HIGHER EDUCATION
SUPPORT FUNDS POLICY
2026-2027

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INTRODUCTION

The Bishop Burton College Learner Support Funds assist those students on higher education courses who are in financial hardship to meet the costs of completing their studies.

The College receives support funds from the Office for Students.

The following policy will identify the following common themes:

- Eligibility
- Priority Groups
- Types of Assistance Available
- Application Procedures
- Communication Procedures
- Roles and Responsibilities of the Support Funds Committees
- Appeals Procedures
- Equality Impact

The policy is reviewed annually in order to respond to the changing needs of students. Following consideration by CMT, the policy is formally approved by the Curriculum and Quality Enhancement Committee. This policy forms the basis for which the Committee makes its decisions.

Policy Approval

Approval by: **Corporation**	**Date:** 7 July 2026

Contents

1. Introduction

The College allocates a proportion of income to support access to Higher Education, student retention, student continuation, progression and student hardship. The awards vary on an annual basis and are confirmed in the College's Access and Participation Plan.

2. Policy Statement

This policy aims to identify how the appropriate and timely distribution of funds to those facing barriers to learning, will assist such students to participate, continue, complete and progress in their chosen programme of study.

The expectations of the College's Access and Participation Plan are reflected in this policy.
This policy identifies how the College aims to ensure funds are used appropriately, at the correct level, whilst remaining available for any sudden need encountered during the academic year.

3. Aims

The policy identifies the following;

- Types of Assistance Available
- Eligibility
- Application Procedure
- Communication Procedure
- Roles and Responsibilities of the Learner Support Fund (LSF) Committee
- Appeals Procedure

This policy is used as a guideline for the LSF Committee and decisions are made at their discretion and in line with any external guidelines.

4. Summary of Support Available:

4.1 The Student Opportunity (Hardship) Fund

This is a discretionary fund aimed at supporting Higher Education students that are in financial hardship to meet specific course or living costs, or to provide emergency payments for an unexpected financial crisis.

4.2 The Childcare Bursary

This is an award for students with children under the age of five. It covers the 15% of the childcare costs that the student's Student Finance England (SFE) Childcare Grant does not, and is paid directly to the childcare provider. This support is to cover the student's days of timetabled attendance only, and is subject to available funds.

4.3 Employability Bursary

This is an award that is aimed at supporting students to complete additional qualifications or engage in industry specific qualifications which will support career opportunities. This fund will contribute up to £300 for an additional qualification, dependent on availability of the funds.

4.4 Bishop Burton Bursaries Programme

We offer financial support from underrepresented groups to help students access higher education.

This support includes a bursary of £500 for those students who meet criteria such as;

- When a student's household income is less than £25,000.
- When a student has accessed Free School Meals during their secondary education.
- When a student is care experienced.
- Where a student is from a postcode area where young people are less likely to go to university.

We also offer support for eligible students who require financial support to access IT equipment and enrichment activities as part of their learning programme.

5. 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).
- Students must be able to demonstrate they are in financial hardship.
- All applicants must have applied for their full entitlement of student finance and grants (where applicable) for example Maintenance Grants and Loans.
- All applicants must have applied for all other available means of financial support, including tax credits and social security benefits (where applicable).

6. Income rates 2026-2027

6.1 Full Time Undergraduates only

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

The table below highlights what we can count as income for full time undergraduate students for 2026-2027 regards to Student Finance.

Income type SFE	Count as income
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
Adult Dependants' Grant	Yes
Student Maintenance Loan	Yes
Childcare Grant	No
Parents' Learning Allowance	Yes

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 excluding gift money. This will be included alongside the Student Finance income for the application process.

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

6.2 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 student's 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.

6.3. Assessment of expenditure

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

Student Profile	Per Week
Single Student	£100
Student with Partner	£155
Children (each)	£91

In addition, variable expenditure will be included for elements such as 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, particularly where costs are not evidenced on the bank statement(s) submitted.

