

FE Bursary Fund Policy
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P27

Document control

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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- 1.1 South Devon College receives an annual allocation of funding to provide financial support for students who would otherwise find it difficult to attend or complete South Devon College programmes because of financial considerations. The College promotes these funds in its literature and on its website (www.southdevon.ac.uk) and directs any enquiries to the Helpzone, who have trained staff able to assist and advise on the availability of financial welfare support. This service is available for prospective and current students.

2. OVERVIEW

- 2.1 The Helpzone can be contacted by calling freephone 08000 380 123 or emailing enquiries@southdevon.ac.uk The Helpzone opening hours are: Monday to Thursday 8.30am – 5.00pm & Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm The College has an application form, which must be completed, should a student wish to apply for financial support. There is one universal Bursary Fund application form which supports; High School, 16-18 full time FE and 19+ FE learners. The form does not cover HE bursary funding. Application forms are online via the College website. Support is available in the Helpzone for students who require assistance with completion of the application form. Paper application forms are available at a last resort from the Helpzone.
- 2.2 It is not South Devon College’s responsibility to ensure that learners are made aware of the Bursary Fund, nor will the College send application forms to every applicant. The Helpzone team aim to inform all applicants of the Bursary Fund availability and how to apply for this. Information is available on the Funding page

of the College website. Learners can also apply directly online through the Bursary Application Portal. It is the learner's responsibility to apply for bursary fund support, if required.

- 2.3 The South Devon High School bursary is an internal fund set by the department in order to support travel for learners with household incomes of under £25,000 a year and household savings/bank balance of under £30,000. This is not Government bursary fund and awards are at the discretion of the relevant department. Applicants are to apply using the standard bursary application form. This fund can only support their travel and the learner must live more than 2 miles away from their campus of study.

3. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

- 3.1 The College will ensure that all bursary fund applications are considered on the same basis, irrespective of age, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, belief or faith - As outlined in the Equality Act 2010.

4. SUPPORT FUNDS – GENERAL ELIGIBILITY

- 4.1 Students must be enrolled on a course funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Apprenticeship courses, Higher Education courses and full cost courses are not eligible for bursary fund support. Ordinarily a resident in the British Isles or European Union for purposes other than education for the last three years. Asylum seekers are not eligible. In exceptional circumstances, where funds allow, applications who do not meet these specific criteria may still be considered, at the discretion of the College.

5. ASSESSING INCOME FOR ALL FUNDS

- 5.1 All applicants will be asked to complete an application form. Support is available in the Helpzone for students who require assistance with completion of the application form. Evidence should be dated within 6 months, where possible.

- 5.2 The following is accepted as proof of income for means testing for financial support:

- P60 for previous year
- Wage Slips (minimum of 3 monthly / 12 weekly payslips)
- Current Tax Credit Award Letter (-all pages required)
- Benefit Award Letter (Income Support, ESA, JSA, Housing Benefit -all pages required)
- Full Breakdown of the 3 most recent monthly Universal Credit Payments
- Self-Employed earnings/ profit or Official Accountant's letter

If unable to provide any of the above, we can accept a copy of bank statements indicating regular payments from the Benefits Agency or Maintenance Payments- 3 months worth required.

In exceptional circumstances, where household income evidence is not supplied due to parental / guardian refusal to provide, funds will be awarded

at the discretion of the Funding and Transport Senior Co-ordinator/ Head of Student Services.

