

**Operating Procedure for Higher Education Support Funds 2019-20**

**1 Purpose**

- 1.1 The College allocates a proportion of income to support access to higher education, student retention, student success, progression and student hardship. The awards vary on an annual basis and are confirmed in the college access agreement annually.
- 1.2 This operating procedure provides clarity on the criteria and process for the allocation of support funds. To ensure that they are distributed in a fair and timely manner.

**2 Definitions**

**2.1 The Higher Education Bursary Programme**

The Higher Education Bursary Programme offers financial support to students from households with an income of less than £25,000. The allocation for 2019-20 is £50,000, representing 50 full time awards of £1,000 per student (pro rata to part time students) for low income families and £13,000 representing 13 full-time awards for other widening participation factors.

**2.2 Employability Bursary**

The bursary is aimed at supporting students from the high priority groups listed in section 5 to complete additional qualifications or engage with industry specific development which will support career opportunities.

50 employability bursaries of up to £300 are available in 2019-20

**2.3 Student Opportunity Fund (General Hardship Fund)**

This discretionary fund is specifically aimed at assisting Higher Education students that are in financial hardship or difficulty to:

- meet specific course and living costs which are not already met from other sources,
- provide emergency payments for unexpected financial crisis,
- intervene in cases where a student may be considering giving up their course because of financial problems.

The Student Opportunity Fund awards are conditional to the students' expenditure being higher than their income. If this is the case, the student is considered to have an *additional* need.

**3 Responsibilities**

**3.1 Assistant Principal Campus and Student Services**

- Overseeing that the procedure is fully implemented.
- Countersigning all payments from the funds

- Annual reporting on the effectiveness of policy and procedure
  - Submission of annual returns
- 3.2 Student Services Manager
- Training of Student Services Finance Officers
  - Ensuring that reporting is made to relevant committees throughout the academic year
  - Assuring published information on financial support is accurate.
  - Ensuring all audit requirements are met
- 3.3 Finance Office
- Make timely payments as per approved schedule
- 3.4 Student Services Officer (HE Finance)
- Promotion of the funds to students and applicants
  - Initial assessment of eligibility.
  - Application and appeal support to students
  - Preparation of timely returns to funding authorities.
  - Managing central record of applications and payments
  - Retain audit trail of all transactions including eligibility evidence.
  - Preparation of applications for the Support Fund Committee
  - Communication with students of committee outcomes
  - Accurate recording of committee decisions
  - Obtain evidence to support applications
  - Arrangement of payment with finance
  - Provision of information for reporting purposes as requested
  - Annual updating of criteria as per approved Access and Participation Plan
  - Obtaining feedback and reviewing the success of the HE Support Funds.
- 3.5 Course Managers
- Signpost students in need to Student Services Officer (HE Finance) and promote support funds.
  - Confirmation for eligibility for instalments linked to student attendance and performance
  - Support student appeals
  - May support applications or appeals with written statement
- 3.6 Student Support Fund Committee
- Meet every month
  - Monitor spending levels throughout the academic year and remain within budget
  - Make decisions on awards and appeals

## 4 Eligibility

- Full time and part time Higher Education students defined as “home” students in the residency regulations (including distance learning students) that have been ordinarily resident in the UK for the 3 years prior to the commencement of the course and are enrolled on a Higher Education course at Bishop Burton or Riseholme College (providing part time students are studying at least 50% of a full time equivalent).
- HE students who have completed a Foundation degree at Riseholme and wish to study an agreed articulation route at the Bishop Burton campus, may be able to access financial support towards transport costs incurred. Students will apply to the Committee in the normal way to access this transition fund.
- Students must be able to demonstrate they are in financial hardship.
- All applicants must have applied for their full entitlement of student loans and grants (where applicable) e.g Maintenance Grants and Loans
- Applicants must have agreed to share their information when applying to Student Finance England.
- All applicants must have applied for all other available means of financial support, including tax credits and social security benefits (where applicable).
- Post graduate students who meet the criteria may also apply for HE postgraduate financial support through the student opportunity (hardship) fund.
- The College will take appropriate account of and provision for any student whose attendance is affected by a disability (as defined in the Equality Acts 2010 Guidance document) to appropriately mitigate against the adverse effects their attendance may have on their access to attendance linked benefits and provisions

### 4.1 Additional Learning Support

Students who require additional academic support which is no longer met by the Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) may be able to access support via the Student Opportunity Fund. This can cover items such as dyslexia assessments, SpLD software or other assistive technology support. Students have to be endorsed for this support by the Student Support Co-ordinator. This does not replace any support which would be provided as a reasonable adjustment by the college.