	Essential Expenditure	**Variable Expenditure**
Rent / mortgage		✓
Food	✓	
Utilities	✓	
Childcare		✓
Mobile phone	✓	
TV licence	✓	
Clothes	✓	
Travel		✓
Course-related costs		✓
Medication		✓
Entertainment		✓
Debt Repayments		✓

7. Priority groups

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 (IMD/Polar Q 1-4)
- Care experienced
- Students who accessed Free School Meal provision
- Mature and part time students with existing financial commitments, including priority debts
- Students with children (especially lone parents)

Attendance will be considered in making 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.

8. The Student Opportunity (Hardship) Fund

This Student Opportunity (Hardship) fund is a discretionary fund 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 (Hardship) Fund awards are conditional to a student's expenditure being higher than their income. If this is the case, the student is considered to have an *additional need*.

Students with an attendance percentage of 85% or above will be eligible to receive support. Consideration will be given to mitigating circumstances following consultation with Programme Lead.

With regards to loans via the Student Opportunity (Hardship) Fund

- A loan may be granted to a student at the discretion of the Student Services Manager or Head of Student Services, or the LSF Committee for exceptional circumstances. They will consider the need of the loan, the individual circumstances of the student and will exhaust alternative methods of support before a loan is granted.
- A maximum of £300 for independent students and a maximum of £500 for students with children will be agreed. This can be over several loans or one loan but will not usually exceed this amount. Higher amounts may be considered by the LSF Committee based on individual applications and status of the fund. This way we can ensure students are not disadvantaged but also reduces the risk of non-repayment.
- Repayment dates are to be mutually agreed with the Student Services Manager and should take into consideration the instalments of the student's maintenance loan from Student Finance England. All loans should be repaid, in full, by the end of the academic year.
- Students who do not pay back their loan by their agreed payment date will be reminded monthly by the Student Services Officer (SSO) via the agreed communication procedure.
- One month before the end of semester two the SSO will contact all students with an unpaid debt to advise and assist on repaying the debt. The Student Services Manager / Head of Student Services or LSF Committee, will consider writing off the debt based on their financial situation and status of the fund.

8.1 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 (Hardship) Fund. This can cover items such as; the upfront cost of DSA, dyslexia assessments, SpLD software or other assistive technology support. Students have to be endorsed for this support by the HE Study Skills Coordinator. 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.

8.2 Application procedure for Student Opportunity (Hardship) Fund

For applications to be considered, all students must follow the College procedure which includes the completion and submission of a HE Financial Awards Application Form (available on PayMyStudent, or from Student Services) and provide supporting documents, as listed below in 12.3.

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

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)
- 1-month recent bank statement(s). Credits over £100 may be discussed with the student, and both current and savings accounts must be evidenced.
- 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)

8.3 Debt

Students with debts are encouraged to seek advice from a trained money adviser. Students with severe debts will be signposted to, for example, the Citizens Advice Bureau or the local Community Legal Advice Network for specialised advice and support. The SSFO or Student Services Manager is not responsible for contacting any external services.

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 Student Services Manager will consider to support a debt where non-payment will 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 Student Services Manager/Vice Principal'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 Student Services Manager/Vice Principal, on an individual basis and at their discretion.

9. Application to the Bishop Burton Bursary Programme

Students may qualify for a £500 bursary award if they meet qualifying criteria;

- If a student is from a low-income household, whereby the household income is less than £25,000. The data is shared via Student Finance England, if the student allows SFE to share the information with the College. The student will be invited to complete a bank details form available from Student Services following enrolment.
- If a student is from a postcode area where young people are less likely to go to university, (IMD 1-4). This data will be captured through internal application process. The student will be invited to complete a bank details form available from Student Services following enrolment.
- If a student is care-experienced. This data will be captured through the enrolment process. The student will be invited to complete a bank details form available from Student Services following enrolment.

Priority will be given to first year students, but the bursary may be offered to second- and third-year students subject to availability of the funds.

9.1 Bishop Burton Bursary Programme IT equipment

Students who would like to access a bursary for IT equipment or for enrichment purposes will need to complete an application form and provide a supporting statement from their Programme Lead/Access and Intervention Officer. This will be available from Student Services, and eligibility criteria and hardship must be evidenced.

10. Childcare Bursary

Students must complete an application to the Fund using the appropriate form available from Student Services. In support of the application, the student must provide the Childcare Grant Award they have received from Student Finance England, detailing the 85% that has been approved. Subject to the availability of funds, the college will consider awarding the student with the remaining 15%, to cover the student’s timetabled attendance. These monies will be paid directly to the Childcare provider on submission of invoices. The invoices must detail the 15% cost due, name the student, and the days of student’s child(ren)’s attendance.

