

Learner Support Fund Policy 2020-2021

Responsible Senior Manager: Vice Principal Finance & Facilities

Effective Date: August 2020

Related Policies:

Approved By: Finance & Estates Committee *

Next Review Date: March 2021

* Under delegated powers



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1. Aim

To support potential students who face genuine financial barriers to participation in learning with essential course-related costs such as transport, food or equipment.

All applications are considered individually. The funds will be granted where a genuine need for assistance has been demonstrated and the student meets residency eligibility following guidelines issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

At HSDC (which comprises Alton, Havant and South Downs campuses) the Learner Support Fund is split into

- General and Discretionary Financial Assistance
- 19+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary (ALLB)
- 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary Fund (VB)

This policy lists the Criteria/Eligibility and 'How to Apply' individually for the above.

This policy lists the Financial Assistance Offered, How Payments Are Made and the Conditions and Appeals Procedure collectively for all the above.

2. Financial Assistance

Financial Assistance is designed to provide support to all full and part time students aged 16+ who face genuine financial barriers to participation.

Criteria/Eligibility for Financial Assistance

- Must be currently attending a course at HSDC which is funded by the ESFA (this excludes SC/HC coded courses, HNC/HND, some Level 4 and Level 5 courses, and Treloar-funded courses).
- Aged 16 or over on 31 August 2020 and living with their Parent/Carer who is in receipt of at least one of the benefits listed below:
 - Job Seekers Allowance (where there is an Income-Based payment, not solely a National Insurance Credit)
 - Income Support
 - Working Tax Credit (not solely Child Tax Credit)
 - Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit)
 - Housing benefit
 - Council Tax Support (other than the single person allowance)
 - Employment & Support Allowance (Income-related)
 - Universal Credit (not solely Child Tax element)
- Aged 19 or over on 31 August 2020 and in receipt of at least one of the benefits listed above or an unwaged dependent of someone who is in receipt of such a benefit.
- Full time students travelling from the Isle of Wight to study at HSDC, will automatically receive college financial assistance towards travel costs due to the expense of travelling over to the mainland. Further financial assistance will be available for those who are in receipt of an income-based benefit. For more details, please speak to an adviser from the Student Travel and Support Office.

3. Discretionary Financial Assistance

The Discretionary Financial Assistance provides financial support for full and part time students in exceptional and severe financial difficulties. It is specifically designed to respond to hardship and Government Priority Groups such as those whom may become homeless or experience sudden changes in circumstances. All applications are considered individually, and funds will only be granted where a genuine need for assistance has been demonstrated, along with meeting various criteria. The Discretionary Financial Assistance is limited and can only be allocated whilst funding lasts. Assistance cannot be guaranteed in cases of over-demand.

Criteria/Eligibility for Discretionary Financial Support

- A student must be currently attending a course at HSDC, which is funded by the ESFA (this excludes SC/HC coded courses, HNC/HND, some Level 4 and Level 5 courses, and Treloar-funded courses). Funding will be prioritised to students that meet the following priority groups: -
 - a young lone parent, retraining for employment
 - a significant carer for an adult or child relative
 - statutory education was interrupted
 - has a significant diagnosed mental health condition (appropriate evidence is required)
 - dependant on somebody who has been made redundant in the last 12 months and remains unemployed
 - in care or have recently left care
 - supervised by a Young Offender Officer
 - Household annual gross income is under £25,000 and there is a proven need for Financial Assistance

4. The 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary Fund (VB)

The Vulnerable Bursary is designed to support any student who faces genuine financial barriers to participation; the VB provides funding for items such as transport, equipment and uniforms, leaving remaining funding to be allocated as a weekly payment direct into the eligible student's bank account. This payment will be based on 100% attendance whilst maintaining a good standard of effort and behaviour.

Criteria/Eligibility for the 16 – 19 Vulnerable Bursary Fund.

- A Student may be eligible for a bursary of £1,200 a year if they are aged 16, 17 or 18 on 31 August 2020 and meet *one* of the following criteria.
 - Are in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit in their own name 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
 - Are a Care Leaver or In Care (Local Authority confirmation will be required).
 - Are in receipt of both Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit and Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payment in their own right.

Where a student is eligible for the VB and is undertaking a course lasting less than 30 weeks, or they are starting later than the planned start date of the course, or their circumstances change during the year and they become eligible part way through their course, the award should be an appropriate proportion of the £1,200.

5. Free Student Meals in Education

Free Student Meals are available for all eligible students for each day the student attends their study programme or work experience placement, where appropriate.