Students may utilise the fund (with or without previously having taken out Student Finance). It is not necessary for the student to be assessed formally for the cost of the additional academic support. The student will be required to provide a valid invoice for reimbursement if they have paid for the assessment cost themselves in advance.

## 5 Priority Groups

The Office for Students provide guidance on the priority groups which should be targeted for support

In 2019-20 priority will be given to students that fall into the following priority groups:

- Students from low-income backgrounds (household income of up to £25,000)
- Students from lower socio-economic groups or from neighbourhoods where higher education participation is low
- Students from ethnic groups or sub-groups, including white males from economically disadvantaged backgrounds
- Disabled students (that have already applied for all other statutory support for which they are eligible)
- Care leavers
- Carers
- Estranged young people and students
- Students who are homeless
- Students in final year loan rate, in financial difficulty and unable to work due to academic pressure
- Mature and part time students with existing financial commitments, including priority debts
- Students from traveller communities
- Students with children (especially lone parents)

Attendance and submission of work will be considered when making awards Bishop Burton bursary awards as securing successful outcomes for students is central to the policy and the link between attendance and performance is therefore highlighted. Students will not be discriminated against when absence is due to disability.

## 6 Process

### 6.1 The Higher Education Bursary

6.1.1 The Student Support Fund Committee will manage the allocation of this funding. The Committee will allocate funding to students based on financial and personal data received from Student Finance England, therefore there is no additional application process for this funding. The awards will be made to the 50 students with the lowest household income as shown in the data from Student Finance England. The Student Support Fund Committee can only consider allocating the funding to students who have agreed to share their financial data with the College.

6.1.2 The funding will be made up of a cash bursary of £1,000 and will be awarded in the first year of the course.

6.1.3 The funding will be paid in three instalments across the academic year subject to confirmation of 90% present attendance between the payment dates. The payment dates for 2019-20 are:

- Friday 22 November 2019
- Friday 21 February 2020
- Friday 1 May 2020

With a final payment for students continuing year 2 of study in 2020-2021

- Friday 14 November 2020

6.1.4 Students that have been allocated the funding will be notified in writing of the decision made by the Committee within five working days of the meeting. The letter will detail the method in which any payments will be made.

## 6.2 Employability Bursary

6.2.1 For applications to be considered all students must complete and submit a Student Financial Awards application form (available from Student Services) and supporting documents, followed by an advisory interview.

6.2.2 Students must submit a supporting statement to 'pitch' for the award which identifies how this will support their career ambitions and enhance CV's. Supporting evidence of jobs which ask for these qualifications would support the application if applicable.

## 6.3 General Hardship Fund (GHF)

6.3.1 For applications to be considered all students must follow the college procedure which includes the completion and submission of a Student Financial Awards application form (available from Student Services) and supporting documents, as listed below, followed by an advisory interview.

6.3.2 All applicants must have applied for their full entitlement of student loans and grants (where applicable).

6.3.3 Evidence must be provided to support every application as follows:

- An assessment/SFE loan request form and payment schedule letter (where applicable)
- Written evidence of any scholarships or other grants received (where applicable).
- Evidence of savings or other income, or evidence to show that the student has applied for other sources of income available (e.g. HE bursaries)
- Three months recent bank statements. All credits/debits over £100 must be discussed at the advisory interview.

