

# Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) Bursary

Policy for the disbursement of funds  
2021/2022 academic year

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Reviewed: August 2021

Next review: August 2022

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At the Isle of Wight College, discretionary learner support funds (DLSF) are also referred to as bursary, childcare and extenuating circumstances funds and appear as such throughout this policy and on all applications and communications with learners.

## 1. Overview

- 1.1 The purpose of the Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF), is to provide financial support to assist learners with College costs. This is for learners aged 16+ on eligible courses who are experiencing difficulty in meeting the costs associated with learning. Decisions about who is assisted will be governed by a number of guidelines for example the [16 to 19 Bursary Fund Guide 2021 to 2022](#) , [Adult Education Budget \(AEB\) Funding Rules 2021 to 2022](#) and [the Advanced Learner Loans Funding Rules 2021 to 2022](#).
- 1.2 The bursary will not support courses that are not funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency for example; non-concessionary courses and in most cases 14-16 learners. The bursary will also not fund learners on Apprenticeship courses.
- 1.3 To apply for a bursary in 2021/22, all learners must be 'settled' in the UK and have been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands (including Channel Islands and Isle of Man) for 3 years preceding their learning start date. European Union nationals, family members of EEA and Swiss workers (resident in the UK before 01 January 2021) with settled or pre-settled status are also considered eligible if ordinarily resident in the UK for 3 years. There are additional flexibilities for those with right of abode in the UK due to refugee, asylum or humanitarian reasons or accompany parents with right of abode to the UK who may not be required to meet the 3-year residence criteria with eligibility determined on a case-by-case basis. Residence eligibility criteria for the bursaries are aligned to the residency criteria addressed in the ESFA funding rules.

## 2. The Isle of Wight College bursary commitment

The Isle of Wight College will:

- 2.1 Consider the availability of other strands of financial support for learners (including government funded childcare, support through Department for Work and Pensions and the Jobcentre Plus and IW Council funded travel) ahead of consideration for the bursary and ensure that learners exercise their entitlement to other forms of financial support before they pursue an application for a bursary. The College will then award learners as necessary guided by the funding criteria.
- 2.2 Develop a policy detailing to whom and how the bursary is distributed. This policy will be available to learners upon request and via the College website.
- 2.3 Develop an application process demonstrating how learners can apply for the fund and how The Isle of Wight College will administer and distribute the funds.

- 2.4 Identify a learner's specific financial needs and consider the factors that may prevent a learner participating in Further Education (FE), before making any financial award.
- 2.5 Assess learners' financial circumstances by carrying out assessments, based on pre-determined criteria.
- 2.6 Clearly communicate with the learner at the time of application what support the learner is entitled to and for what purpose the financial support is given.
- 2.7 Make bursary payments to eligible learners to support the costs of college as follows:
  - Make internal transfers (e.g. to cover a bursary contribution to pre-determined material and central enrolment fees).
  - Refund pre-agreed expenditure, as identified with departments and on the bursary contributions sheet.
  - Make payments into the learners' own bank account.
  - Make payments 'in kind' when deemed appropriate by Student Services (e.g. paying direct Southern Vectis for travel or the catering provider for free college meals).
  - Make payments to support childcare for learners aged over 20 years old.

### **3. Bursary application process**

- 3.1 All learners will be informed about the bursary application process through the 'start letter' sent to learners prior to their enrolment.
- 3.2 Learners can apply for financial support towards the essential costs of college (i.e. materials, travel and free college meals) dependant on eligibility. Eligibility criteria and details of appropriate evidence can be found on the online application. Bus pass and Age 20+ Childcare forms are available online. Some learners will be participating in work placements and may be eligible for support with costs associated with the placement. Staff will discuss individual support needs when planning industry placements.
- 3.3 Application forms are available online. Members of staff are available during office hours to advise and discuss an individual's application for a bursary, what they may be entitled to and to help complete application forms if necessary. Learners can also email [bursary.info@iwcollege.ac.uk](mailto:bursary.info@iwcollege.ac.uk).
- 3.4 Once the application is completed by the learner (i.e. details filled in, signed and the correct evidence submitted) the learner will be informed by email.
- 3.5 All bursaries are funded subject to the availability of funds and will be awarded on the understanding that the learner adheres to all aspects of the College Charter "Our Promise – You and Your College 2021/2022". We encourage learners to apply as early as possible to secure funding, although learners can apply at any point in the year if their circumstances change.