Eligibility for Free Student Meals is as per the current ESFA 16-19 Free Meals in Further Education Guidance. To be eligible to receive a Free Student Meal, the student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2020 and be in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the qualifying benefits. Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a free meal if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 or have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

A student is only eligible to receive a free meal when they, or a responsible adult on their behalf, have made a successful application.

6. 19+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary (ALLB)

The Bursary is designed to support students aged 19+ who have taken out an Advanced Learner Loan and face genuine financial barriers to participation.

Criteria/Eligibility for 19+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary (ALLB)

A Student: -

- must be currently attending a level 3 or 4 course (other than HNC/HND) at HSDC, be aged over 19, and have had an a 19+ Advanced Learning Loan approved by the Student Loans Company
- **and** in receipt of at least *one* of the benefits listed below: -
 - Job Seekers Allowance (where there is an Income-Based payment, not solely a National Insurance Credit)
 - Income Support
 - Working Tax Credit (not solely Child Tax Credit)
 - Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit)
 - Housing benefit
 - Council Tax Support (other than the single person allowance)
 - Employment & Support Allowance (Income-related)
 - Universal Credit (not solely Child Tax element)

7. Financial Assistance Offered

The list below is not an exhaustive list but covers the main areas of financial assistance the College offers. Requests for support not included below will be considered on a merit and circumstantial basis only and within the realms of financial affordability.

Financial Assistance Offered	Financial Assistance		Discretionary Financial Assistance	VB	ALLB
	Full time	Part time			
Age group funding applies to	16-23 and 19+ if course is level 2 or under			16-18	19+
Travel between home and college Full time by way of a bus pass or a contribution towards a train pass Part time by way of refunded public transport fares or in some circumstances by mileage	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Specified equipment, clothing relating to the course you are intending to study	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Activities such as compulsory residentials and day trips relating to the course you are intending to study	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Refund of necessary work experience expenses including a DBS check	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Specified books relating to the course you are intending to study	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Food Vouchers			✓*	✓*	
UCAS administration fees	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hepatitis B Vaccinations for Health & Social Care Students if required by the placement provider	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
A contribution towards exam fees, if applicable	✓	✓	✓		
Financial assistance towards childcare costs (student aged 20+)	✓	✓	✓		✓

* Food Vouchers for students on the Vulnerable Bursary/Discretionary Financial Assistance will be awarded based on the individual's circumstances

Financial Assistance towards childcare costs for students who are aged under 20 is funded by the government scheme, Care to Learn. Students need to apply via the website

<https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn>

8. How to apply

Details of how to apply can be found on the College website under the travel and support section. Paper applications are available from the Student Travel & Support office at the Havant and South Downs campuses and from the Student Hub at the Alton campus.

All applications are treated fairly and confidentially and per funding body prevailing rules and regulations.

9. How Payments Are Made

Methods of payment will be largely electronic into a confirmed Bank Account or can be discussed as appropriate to individual circumstances.

10. Conditions

- Student Financial Assistance is provided by the ESFA; this is a limited sum of money that offers no guaranteed right to assistance.
- Any equipment purchased remains the property of HSDC.
- The following conditions will be clearly indicated to the learner of the funding award on the application form; Financial Assistance is granted on the following conditions; there is a proven need for Financial Assistance, that attendance records are good, and college expectations in line with the HSDC standard are being met. If at any time, attendance, work or behaviour is unsatisfactory, the funding may be withdrawn or suspended.
- The information and proof of benefit/income provided must be correct and complete to the best of the student/parent/carer's knowledge. Giving any false or incomplete information which may lead to wrongfully claiming financial help from the college, may result in any future assistance being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered. Using false information may result in a referral to the police.
- If a student is in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit, they need to declare any financial assistance given to the appropriate benefits agency.
- HSDC will process data related to applications for financial support in accordance with the student's Learning Agreement. HSDC is committed to protecting personal information in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- Students cannot apply for Financial Assistance, VB or ALLB if they are: -
 - Under 16 at 31 August 2020 (with the exception of home-schooled 14-16 year olds)
 - Enrolled on a Higher Education course
 - On a waged Apprenticeship
 - In Prison or a Young Offender Institution and released on a temporary licence

11. Appeals Procedure

If you are dissatisfied with the result of your application, you may appeal stating your reasons. Appeal requests must be made either in writing or by email to:

Finance Manager
HSDC
College Road
Waterlooville
Hants PO7 8AA
Tel: 023 9387 9999
Email: finance@hdc.ac.uk