- Evidence of Income Support, Incapacity Benefits, Housing/Council Tax Benefits, Job Seekers Allowance and Working/Child Tax Credits as appropriate.
- Tenancy Agreement or Mortgage Payment Schedule. Students boarding with parents/guardians must provide a letter confirming the amount paid per week/month.
- A letter from childcare provider and a recent receipt/invoice for childcare costs (if applicable)
- Travel costs will be calculated using the appropriate token price for the College bus in relation to the number of days timetabled at College. If it is not possible to use the College bus, a contribution mileage rate of 10p per mile will be applied subject to supporting evidence to confirm the reason that the College bus cannot be used.
- Students with children or with disabilities which prevent the use of the College bus may apply for support with private vehicle costs. Car insurance policy details and car loan payment schedules must be included and £5 per week will be allocated for MOT/repair costs. Any additional costs may be included with supporting evidence up to a maximum of £500 per academic year.
- For debts, written evidence must be included to show debts and current repayment arrangements.

**6.3.4** Requests for support with course-related costs must have a supporting statement from the Course Manager approving these requests as essential in order to complete the course.

## 7 Income rates 2019/20 – Full Time Undergraduates only

For the application process, the Committee will expect that full time undergraduate students will have sources of income other than their Student Finance to support themselves.

7.1 The table below highlights what we can count as income for full time undergraduate students for 2019/20 in regards to Student Finance.

<b><i>Income type - Student Finance England</i></b>	<b><i>Counts as income</i></b>
Grant for tuition fees	No
Loan for tuition fees	No
HE Grant	No
HE Maintenance Grant or Special Support Grant - anything over £1,796	Yes
Disabled Students' Allowances	No
Student Loan	Yes

Adult Dependants Grant	Yes
Childcare Grant	Yes
Parents' Learning Allowance	Yes

7.1.1 Further to the Student Finance income list above, full time students may have income from other sources such as part time earnings, overdrafts and parental help. This will be included alongside the Student Finance income for the application process.

7.1.2 For a Student Opportunity (hardship) Fund application to be considered by the Committee, a student's income is required to be lower than their essential expenditure to show that they have an additional need.

## 7.2 Part Time Students Only

For Student Opportunity (hardship) Fund applications from part-time students, the assessment will take into account actual net income as it is assumed that a part-time students' income will be consistent throughout the year. This will include:

- Earnings, tax credits, benefits and any other supplementary grants including course grants, childcare grants and professional and career development loans for postgraduates.
- Other income such as savings and personal/occupational pensions.
- Partner's net earnings.

Any fee loans will be disregarded.

## 8 Assessment of expenditure

For the application process, the student's essential expenditure will be taken into consideration to distinguish their additional need. Expenditure on basic costs such as food, household bills, clothes, entertainment etc. will be calculated using an agreed figure, known as *Composite Living Costs*.(CLC)

<b>Student Profile</b>	<b>Per Week</b>
Single Student	£80
Student with Partner	£140
Student with partner & two children under 16	£286
Single parent student with two children under 16	£242

These amounts are put in place to ensure all applicants are treated fairly, regardless of individual lifestyle choices.

In addition, variable expenditure will be included for elements such as rent/mortgage, childcare costs, travel costs and course-related costs and the student must detail this expenditure clearly on their application form accompanied by supporting documentary evidence.

The table below lists the elements that should and should not be included as CLC (the list is not exhaustive).

<b>Element</b>	<b>Composite Living Costs</b>	<b>Variable Expenditure</b>
Rent / mortgage		✓
Food	✓	
Utilities	✓	
Childcare		✓
Mobile phone	✓	
TV licence	✓	
Clothes	✓	
Travel		✓
Course-related costs		✓
Home contents insurance	✓	
Buildings insurance		✓
Medication		✓
Entertainment	✓	
Clubs and societies	✓	

Expenditure on rent, travel, course-related costs, childcare and other exceptional costs are excluded from the CLC and capped costs will be included in their assessment.

## **9 Debt**

Students with debts should be encouraged to seek advice from a trained money adviser. Students with severe debts will be signposted to the Citizens Advice Bureau or the local Community Legal Advice Network for specialised advice and support.

For the Student Opportunity (hardship) Fund assessments, debts take priority and will be considered within 5 working days of receiving the application and are considered for financial support where non-payment would give the creditor the right to deprive the student of his/her home, liberty or essential goods and services, such as secured loans, rent arrears, council tax,

maintenance and compensation orders, gas and electricity charges or Hire Purchase agreements for goods that are essential for the student to retain.