6. 16-18 FE COLLEGE BURSARY FUNDS

- 6.1 To be eligible for these awards students must be at least 16 but under 19 years of age on 31 August 2024. There are two main categories to the Bursary Fund:
- 6.2 **16-18 Vulnerable Bursary:** This includes students in care, care leavers, young people in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit in their own name with also a tenancy agreement and also for students in receipt of both Disability Living Allowance (or the new Personal Independence Payment) AND Employment Support Allowance (or Universal Credit as a replacement for ESA) in their own right, or unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. This bursary is assessed on need and there may be funding available of up to £1,200 per student. No blanket/ set payments- only if we deem the support necessary.
- 6.3 **16-18 Discretionary Bursary Fund:** This element of the bursary is to be used to support students from low-income households, less than £25,000 (before tax) a year and household savings/bank balance of under £30,000. Bursary is assessed on earned household incomes, therefore this includes allowances paid such as fostering allowances. Bursary funds may be awarded for items such as; books, equipment, transport, and other course related costs. If a student has an earned household income of £21,000-£25,000 then the Bursary fund can support with transport-only. Students aged 19 who are completing the second year of the course they started when they were 18 years old will also be supported through the 16-18 Bursary Fund. 19-24 year old students enrolled on an FE course with a valid Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP), who meet the income criteria will also be supported through the 16-18 Bursary Fund.
- 6.4 **Apprentice Care Leaver Support:** Any care leaver who is enrolled onto an apprenticeship programme after 1st August 2024 will be entitled to a lump sum bursary payment of £3,000. This payment will be issued within 90 days of the relevant form being completed and submitted. Care Leaver status confirmation will be obtained through Social Services, by the Helpzone Team. This support is intended to support things such as household rental deposits, kit and equipment support and other support to enable the apprentice to succeed.

7. 16-18 CATEGORIES OF SUPPORT

- 7.1 Students identified as being in the priority group for the 16-18 Vulnerable Bursary may be entitled to up to £1,200 per academic year. This bursary is assessed and awarded on need and no blanket/ set payments will be added unless we deem the support necessary.
- 7.2 If set payments are deemed necessary these will be awarded pro-rata for students that start their programme late, complete early, or are studying a programme of less than 30 weeks in length. Students will have their up-

front awards deducted from the value of the bursary during the first term of the academic year. The amount remaining will be calculated and paid weekly by BACS throughout the duration of the course where satisfactory attendance requirements have been met. The payment of the 16-18 Discretionary Bursary will be awarded to students under the standard categories of support seen below. Due to the limited nature of funding available the College will assess on a first-come, first-served basis. It is the student's responsibility to apply for funding.

8. 16-18 COURSE MATERIALS / EQUIPMENT

8.1 Applications for assistance with additional equipment, books and uniform will be supported, up to the level identified by the College ready reckoner. Assessments will be made against the essential items provided by curriculum teams prior to the start of the course and support is considered a contribution to these costs and will not necessarily cover the costs in full. If any additional support is required for disadvantaged students such as IT equipment/ devices, this will be assessed on an individual basis to overcome any barriers to learning working alongside the HOT's. Any items already purchased may not be reimbursed. Awards will be made to a third party where possible. Applications and support are available from the website and the Helpzone.

9 16-18 TRAVEL COSTS

- 9.1 Working in partnership with local authorities and transport providers, eligible students are entitled to discounted annual bus passes.
- 9.2 Where students require a travel pass, funded through the bursary fund, monies will be used to purchase this on behalf of the student and will be paid directly to the provider.
- 9.3 High School students must live more than **2** miles from their site of study and be enrolled in order to be eligible for support with travel costs. Assessment for transport and decisions on transport eligibility will be made by the Head of Student Services, in line with policy.
- 9.4 For 16-18 students who receive petrol payments (or 19+ EHCP), payments are subject to attendance checks, with the approval rate being above 80%. We understand that for some students, attendance may be a challenge due to medical reasons. Where attendance is below 80%, petrol payments will be made on a pro-rata basis. For example, if a student has attended 50%, they will receive 50% of the termly travel payment. These payments are awarded in 6x separate instalments, one per half-term.
- 9.5 There may be exceptions which do not fit these criteria, in this situation the case may be reviewed under exceptional circumstances, jointly by the Head of Student Services & Wellbeing and the Head of SEND, Learning Opps and Vulnerable Learners.

