

Discretionary Learner Support Fund Policy 2019 - 2020

Introduction

This policy outlines the guidelines for the management and allocation of the 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund for the 2019/2020 academic year.

These funds are provided to the College by the government to support learners who are experiencing financial difficulties with costs associated with their studies. This could include transport, books and equipment, UK compulsory trips (overseas compulsory trips considered on individual basis) and other essential course related costs.

The funds are available to students undertaking a government funded course but cannot be used to support students undertaking a full cost course. Funds are limited and targeted at those most in need. Funds are allocated on a first come, first served basis. All requests for funding will be considered although it may not always be possible to help. If the funding is exhausted, the College reserves the right to close the fund. Throughout this form the word 'student' will be interchangeable with the word 'learner', both referring to the individual undertaking the programme of study.

Eligibility and Conditions

Eligibility: Learners are eligible to apply for funding if they meet the requirements as stated in the Funding Rules 2019/2020 issued by the Education & Skills Funding Agency.

Eligibility to funding does not give the individual the right to funding. Assistance awarded to a learner will always be conditional on behaviour, remaining on the course and maintaining a **minimum of 90% attendance**. Colchester Institute reserves the right to remove support due to students' misbehaviour, fraud or if the reputation of the College is brought into disrepute. If the learner does not meet the conditions or withdraws from the course then they may be requested to return equipment and any cash awards they have received.

Awards will be made in accordance with the published guidance from the Education & Skills Funding Agency. While it is recognised that learners face financial pressures, funding is not a right and the College has a duty to make sure that funds are awarded fairly and to the learners most in need.

If the student does not meet the conditions or if they withdraw from their course then they may be requested to return equipment and any cash awards they have

Application Process

Applicants must complete the relevant application form for the fund they are applying to, and clearly identify the support that they feel they need to achieve their course of study.

Applicants must demonstrate their financial need by providing the income information and supporting evidence as detailed in the application forms. Each application for financial assistance will be considered by a College Fund Administrator and decisions will be made based on the information provided and the eligibility criteria for the different type of award.

These are detailed in the sections below.

For courses starting in September 2019, applications should be received by the Student Services office by 1st November 2019. Applications received after this date will be considered on a pro-rata basis subject to need and availability of funds.

Appeals

Learners can appeal against decisions taken by the College Fund Administrators in writing to the Student Services Manager.

19+ Discretionary Learner Support (DLS)
Important: The college support fund will not make any reimbursements for items purchased by you prior to your form being assessed, unless authorised by the Student Services Manager.

19+ Discretionary Learner Support is aimed at supporting learners aged 19 and over, whose course is not eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan. Students aged 19 who started a two year programme before their 19th birthday or aged 19 and over and have an EHCP should apply for funding from the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

This support is aimed at students with a specific financial hardship. It aims to support vulnerable and disadvantaged learners by removing the barriers to education or training.

The College Fund Administrators will determine if the area of financial hardship is:

- Learners aged 19 and over in financial hardship
- Learners aged 20 and over with childcare issues

Hardship Fund

Applications will be considered by a College Fund Administrator according to individual needs and local circumstances and awards may be for the following:

1. Essential course related costs including trips, books and equipment.
2. Transport to College and/or work placement. As funding is provided by public money, we are required to ensure support given provides the best value for money. Travel support may be in the form of a bus pass or train pass, whichever is the cheapest option.
3. Professional membership fees
4. A grant to support the learner with a domestic emergency or extenuating circumstances that would render them unable to start or continue with their learning

Note: Asylum seekers are eligible for provisions 1-3 but not 4.

Additional information required for 19+ Discretionary Learner Support

Evidence of income/benefit which must be in date and should be **one** of the following:

Qualifying benefits:

Income Support
Jobseeker's Allowance (income based)
Employment & Support Allowance (income related)
Working Tax Credit (2019/20) income below 21,000
Child Tax Credit (2019/20) income below £21,000 and not entitled to Working Tax Credit
Pension Credit
Universal Credit

Evidence of Income:

P60 2019
Current payslips

Please be aware that it is your responsibility to tell the Department for Work and Pensions about any discretionary learner support that you receive from the college, as discretionary learner support payments may affect your eligibility to some benefits.

20+ Childcare

If applying for help with childcare, the childcare application form must be completed in addition to the student funding application form.

Provides targeted support for students who are at risk of not starting learning, or not continuing learning, as a result of difficulty getting childcare due to the cost.

All Colchester Institute childcare awards will be subject to the provider being registered with Ofsted.

If a learner withdraws from College or has funding declined because attendance has fallen below 90%, the College will take no responsibility for payment of outstanding fees to childcare providers. Students who withdraw will be liable for any childcare costs incurred after their last day of attendance.

Childcare will pay:

- For the time you spend in timetabled classes or placement
- Travel time to and from college
- 100% fees for first two children, 50% for third and fourth children. There is no assistance for any other children
- A maximum award of £7,000 per year per student
- To a registered childcare provider during term time only

Childcare will **not** pay:

- For Christmas and Easter holiday periods and periods of half term
- For deposits, make advance payments or be responsible for late payment fees
- If the learner changes the number of days or hours their child attends their childcare provider and fails to inform the College Childcare Administrator.
- For timetabled hours if you have a partner who is able to provide childcare

Please note that any free government funding for 2, 3 and 4 year olds must be used for college and placement days before additional hours can be paid for with college funding.

Colchester Institute reserves the right to cap childcare fees if they are considered to be excessive.

Funds are capped and allocated at the discretion of the Colchester Institute College Support Fund Committee, in line with current policy. The funds are limited and childcare funding applications received when the fund is low or exhausted may be refused.

Colchester Institute reserves the right to alter or amend the childcare funding policy at any time.

Options for Childcare

Your children must be placed with either an Ofsted registered private nursery or an Ofsted registered childminder.

School age children must also be placed with an Ofsted registered childminder, or after school club.

Please note: Applications for financial help are valid for one academic year only. Should you return to College in September 2020 and still require financial assistance, a new application form must be completed and up to date supporting evidence supplied.

(All figures correct at the time of printing)