11. Employability Bursary

Students who meet the eligibility criteria can make an application to the Employability Bursary by submitting a completed application form, available from the Bursaries team, alongside a supporting statement from their Programme Lead. On approval, the student will be requested to submit receipts for reimbursement from the fund. The total support available is £300 per eligible student, subject to availability of the funds.

12. Communication procedure

Once a completed Student Opportunity (Hardship) Fund or Bishop Burton Bursary Programme application form has been received by the Student Services Officer, the application will be assessed. The student will be contacted for further information or supporting evidence if necessary. The student will be contacted:

- Primarily by email, using the student's college email.
- Secondly, by telephone, using the telephone number they have provided.

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

Applicants will be notified via email of the decision made by the Student Services Manager. This will detail the method in which any payments will be made, which primarily will be by BACS. 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.

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

13. Staff Responsibilities

13.1 Student Services Manager and Student Services Officer (SSM/SSO)

Based in Student Services, the SSM is responsible for the effective and efficient operational workings of the funds from initial promotion through to timely returns to funding authorities. Both the SSM and the SSO are the key link to the student in providing the information and guidance and operation of the funds.

13.2 Programme Leader

It is the Programme Leader's responsibility to ensure that their students are aware of the funds and how they can be accessed. The Programme Leader or a HE representative may also support the student at meetings if required.

13.3 Learner Support Fund (LSF) Committee

This is a cross-college committee which meets to monitor and respond to the spending of all Learner Support Funds, volume of applications to all funds, consideration of applications outside of the agreed criteria and appeals against decisions.

The LSF Committee meets at least six times across the year with their first meeting being within two weeks of the start of the academic year.

Decisions by the Committee can be made via e-mail in certain circumstances i.e. applications for financial support nearing the end of the academic year or emergencies.

Decisions will be communicated as detailed in Section 12 above.

All awarding decisions regarding all funds are at the discretion of the Student Services Manager or LSF Committee who have the jurisdiction to override the aforementioned criteria if appropriate. The LSF Committee is chaired by the Student Services Manager. Other committee members include;

Head of Student Services
FE Curriculum Representative
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Representative from Residential Services
Wellbeing Manager
SEND Team Member
HE Curriculum Representative

14. Appeals

Any appeal against a decision must be received in writing to the SSO within 10 working days of the student receiving the letter informing them of the awarding decision. The appeal will be considered and the student will receive a response within 5 working days of this.

15. Equality impact

This policy has taken into consideration priority groups, as identified in the University Centre's Access and Participation Plan. The SSM and the SSO are to ensure that all of a learners' needs are considered from different viewpoints, and will consult with relevant academics/support staff to understand the student's circumstances. Through the implementation of the support funds, under-represented students will be supported to complete their programme of study therefore reducing, and minimising the continuation and attainment gaps.

UNIVERSITY CENTRE BISHOP BURTON

LEARNER SUPPORT FUND COMMITTEE

TERMS OF REFERENCE 2026-2027

PURPOSE:

The Learner Support Funds (LSF) Committee exist to assist 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 LSF Committee is charged with delivering the Further Education and Higher Education Support Fund Policies which are based upon these priorities.

MEMBERSHIP:

Membership of the Committee should reflect all areas of the College and will be chaired by the Student Services Manager.

Membership:

Student Services Manager (Chair)
Head of Student Services
FE Curriculum Representative
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Representative from Residential Services
Wellbeing Manager
SEND Team Member
HE Curriculum Representative
Representative from the HE Life Coaching Team

MEETING:

This cross-College Committee will meet to monitor and respond to the spending of the funds, volume of applications to all funds, consideration of applications outside of the agreed criteria and appeals against decisions.

The Committee will meet at least six times per year with their first meeting being within the first two weeks of the start of the academic year.

Decisions by the Committee can be made via email in extenuating circumstances i.e. appeals or applications requiring a quick response.

REPORTING PROCEDURES:

A summary of spend will be available (including a year-end position) as requested by the Executive Leadership Team.