10 FREE MEALS

10.1 16-18 students will be assessed for Free Meals in line with ESFA guidance using the information and evidence provided in their Bursary Application. You may be entitled to Free Meals for the days you attend lessons if you or your parents are in receipt of certain benefits. This assessment will be undertaken alongside the assessment for transport and bursary eligibility. Students will not be entitled to receive free meals unless an application has been assessed and approved. *See below for details of eligible benefits.* One meal per day will be available to eligible students from college catering outlets on timetabled days and up to a set value. A supermarket voucher for the same amount will be provided for students who are off site on mandatory placement claimed on a weekly basis. Students aged 19-24 could also be entitled if they have a valid Educational Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan) and meet the criteria.

10.2 Free Meal Eligibility

10.2.1 In receipt of Income Support/ JSA- income based or ESA- income based

10.2.2 In receipt of Universal Credit (with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum)

10.2.3 Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit

10.2.4 Child Tax Credit (without working tax credit) and annual income of under £16,190

10.2.5 Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

11 CHILDCARE COSTS FOR 16-19 STUDENTS

11.1 Any student who meets the criteria for childcare funding and is under 20 years old when commencing their course, will be eligible for childcare payments through Care to Learn. Applications are submitted online via www.gov.uk/care-to-learn

12 OTHER COSTS

12.1 The college has a Discretionary Hardship Fund for those students who require short term or emergency financial support. Further details are available from the Funding and Transport Team. When a 19+ student is supported by the 16-19 Bursary Fund due to having an EHCP, the college will strive to ensure that this does not disadvantage the student from receiving support, as a 19+ student, where appropriate.

13 19+ STUDENTS – ADULT BURSARY FUNDS

13.1 There are two bursary funds available; the Learner Support Fund and the 19+ Advanced Learner Loan bursary. To be eligible, students must be aged 19 or over on the 31st August 2024 and must be enrolling on a FE course (Not available for HE).

- 13.2 Applications will be means tested and those students who can provide evidence of earned income of less than **£35,000** per year (gross) will qualify.
- 13.3 The student must also have savings/a bank balance of under £30,000.
- 13.4 Due to the limited nature of funding available the College will assess on a first-come, first-served basis. It is the student's responsibility to apply for funding. Students must meet a means test to qualify for support. If a student has an earned income of **£30,000- £35,000** then the Bursary fund can support with transport only.
- 13.5 All individuals in need of financial support are encouraged to apply. Any student who does not meet the criteria outlined above but can demonstrate a financial need will be considered and, where funds allow, discretionary awards will be made. If this is not possible the student will be advised about other support available in the form of other College funds, or other local and national grants.

14 ADDITIONAL QUALIFYING REQUIREMENTS FOR 19+ ADULT SUPPORT FUNDS

- 14.1 Where adult funds are limited, students aged 19 + who are applying for assistance for a course where they have previously achieved a higher level of qualification or a recent equivalent level of qualification (within the last 5 years) will not be considered a priority for support from the Learner Support Fund, even if they satisfy the criteria for one or more of the groups. However, the application will be reviewed once all priority applications have been assessed and where funds allow, awards will be made.

15 CATEGORIES OF SUPPORT FOR ADULT BURSARY FUNDS – 19+ STUDENTS

- 15.1 The Adult Bursary Fund can support with course related costs, such as, additional course materials, travel costs and childcare costs.
- 15.2 Support for tuition fees can be considered in exceptional circumstances where students **do not** qualify for any of the government funded schemes or the Advanced Learner Loan, and the means test shows that the costs are not affordable to the student and, therefore, a barrier to enrolling or completing on the programme. In these cases, applicants may be required to attend an interview with the Funding and Transport Senior Co-ordinator and Head of Student Services to gather additional financial information required to make a fair decision.
- 15.3 The cost of the College Fee cannot be supported by this fund and must be paid by all adult students. Course Trips cannot be supported from this fund. Students who have been awarded support with the cost of equipment may use this equipment at home or in their own study time to enhance their learning.
- 15.4 Eligible adult students can request either a bus pass or termly petrol award which will be made directly to the student. Any awards made from the Adult Bursary Fund are considered a contribution to these costs and will not

necessarily cover the costs in full. Large items of equipment purchased will remain the property of the college and should be returned, in a good condition, by the student at the end of their course.