The Committee will not consider to support a debt where non-payment will not result in the loss of the debtor's home, liberty, essential goods or services unless there are extenuating reasons which will be considered on an individual basis and at the Committee's discretion

The Student Opportunity (hardship) Fund would not normally be used to repay inherited debts unless in exceptional circumstances which will be considered by the Committee on an individual basis and at their discretion.

## **10 Communication procedure**

10.1 Once the application form has been received by the assessment team, the student will be contacted to book an interview. The student will be contacted:

- Primarily by telephone if contact is not made within 5 working days of email being sent.
- Secondly by text message to the student's mobile number provided on the application form.
- Finally by email to the student's college email address. The student's Course Manager will be copied into this email.

These methods of communication between the Student Services Officer (HE finance) and the student will be detailed in the guidelines the student receives with the application form.

10.2 Applications will not be progressed if attempts to contact a student with regards to their application over a two week period are unsuccessful.

10.3 If students fail to attend two pre-booked interview appointments to review their application prior to the Committee meeting their application will not be progressed further.

10.4 Applicants will be notified in writing of the decision made by the Committee within five working days of the meeting and the letter will detail the method in which any payments will be made, which primarily will be by BACS. If this is not possible and payment is made by cheque, the student must collect the cheque from Student Services. Any awards not claimed within one month of issue will be withdrawn. The student must then reapply if they wish to be reconsidered for support.

10.5 Students will be asked to complete a questionnaire after accessing Student Opportunity Fund in order to ensure feedback is collated and actions implemented to improve the procedure where necessary.

## 11 Appeals

Students wishing to appeal against a committee decision should complete the HE Student Support Funds - Appeal Form (CQD40). This form must be handed in to Student Services within 10 working days of the student receiving the letter informing them of the Committee decision. Student Services will pass Appeal Forms to the Assistant Principal Campus and Student Services immediately. The appeal will be heard at the next Committee meeting and the student will receive a response within 5 working days of this Committee meeting.

## 12 Related Documents

Student Support Funds Policy

Bishop Burton Access and Participation Plan 2019/20

HE Student Support Funds - Appeal Form

CQD40

**Updated:** February 2020

**By:** Assistant Principal Campus and Student Services

## **Appendix 1 - Learner Support Funds Committee Terms of Reference 2019-20**

### **Purpose:**

The Discretionary General Hardship Fund and Student Opportunity Fund exist to assist full and part-time Further Education or Higher Education students that are facing financial hardship or unexpected changes in personal circumstances. The funds should be used to: -

- Assist those who need extra financial help to meet specific course and living costs that are not already met from statutory or other sources of funding.
- Intervene in cases where a student may be considering giving up their course or leaving education due to financial issues.
- Provide emergency financial support for unexpected financial crises.

The committee is charged with delivering the College Further Education and Higher Education Student Support Fund Policy which is based upon these priorities.

### **Membership:**

Membership of the Committee should reflect all areas of the College and will be chaired by the Assistant Principal Campus and Student Services

Current membership:

Assistant Principal, Campus and Student Services

Assistant Principal, Higher Education

Transport and Security Manager

Student Support Co-Ordinator

Student Services Manager

Health and Welfare Officer

In attendance

Student Services Officer (FE Finance)

Student Services Officer (HE Finance)

### **Meeting:**

The Committee meets once per month with the meetings being held more frequently during the first two weeks of the academic year in line with volume of applications. The Committee requires an attendance of 4 out of the 6 members in order to be quorate

Where appropriate, decisions may be communicated to the Committee members via e-mail. Four out of six members' responses are required for a decision.

### **Reporting procedures:**

A summary of spend will be available for each Strategic Leadership Group meeting and an update on spend will be given to the Strategic Leadership Group three times a year, including the annual Access and Participation plan and OfS data monitoring return.

## **Glossary**

Disabled Students Allowance – DSA

Employment Support Allowance – ESA

General Hardship Fund – GHF

Higher Education - HE

Job Seekers Allowance – JSA

Office for Students OfS

Personal Independence Payments – PIP

Student Finance England – SFE

Student Opportunity Fund – SOF

Student Support Fund - SSF

Student Services Officer FE Finance SSO(FE)

Student Services Officer HE Finance SSO(HE)