

# Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) Bursary

Policy for the disbursement of funds  
2020/2021 academic year

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At the Isle of Wight College discretionary learner support funds (DLSF) are also referred to as bursary/childcare funds/funding in exceptional circumstances 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: 2020 to 2021 academic year](#), [Adult education budget \(AEB\) funding rules 2020 to 2021](#) and the [Advanced learner loans funding rules 2020 to 2021](#).
- 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 2020/21 all learners must be ordinarily resident in the UK, EU or EEA and have been continuously resident there for at least the previous 3 years on the first day of learning, this applies to UK refugees with residency rights (support under part VI of the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999). The residence eligibility criteria for the bursaries are aligned to the residency criteria addressed in the ESFA funding rules and eligibility may change due to the UK's withdrawal from the EU/EEA.

## 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 application forms. There are two different bursary application forms available: 16+ Bursary and 19+ Advanced Learner Loans (19+ ALL). Bus Pass and Age 20+ Childcare forms are not included in the main bursary application forms and will need to be collected/downloaded separately. 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 supported by the Capacity and Delivery Fund (CDF).
- 3.3 Application forms are available to collect from outside the Student Services office or are available to download from the [college website](#). 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 attached), the learner should submit it to Student Services in person, via post or 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 2020/2021". 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. 16+ bursary

- 4.1 Learners can apply for any of the below funding using the 16+ Bursary application form:

- Vulnerable Bursary
- Free College Meals
- 16-19 Discretionary Learner Support Funding
- 19+ Learner Support funding

- 4.2 Learners whose household income is less than £25,000, or the learner is in receipt of qualifying benefits (where we may only look at their individual income), and meet the eligibility criteria, can apply for support towards the essential costs of College. If funds are available in the 19+ Bursary we will also consider applications for support from those whose household income is above this threshold but they have a low income fee waiver, i.e. where a learner has had their fee waived due to being on an eligible course and provided evidence that they earn less than £17,004 annual gross salary.

## 5. 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 2020 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 have a meeting to discuss what support 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 for 30 weeks or less (or on a reduced programme) may be entitled to a pro-rata bursary. For example, a vulnerable learner on a 6 week course (full time hours) would be eligible for a pro-rated guaranteed bursary of £240 (£40 per week multiplied by 6 weeks). Vulnerable learners who are on a part time course will also have their bursary pro-rata.

## 6. Free college meals (FCM)

- 6.1 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 these through our 16+ discretionary bursary, exceptional circumstances or through their vulnerable bursary. For more information, please see the Free College Meals Policy.

## 7. 19+ advanced learner loan (ALL) bursary

- 7.1 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 2020 (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 £25,000 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.

## 8. Support with child care costs for learners aged 16 - 19

- 8.1 Learners aged 16-19 on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020 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>.

## 9. Support with child care costs for learners aged 20 +

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 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.

## 10. Exceptional circumstances

- 10.1 Exceptional circumstance funding cannot be used to replace the funding arrangements that have already been provided through the College, national policy or legislation (e.g. through benefits).
- 10.2 The exceptional circumstance fund is to help learners who are in extreme financial difficulties that are outside normal bursary funding arrangements. The fund is designed to respond to hardship needs, particularly those that arise through sudden changes in circumstance for example where nationally administered schemes are not able to respond in-year or to support learners who find themselves in extreme 'in year' financial difficulties that may impede upon completion of their course.
- 10.3 The funding can be used for:
- Course related costs such as books, uniforms and equipment
  - Temporary support with domestic emergencies
  - Help to meet individual learners' transport cost usually on a temporary basis
  - Exam Fees
  - Tuition fees
  - Meals at college.

However, funding **will not** be used for:

- To replace support and benefit arrangements already provided through national policy or legislation (e.g. through benefits).
- 10.4 There is a separate form to complete when applying for funding for exceptional circumstances, which can be obtained from Student Services.
- 10.5 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 exceptional as the learner believes them to be.
- 10.6 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.
- 10.7 Applications for exceptional circumstances funding are not restricted to the beginning of the year and can be made throughout the year. If the learner feels they have a genuine case of difficulty the College will consider an application at any time.
- 10.8 All applications for exceptional circumstance funding should be submitted in person to Student Services.

- 10.9 All applicants will be supported by a member of Student Services regarding their application. In order to ensure learners receive the correct support in a timely way applicants should be prepared to answer questions and provide the necessary evidence as requested.
- 10.10 Decisions regarding the funding requested will always be made by two members of College staff.
- 10.11 Bursaries will only be allocated to an employee of the Isle of Wight College if the staff member is undertaking a funded course which is not sponsored through the staff development budget and is not part of their role). Any bursary support awarded will be allocated in accordance with the agreed bursary contributions attributed to the course undertaken, in line with any other learner eligible for bursary

Bursary allocations/payments for travel or childcare will only be made where the employee is undertaking their course on non-working days, and where costs incurred will directly relate to attendance at a course that is not required for their job role.

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.

## 11. Appeals/complaints process

- 11.1 Learners are able to appeal the decision of an initial assessment regarding support from the bursary. In the first instance a learner or parent should speak to the Senior Student Information Advisor who will try to resolve their query or concern. If the matter remains unresolved concerns regarding the administration, management of distribution of the bursaries should be submitted through the College complaints procedure, details of how to make a complaint are available on the college website.