

**Discretionary Learner Support Fund
(DLSF)
Bursary**

Policy for the disbursement of funds
2017/2018 academic year

Author: Michelle Campbell

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Putting Students First

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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 students.

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 for 2017 to 2018](#) and the [Adult education budget: funding and performance- management rules](#)
- 1.2 The bursary will not support courses that are not funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency for example; non-concessionary courses. The bursary will also not fund learners on Apprenticeship courses.
- 1.3 To apply for a bursary 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 EFA and SFA funding rules.

- 1.4 We have referred to the EFA and SFA bursaries in this document as this helps identify what bursary pot students are funded from. The EFA and SFA have now combined to form the Education and Skills Funding Agency but the bursary pots remain separate and identifiable.

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 DWP and the Jobcentre Plus and IW Council funded travel) ahead of consideration for the bursary and ensure that learner's 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 learner's 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 students to support the costs of College as follows;
 - Make internal transfers, to cover the pre-determined material fees.
 - Refund any pre-agreed expenditure, as identified with departments, noted on the bursary application packs (and course vouchers for Catering, Hair & Beauty).
 - Make regular payments to the 'vulnerable' and 'enhanced discretionary' bursary groups into the learners own bank account.
 - Make payments 'in kind' when deemed appropriate by Student Services e.g. paying Southern Vectis directly for travel or Caterlink directly for Free College Meals.

- Make payments to support childcare for learners age 20+.

3. CATEGORIES OF FUNDING AVAILABLE

The following bursary funding is available for learners:

- 16-24 EFA Bursary
- 19+ SFA Bursary
- 19+ ALL Bursary

4. 16 – 24 EFA BURSARY:

Who is eligible to apply for the EFA 16-24 Bursary?

- Students age 16-18
- 19+ Continuers (Students age 19+ who are on the second year of a course they started when age 16-18)
- Students age 19-24 who have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)

4.1 There are 4 categories of 16-24 EFA Bursary. The first category – the vulnerable bursary’s eligibility is defined by the [government guidelines](#). Funding claims for this group are made directly through the Student Bursary Support Service portal and do not form part of the DLSF allocation. The guaranteed bursary will be awarded to students who are aged 16-18 on 31st August 2017 and are:

- In care¹
- care leavers²
- 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

Learners will be required to provide appropriate evidence of their circumstance as detailed on the application forms available to download from the [College website](#). Printed copies are available from Student Services.

¹ For the purposes of the 16-19 Bursary Fund children in care is defined as “children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (section 31 of the Children Act 1989). Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 defines the term ‘looked after child’”

² For the purposes of the 16-19 Bursary Fund care leavers are defined as “either young people aged 16 and 17 who were previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16. Or a young person who is aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods of 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16.”

Learners, who receive a Vulnerable Bursary, will receive regular payments into their bank account (up to £ 1,200 per academic year). Initially the College will support essential costs e.g. material fees and bus passes and these costs will be deducted from the bursary.

Vulnerable learners (criteria as above) on a course for 30 weeks or less are 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.

If vulnerable bursary learners are also eligible for Free College Meals they will receive these in addition to any help through the vulnerable bursary. Vulnerable bursary learners who are not eligible for Free College Meals can choose to have these coming out of their vulnerable bursary if they wish.

- 4.2 Learners in the other 3 16-24 EFA Bursary groups 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 available to download from the [College website](#).

The 3 types of non-guaranteed DLSF Bursary are:

- 1) Discretionary Bursary – Learners whose household income is less than £19,000, and meet the eligibility criteria, can apply for support towards the essential costs of College.
- 2) Enhanced Discretionary Bursary – is for identified groups of learners (based on local knowledge) who are vulnerable who also qualify for the discretionary bursary. We use our discretionary learner support fund and do not directly claim this from the EFA.
- 3) Travel Bursary - Learners with a household income of between £19,000 and £30,000 may be eligible for help towards travel only. This is in the form of a Southern Vectis ‘flash pass’ or petrol only.

All non-guaranteed bursaries are funded subject to the availability of funds from the DLSF and will be awarded on the understanding that the learner adheres to all aspects of the College Charter “Our Promise – You and Your College 2017/2018”.

