asked to complete a separate application form to enable the collection of additional information required for the assessment of Access to Learning Fund payments. Applications will be subject to Access to Learning fund regulations and students should first have taken out their full grant and loan entitlements.

Fees

29. The guidance permits use of a small proportion of discretionary funds to support the cost of fees for 19+ students. In order to manage the limited funds, support for fees will be by exception and on referral from Student Services or Finance staff.
30. Students in the receipt of a College bursary (Access courses and Pre-degree Foundation Art & Design) will not be eligible for support with tuition fees.
31. The maximum support will be 60% of tuition fees.
32. Full and part time higher education students who require support with the cost of course fees should apply to Student Finance England via www.direct.gov.uk .

Childcare

33. Students may only apply to the Student Support Fund for payment towards childcare costs if they are aged 20+ and do not therefore qualify for Care to Learn.
34. The fund may be used towards the cost of a registered childminder, nursery or pre/after-school club. Only childcare with a provider who is registered with Ofsted may be funded.
35. Funds are limited and demand usually exceeds supply. Once all childcare funding has been allocated, further applicants are placed on a waiting list.

36. The availability of nursery education grants for all 3 and 4 year olds are verified with each student, and also with their nursery. If they are eligible for 3 and 4 year old funding, childcare is only supported where the student's timetable exceeds the number of funded sessions.
37. All students are required to pay £1 per child per session towards the cost of their childcare.
38. Support for childcare is given only for timetabled teaching hours. Nursery deposits and childcare retainers payable during college holidays are not funded.

Travel

39. Travel is paid only for students living over 3 miles from college, unless they require support with transport costs incurred as a result of a mobility difficulty. Only the cheapest form of travel is paid.
40. Students aged 16-18 must apply to their local authority for subsidised travel in the first instance. Bedford College students who are rejected by their local authority AND who are not in receipt of transitional EMA may apply for a 16-18 travel bursary of £450 per year provided they live more than 3 miles away from College. Shuttleworth College students may apply for subsidised travel through the College bus scheme.
41. Support for transport may be granted for adults where financial need has been demonstrated. For adult students travelling by car, the AA mileage rates apply. Parking is not funded.

Books/equipment/materials and other course costs

42. Payments for books, kit, materials/equipment and uniform which are deemed by the Course Manager as 'essential' to the course are prioritised. Book/library deposits are not paid.
43. The College reserves the right to request the return of any equipment, for example where a student withdraws from the course. Such equipment would then be available for reissue. However, due consideration is given to hygiene, health and safety, and wear and tear.
44. Counselling supervision is funded up to a maximum of £25 per month.

Bursaries

45. 16-18 students who are in the following groups identified by the government as vulnerable:
 - a. Young people in care or care leavers
 - b. Young people in receipt of Income Support
 - c. Young people in receipt of Employment Support Allowance AND Disability Living Allowance

are eligible for £1200 guaranteed bursary per year. Students eligible for the guaranteed bursary are not eligible for any transitional EMA.

Payments will be made by BACS in 3 instalments of £400, 2 weeks into each term subject to satisfactory attendance. Students on the guaranteed bursary may still apply for help with essential course costs but not for the travel bursary.

46. Other students judged by the Student Support Fund panel to be vulnerable or in extreme hardship may be awarded a discretionary bursary of up to £300 per year towards to costs of studying.

Accommodation (Bedford)

47. Applications for accommodation costs will be considered only for non-HE students aged 16-18 who have to move to Bedford to undertake their course from a distance of over 50 miles from Bedford.

Accommodation (Shuttleworth)

48. Fees for halls of residence can be supported through the residential bursary. Applications are prioritised by distance from the student's home and/or availability of bus routes.
49. Applications are subject to the standard means-testing and income thresholds. However, because of the costs involved and the limitations of bursary funding, there is a maximum award of £2490 against fees of £3850.

Trips/Visits

50. Only trips which are curriculum-related are normally funded. Support is given for up to 90% of costs depending on income (50% for overseas trips, up to a maximum of £100). Exceptions are considered on a case by case basis. As with other course-related costs, these must be notified to Student Services by Course Managers prior to the start of the academic year.

Payment

51. Wherever possible payment is made direct to the supplier or by internal transfer. Payments direct to students are by BACS and subject to satisfactory attendance.

Monitoring

52. Monitoring of the Student Support Fund is the responsibility of the Director of Student Services with the Student Finance Manager and Finance Department. Expenditure is monitored monthly and reported to the Student Support Fund panel via panel meetings.
53. Costs for books, kit, materials/equipment, uniform and other essential materials are verified with Course Managers. Confirmation of support for childcare is subject to the student supplying a copy of their timetable signed by their Course Manager or Personal Tutor.

54. Students' attendance on their course is verified by Personal Tutors or Student Personal and should be at a minimum level of 85%. Payment may be refused where a student's attendance is unsatisfactory.
55. Take-up of the Student Support Fund is monitored annually in relation to retention and reported in the self assessment report.
56. Feedback from students on the impact of the fund on their learning is collected annually.
57. Annual returns are completed for YPLA, SFA, HEFCE and Harpur Trust funds.

Student Support Fund Panel

57. The Student Support Fund Panel will comprise the Director of Student Services (chair), Student Finance Manager, Student Finance Adviser, Student Support Adviser (Shuttleworth) and a member of the Finance Department. The Student Finance Adviser will provide administrative support to the panel.
58. The panel will meet fortnightly during July, August and September, and thereafter as required, to approve payments from the Student Support Fund, on the recommendation of Student Finance Manager. Panel dates will be published in advance.
59. Students will be notified of decisions by letter within 4 weeks of receipt of their fully completed application.
60. The panel will have the right to vary the above criteria in exceptional circumstances, and chair's action will be possible in cases of urgent hardship. They will also review the criteria annually and make recommendations for change to the College Executive.

Appeals Procedure

61. Appeals against decisions of the panel must be made in writing to the Director of Quality, Bedford College, Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AH within 10 days of the decision being notified. Appeals will be acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt and resolved it within 21 working days.

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Student Services
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