16 ADULT BURSARY FUND – CHILDCARE FUND 20+ ADULT STUDENTS

- 16.1 Support for external childcare provision will be considered at a capped rate – in line with the on-site nursery equivalent daily / session charge.
- 16.2 Payments will be made directly to the provider. Providers must be OFSTED-registered.
- 16.3 The Adult Bursary Fund will only support **term time** childcare places and cannot support the cost of holiday retainer fees for other providers.
- 16.4 Cover will only be provided to cover timetabled lessons and not independent study time. Reasonable travel time to and from nursery to college is taken into account when assessing sessions / hours covered.
- 16.5 Payments for childcare will not be supported where a student has chosen to undertake a period of work placement. Compulsory work placements can be supported.
- 16.6 Students whose children are eligible for LEA funded or the Torbay 'Together funding' are expected to use these sessions to cover timetabled sessions before any additional funding is requested.
- 16.7 All awards will be 'provisional' until a copy of the student's timetable has been received and checked against sessions / hours claimed.
- 16.8 Children of school age can be supported with breakfast / after school clubs fees but not fees for private schools.
- 16.9 Students must inform the Helpzone if they leave their course early or if any changes are made to their timetables which affect the sessions required.
- 16.10 Any cost of childcare used after leave dates will be the responsibility of the student.
- 16.11 Payments are made monthly in arrears, subject to satisfactory attendance.
- 16.12 **Eligible funded students will be sent a college childcare contract outlining the requirements for ongoing support. This will need to be signed and returned by the student before any payments for childcare can be made.**

17 19+ BURSARY FUNDED IT PACKAGE

17.1 Students who meet the criteria set out below may be entitled to a Bursary Funded IT Package. In order to be eligible for an IT package, a student must be:

17.1.1 A 19+ adult student, with a earned income of below £25,000 and on a course that is 100+ hours a year.

17.1.2 A 16-18 vulnerable student i.e. a child in care.

17.2 IT package vouchers will give students the choice between a Laptop or an iPad *subject to change* and can be redeemed at the Essentials Shop on main campus. Vouchers will be valid until 31st June 2025.

18 APPRENTICESHIP HARDSHIP FUND

18.1 Students who are studying for an apprenticeship and who are experiencing financial difficulty may apply to the Hardship Fund for support. Applications will be means tested in line with the above support funds and funds are limited.

19 ADMINISTRATION OF THE APPLICATIONS

19.1 Decisions on the level of financial support offered to applicants will be made by the Funding and Transport Senior Co-ordinator. Internal ready-reckoners will be used to identify amounts awarded – this will vary depending on course requirements. 16-18 Bursary Fund applicants will be informed of these decisions by email, within 20 working days of a correctly completed form being submitted. 19+ Adult Support Fund applicants will be informed of these decisions by email, within 20 working days of a correctly completed form being submitted.

20 AWARD NOTIFICATION

20.1 Applicants will be notified by email where possible, within the above specified time frames, how much has been allocated to the categories they have applied for help with. Successful applicants will be informed of how payments will be made and what proof or further information is needed before monies will be released. Subject to termly confirmation of continued eligibility and attendance targets met.

21 APPEALS

21.1 All bursary applicants are able to appeal their award decisions, by putting their appeal in writing addressed to the Head of Student Services and Wellbeing, for review. The purpose of the appeals procedure is to promote and maintain the integrity of the Bursary Fund assessment process for all applicants and to settle any appeal promptly, simply and above all fairly.

22 RESPONSIBILITIES

22.1 Head of Student Services & Wellbeing and the Funding and Transport Team - Allocation & administration of the Bursary Funds and to ensure the maintenance of appropriate records. To forecast against the budget and to monitor levels of spending on each fund. To ensure accurate completion of yearly returns. To monitor the administration and decision making of the applications process against agreed policy. To review forecasts on

financial commitments and to liaise with Financial Controller to ensure full use of fund.

22.2 Helpzone Advisor(s) - Knowledge of the criteria and application process of the Bursary Funds, to advise students broadly.