

**Name of Policy** DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUND – STUDENTS AGED 19 AND OVER

**Policy objectives** The aim of the Discretionary Learner Support Fund (dLSF) is to support and assist students aged 19 and over on their course of study by ensuring that finance is not a barrier to their learning.

**Person Responsible for Policy** Student Services Manager **Dept** Student Services

**Date Policy approved** July 2011 **Date of next review (month & year)** June 2012

**Approved by**

**Related policies or procedures or parent policy if applicable** Discretionary Learner Support Fund – Students Aged 16-18

## DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUND POLICY FOR 2011- 2012 FOR STUDENTS AGED 19 YEARS AND OVER



The aim of the Discretionary Learner Support Fund (dLSF) is to support and assist students on their course of study by ensuring that finance is not a barrier to their learning.

Eligibility is determined through government guidelines on priority. This year the primary priority is:

*Students who are economically or socially disadvantaged, who need support with transport, childcare or other associated learning costs and are facing financial difficulty;*

Once the primary priority has been established, the provider will further prioritise dLSF to focus on:

### **19+ priorities**

- a those on probation
- b those eligible for fee remission
- c those in receipt of means tested benefits i.e. Income Support;
- d adults undertaking a full first Level 2 qualification;
- e learners aged 19-24 undertaking a full first level 3 qualification;
- f learners taking a Foundation programme;
- g learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities

It is available to students meeting this criteria if they are a “home student” i.e. have been resident in the country for three or more years and are studying a programme of learning funded by the Learning and Skills Council. They must be over 16 years of age. The residency “decision tree” available in the LSC Circular should be used if there is any doubt over eligibility as a “home student”.

Eligible students can receive funding for the duration of their progressive programme, e.g. NVQ 1 - 3 (3 years funding), Introductory Diploma - National Diploma (4 years funding).

Those students in receipt of Adult Learning Grant or Career Development Loan may also apply to the discretionary Learner Support Fund if they can demonstrate financial needs that would deter them from joining or completing the course.

## **Application Procedure**

Students will need to complete an application form for assistance. Forms are available from the Student Services.

Completed forms should be handed in to Student Services with all supporting documentation. The application will be delayed should the student provide insufficient evidence. Where a student is applying for Childcare support, official documents must be provided e.g. child benefit letter or full birth.

A letter detailing the individual support provision will be sent within (20 days during September and October and 10 days thereafter) of receiving a fully completed application. Included with this letter will be information detailing conditions and procedures for collecting funding. Details of the decision are recorded on the student's form and stored within Student Services.

## **Means Test**

The means test will be applied to all applications to the dLSF. In cases where a student or person in the student's household is receiving a means tested State Benefit, such as Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance or full working tax credits. Cases will automatically pass the means test, providing that the necessary documentary evidence of benefit is provided.

In all other cases a **Personal Income Threshold** will be established using composite living costs figure determined by the government (see Appendix 1). Where the student is living in shared student accommodation or other accommodation with non-dependants, the income of the other members of that household will not be taken into account.

Financial assessment for students aged 16-18 will be based on parental income.

## Travel

**Policy:** Transport support will only be provided to students living 3 miles or more from College.

For students claiming mileage, this will be calculated by Student Services using the 'RAC Route Finder' web site – based on postcode to postcode mileage – shortest route. Payment will be made at a rate of 20p per mile. Students travelling by public transport will be required to use the cheapest available tickets e.g. weekly /monthly tickets. Students are required to include all tickets with their claims – lost tickets will not be reimbursed. All claims will be made monthly in arrears. Taxi fares will not be reimbursed unless by prior arrangement.

Charges incurred for parking e.g. permits and tickets from Macclesfield Bus or Train station to the College will not be reimbursed. No support will be given towards the £150 College bus transport charge.

**Procedure:** Students are required to complete a claim form at the end of **each** month. Payments will be paid at 100% of the total cost subject to penalties for absence. **Attendance to every class will be checked using the electronic register system and students must have a minimum attendance level of 91%.** The claim form must be received in Student Services by the end of each month or payment will not be made. Claims must be submitted monthly as **no** back-dated claims will be reimbursed. Please see Payment Method below.

## Childcare

**Policy:** Students aged up to and including 19 at the start of their programme must apply for Care to Learn and are not eligible for funding for childcare costs through the Learner Support Fund.

It is College policy that students should use registered childcare provision.

Childcare will be calculated over 42 week period and on this basis the dLSF will cover half terms, Christmas and Easter holidays. dLSF will not pay retainers over the summer holidays. The maximum weekly amount payable for any one child is £160.

Each student will be responsible for 5% of the bill up to a maximum of £20 each month.

The Student will be responsible for paying any deposit due prior to the student enrolling at College.

Student Services will notify the Childcare provider of the parameters of the funding. They will also be notified that all invoices must be addressed to the student and not the College and should include their registration number. Should a student withdraw from their course the College will only be responsible for payment whilst the student was in attendance at College

New Deal Lone Parents may not benefit from full payment of childcare costs by the employment service and are eligible to apply to the dLSF for assistance.

The childcare allowance within the Child Tax Credit will be taken into account when assessing eligibility for support.

All payments are determined by the student's attendance levels. Should a student's attendance fall below the accepted minimum of 91%, they will be required to have an interview with the Student Services Manager to discuss reasons for absence and to establish what payment is to be made.

Where a student continues to undertake placement after completing their course the student will be liable for all childcare costs.