- 3.6 If someone applying for a bursary is known personally by, or related to, the member of staff accepting the application forms it will need to be countersigned by a different member of staff.

## 4. Eligibility Groups

- 4.1 The different financial, travel and childcare support the college administers are listed below:
- 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary: Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups of up to £1,200 a year. Learners aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for vulnerable groups.
  - 16-19 Discretionary Bursary: supports 16 to 19-year-old learners to meet individual needs, for example, help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment.
  - 19+ Discretionary Bursary: support for learners aged 19 or over, on a further education course and facing financial hardship. Childcare support is also available for students aged 20+.
  - Advanced Learner Loan Bursary: support for learners aged 19 or over on a course funded by an Advanced Learner Loan. Childcare support is also available for learners aged 20+.

## 5. 16-18 Vulnerable Bursary

- 5.1 The eligibility for the vulnerable bursary is defined by the government. Funding claims for this group are made directly through the Student Bursary Support Service portal. The vulnerable bursary will be awarded to learners who are aged 16-18 on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 and are:
- in care
  - care leavers
  - getting [Income Support](#) (IS) or [Universal Credit](#) (UC) in place of Income Support in their own right
  - getting [Employment Support Allowance](#) (ESA) or [Universal Credit](#) (UC) and [Disability Living Allowance \(DLA\)](#) or [Personal Independence Payments](#) in their own right.
- 5.2 Learners will be required to provide appropriate evidence of their circumstance as detailed on the application forms.
- 5.3 Learners, who receive a Vulnerable Bursary, will be supported with what they require from the bursary up to a maximum of £1,200 per academic year. Initially the College will support essential costs (e.g. material fees, central fees and bus passes as required) and these costs will be deducted from the bursary.
- 5.4 Vulnerable learners on a course lasting for less than 30 weeks (or on a reduced programme) may be entitled to bursary on a pro-rata basis. For example: -

A student attends college for 30 weeks and is assessed as being eligible for the maximum of £1,200 in the academic year (equating to £40 per week pro-rata). If the

same student was attending for only 10 weeks and was deemed to need the maximum amount of support, they would receive £400.

## 6. Free college meals (FCM)

The Isle of Wight College complies with government funding to provide FCMs to eligible learners who are aged 16+. To be eligible for FCM in the academic year the student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

- 6.1 Learners aged 19 or over are only eligible for FCM if they:
- are continuing on the same study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or
  - have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and aged 24 or under on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020

These 2 groups of learners can receive FCM while they continue to attend education (in the case of a 19+ continuer, this must be the same programme they started before they turned 19), as long as their eligibility continues. Learners are awarded £3.00 per day via a cashless swipe card system connected to the college I.D. cards.

- 6.2 Learners are eligible for FCM if their parent/carer or they, in their own right claim:
- Income Support
  - Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
  - Support 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 than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
  - Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
  - Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa.

- 6.3 Learners do not need to complete a separate application form for free college meals. If they apply for the 16+ Bursary and are eligible, they will automatically be given these. Learners who are not eligible for free college meals may get help, via extenuating circumstances or through their vulnerable bursary.

The government guidance states that the transitional protection arrangements apply as follows:

- Learners must be aged 16+ years on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021, must satisfy the residency criteria as set out by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), and must be on an eligible course (Apprenticeships cannot access FCM).
- Learners are required to complete the form and provide all the evidence requested demonstrating eligibility for FCM. Copies of evidence are retained for future reference and audit purposes.