5. SUPPORT WITH CHILD CARE COSTS FOR LEARNERS AGE 16 – 19

- 5.1 Learners aged 16 – 19 on 31st August 2017 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>.

6. 19+ SFA and 19+ ALL BURSARY

- 6.1 Learners aged 19-24 with an EHCP, or 19+ Continuers should apply for the 16-24 Bursary. Other learners aged 19+ on 31st August 2017 are considered for bursary funding on their personal financial circumstances. Learners can apply for bursary funding if their annual income is under £19,000, they meet the criteria identified on the application forms and are studying an eligible course. We have two application forms 19+ SFA Bursary and the 19+ ALL Bursary dependant on how the course is funded e.g. if an advanced learner loan has been taken out by the student. Students on a 19+ ALL Bursary may need to pay back funds awarded to them if their loan is subsequently not approved.

7. SUPPORT WITH CHILD CARE COSTS FOR LEARNERS AGED 20 +

- 7.1 Learners enrolled on eligible full and part time courses, and who are aged 20+, can apply for support with the costs of childcare from bursary funds. The funding will be on a pro-rata basis dependant 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 of less than £19,000 and provide evidence needed as detailed on the Bursary application form.

8. RULES REGARDING CHILDCARE 20+ FUNDS

- 8.1 The following rules must be followed by the learner who is applying for support with child care costs:
- I understand that I may have to repay the childcare funds awarded to me if I withdraw from the course or my attendance/commitment is not according to the College Charter
 - I understand that I will have to fund my childcare from 8 weeks after my enrolment date if my loan is not approved
 - I understand that if my loan is not approved then I will have to pay back any money that has been awarded to me or paid out on my behalf

- **I understand that I am expected to utilise any free government funded childcare entitlement to cover my timetabled hours and that this fund is not a replacement fund**
- I understand that the childcare fund will only cover my timetabled College hours
- I understand that I am responsible for any fees not agreed with the College
- I understand that the agreement for childcare is made between the childcare provider and myself
- I understand that I am responsible for informing Student Services of any changes to my timetabled hours including any exam dates
- I understand that the childcare fund does not support travel time to and from College or lunches/meals for my children and that I will be liable for these costs myself
- I agree that my childcare provider can share relevant information, as requested, with the Isle of Wight College.

9. BURSARY APPLICATION PROCESS

- 9.1 All learners will be informed about the bursary application process through the 'start letter' sent to learners prior to their enrolment.
- 9.2 There are three different bursary application packs available: 16-24 EFA Bursary, 19+ SFA Bursary and 19+ ALL Bursary.
- 9.3 Application forms are available to collect from outside the Student Services Office. 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 applications if necessary. You can also email StudentServices@iwcollege.ac.uk. Application forms are also available to download from the College website <http://www.iwcollege.ac.uk/information/financial-support/>.
- 9.4 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.

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 As the funding for exceptional circumstances is through DLS funding there are some restrictions on which learners can apply. Learners age 14 or 15 on 31st August 2017, Apprentices, paid Traineeships, learners on university, courses full cost courses and students paying in full for level 3 courses without a loan cannot apply for DLS funded exceptional circumstances.
- 10.3 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.
- 10.4 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
- However funding **will not** be used for:
- Access to College facilities
 - To replace support and benefit arrangements already provided through national policy or legislation (e.g. through benefits).
- 10.5 There is a separate form to complete when applying for funding for exceptional circumstances, which can be obtained from Student Services.
- 10.6 The funding will be awarded and distributed depending on the learners circumstances and will be based upon the receipt of supporting evidence. Learners will be asked to provide extensive proof. Photo 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.
- 10.7 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.
- 10.8 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.

- 10.9 All applications for exceptional circumstance funding should be submitted in person to Student Services.
- 10.10 All applicants will be interviewed by a member of Student Services regarding their application, applicants should be prepared to answer questions and provide the necessary evidence as requested in a timely manner.
- 10.11 Decisions regarding the funding requested will always be made by two people.

11. APPEALS PROCESS

- 11.1 Learners can appeal against a decision of an initial assessment regarding funding. Any concerns regarding the administration, management of distribution of the bursaries should be submitted through the College complaints procedure.