**Procedure:** Students are required to complete a claim form each month ensuring that an appropriate invoice is attached. Payment will be made by BACS directly to the provider approximately 5 working days after submission of the form.

### **Additional Materials and Textbooks**

**Policy:** Each course will have a maximum level of funding for materials and textbooks. This includes costs for stationery or specific materials. This will be based on Lecturer recommendations and past dLSF experience. No assistance is provided for deposits for textbooks.

**Procedure:** Each student will be informed of the maximum level of funding for additional materials. The student will be required to purchase the items in advance of reimbursement. A claim form must be submitted with all receipts attached.

Textbooks: Where-ever possible students will be encouraged to purchase texts from the LRC and funds will be transferred internally. In all other cases the materials procedure will apply. Please see Payment Method below.

### **Tuition Fees**

**Policy:** 19+ hardship funds cannot be used to subsidise tuition fees with the exception of learners in a priority group not currently supported through LSC fee remission policy (subject to available funding).

### **Examination & Professional Body Membership Fees**

**Policy:** Any student on a course up to and including Level 3 who is eligible for support will receive a maximum 80% towards awarding body registration fees and examination entry fees. No payment will be made where the registration is for lifelong membership. Students undertaking a duplicate qualification level will not be entitled to Examination or registration fee support.

**Procedure:** Students are required to complete the Awarding Body entry forms and supply a copy to Student Services. Student Services will produce a cheque that the student will send to the Awarding Body. Please note that this is the student's responsibility. Please see Payment Method below.

### **Educational Visits**

**Policy:** Some courses require individual trip payments, in this case the student is responsible for paying 20% of the cost of an educational visit. Any trip costing £10 or less will not be funded. Bulk funding for entire courses is not permitted, funding is allocated to individual students only.

Students must have a minimum attendance level of 91%

Where a visit is optional funding is not available.

**Procedure:** Eligible students are required to pay of 20% of the total cost of the trip to the main reception. The Lecturer will be requested to supply the actual cost of the trip and the remaining funds will be transferred internally.

### **Specialist Kits/Uniforms**

Catering and Engineering

**Policy:** Only one uniform/kit allocation per student will be funded by the dLSF. **All students will be required to pay a £30 non returnable contribution towards the cost.**

**Procedure:** Catering students will need to complete the appropriate order form and return to Student Services. Engineering students will be required to purchase their overalls/boots and submit a claim form for reimbursement.

Hairdressing/Beauty/Media Makeup

**Policy:** These courses require a specific kit relevant to the level of programme. dLSF will support the purchase of the kit and trip costs but the student is responsible for purchasing their own uniform.

**Procedure:** Students are required to purchase their uniform themselves. The College will purchase the kits directly and complete an internal transfer for trip costs to the relevant department.

### **Block Payments (Sport, Public Services, Travel and Tourism)**

**Policy:** Certain courses require an upfront payment that is inclusive of uniform and trip costs for the year, this is identified on the relevant course sheet. The student is responsible for paying 20% of the cost. For any additional optional visits funding is not available.

**Procedure:** Eligible students are required to pay a minimum of 20% of the total cost to the main reception and the remaining funds will be transferred internally.

### **PAYMENT METHOD**

All claim forms, except Childcare, will be processed by Student Services on the 7<sup>th</sup> of each month, Childcare claims will be processed within 5 days of receipt.

In all cases the student's attendance is checked to ensure that it 91% or above. If attendance is below the required standard the claim is not paid unless the student has a valid reason. In certain circumstances it may be necessary to pay claims where the attendance is below 91%. This is usually at the recommendation of the Personal Tutor/Teacher and after discussions with the student. Details are recorded on the claim form.

The authorised claims will then be passed to Finance to raise cheques or BACs payments for childcare. These cheques will be available from the Main Reception within 5 working days of the 7<sup>th</sup>. **In all cases it is the student's responsibility to collect the cheque from the Main Reception.**

## Appendix One

The following table illustrates Composite Learning costs amounts.

<b>Student profile</b>	<b>Based on DWP applicable amount (assuming no disability in family)</b>			
	<b>Elsewhere Per week</b>	<b>London per week</b>	<b>Total for elsewhere</b>	<b>Total for London</b>
Single student (see note below)	£69	£107	£2,691 (39 weeks)	£4,173 (39 weeks)
Student with partner	£109	£147	£4,251 (39 weeks)	£5,733 (39 weeks)
Student with partner & 2 children under 16*	£255	£293	£10,965 (43 weeks)	£12,599 (43 weeks)
Single parent student with 2 children under 16*	£215	£253	£9,245 (43 weeks)	£10,879 (43 weeks)

\* If the children are in full-time relevant education (in school, 6<sup>th</sup> Form College, FE College etc.) they should be counted as dependants up until the age of 19 – unless they are studying on an HE course.

**Note** – From 2007/08 all single students will attract the same levels of CLC, either at the elsewhere or London rate. There is no distinction between single students aged 18-24 and those aged 25+ as there has been in the past. This change has been made because of the age discrimination legislation.

To calculate further CLC figures you should use the information below.

### **Lone Parent**

Composite Living Costs Elsewhere	£69
Composite Living Costs London	£107

### **Children**

For each child add the following amount to the student rate.

Composite Living Costs Elsewhere	£64
Composite Living Costs London	£64

In addition add an extra one-off cost of £18 (family premium) where a student has at least one child.