In addition, learners age 19+ must also meet one of the following:

- Have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or
- Be a 19+ Continuer (i.e. on the second year of a course started when aged 16-18).

## **7. COVID-19/FCM payments**

7.1 Payments will be paid if the College were closed for classroom learning due to Coronavirus (COVID-19): if students cannot be on site for learning and instead participate in online or distance learning, they will be awarded a weekly allowance of £9, based on a daily allowance of £3 multiplied by an average of 3 days participation in learning per week. This will be paid electronically into their nominated bank account.

## **8. Work placements, students studying at franchise partners and times when students cannot access the college site**

8.1 Learners in receipt of FCM can use their entitlement on work placement days and/or when attending timetabled work-related activities off the College site(s). Learners will be awarded an allowance in arrears to the value £3 per day they attended. Tutors must confirm work placement timetables and attendance before the allowance can be issued which will enable the Bursary Team to process payment. This includes franchise partners such as UKSA and Platform 1.

8.2 Learners undertaking realistic work simulation at the College outside of normal College catering opening hours may be provided with a meal at the £3 rate. This will be agreed on a case by case basis.

## **9. 19+ Advanced Learner Loan (ALL) bursary**

9.1 Learners applying for the 19+ ALL Bursary are applying for funding from the 19+ Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund. The 19+ ALL Bursary is for learners aged 19+ on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 (or at the start of their course if later in the year) who have taken out an Advanced Learner Loan to pay for their course. Learners can apply for bursary funding if their annual income is under £20,000 and they meet the criteria identified on the application forms. Learners on a 19+ ALL Bursary may need to pay back funds awarded to them if their loan is subsequently not approved.

## **10. Support with childcare costs for learners under 20**

10.1 Learners aged under 20 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 wishing to access funding for childcare can apply for support through the government Care to Learn scheme, for further information please see: <https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn/overview>.

## **11. Support with childcare costs for learners aged 20 +**

11.1 Learners enrolled on eligible full and part time courses, and who are aged over 20 years of age, can apply for support with the costs of childcare from bursary funds.

The funding will be on a pro-rata basis depending on the guided learning hours. Learners may be eligible for help with the cost of childcare if they are in receipt of a low income and provide evidence needed as detailed on the relevant bursary application form.

- 11.2 Parents are expected to access any entitlement they may have to early learning for 2, 3 and 4 year olds before applying for bursary funding. Parents should visit [www.childcarechoices.gov.uk](http://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk) for further information.
- 11.3 Upon receipt of the completed 20+ childcare forms learners will be asked to read the associated rules and sign to say that they have understood them.

## 12. Extenuating Circumstances Fund

- 12.1 This fund is available to any students whose financial circumstances have significantly changed and they are not already in receipt of any form of government financial benefits or college Bursary. This fund **will not** be used: To replace support and benefit arrangements already provided through national policy or legislation (e.g. through benefits).
- 12.2 The funding will be awarded and distributed depending on the learner's circumstances and will be based upon the receipt of supporting evidence. Learners will be asked to provide proof of their circumstances. Copies of original documents will be taken and we may request to see the learner's most recent bank statements and letters to demonstrate the circumstances are as extenuating as the learner believes them to be.
- 12.3 Awards given will be decided on a case by case basis. Payments may be in the form of a loan, payment in kind, lump sum or regular instalments. If conditions are attached to the award i.e. an attendance agreement then the learner will be informed once a decision has been made as to what the award will be.

## 13. College Staff

- 13.1 If a member of staff applies for a bursary the initial application and resulting decision will be checked and approved by a director and will be reviewed each term to ensure that the criteria is still met.

## 14. Complaints or Appeals

- 14.1 In the first instance a learner or parent should speak to a member of staff who will try to resolve their query or concern. If the learner/parent/carer is still dissatisfied with how the College has handled their application for Bursary funding they should follow the College's Complaints procedure.