



**HIGHER EDUCATION
SUPPORT FUNDS POLICY
2023-2024**

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HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPORT FUNDS POLICY 2023-2024

INTRODUCTION

The Bishop Burton College 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 SLG, the policy is formally approved by Corporation. This policy forms the basis for which the Committee makes its decisions.

SUMMARY OF SUPPORT AVAILABLE:

The Student Opportunity (Hardship) Fund – This is a discretionary bursary 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.

The Childcare Bursary – an award for students with children under the age of five. It covers 15% of the Childcare costs that the student's SFE Childcare Grant does not, and is paid directly to the child care provider.

The Employability Bursary – This bursary is aimed at supporting students to complete additional qualifications or engage in industry specific qualifications which will support career opportunities. Bursaries of up to £300 are available for eligible students.

Further details on this support is detailed in the policy.

Higher Education Student Financial Awards

2023-2024

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 annually.

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.

Hardship monies provided are limited and therefore the College will contribute towards a student's assessed additional need. 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;

- Eligibility
- Priority Groups
- Types of Assistance Available
- Application Procedure – including the interview process, supporting evidence required and the criteria applied by the Learner Support Fund Committee.
- Communication Procedure
- Roles and Responsibilities of the Learner Support Fund 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. 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/accommodation 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) 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).

5. Income rates 2023-2024 – 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.

The table below highlights what we can count as income for full time undergraduate students for 2022/23 in regards to Student Finance.

<i>Income type SFE</i>	<i>Count as income</i>
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	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. Treatment of income – 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.

7. Assessment of expenditure

For the 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	£94
Student with Partner	£146
Children (each)	£85

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.

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

8. 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 £25000)
- Students from (IMD/Polar Q 1 & 2)
- Black Asian Minority Ethnic students
- Disabled students (that have already applied for all other statutory support for which they are eligible)
- Care experienced
- Carers
- Students who are homeless
- 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.

9. Types of assistance;

The Student Opportunity (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 (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 who fall under a priority group (section 8) will be eligible for £50 to support with course costs for the academic year. For amounts higher than this the student will need to have an approved application on Pay My Student and be approved the support from the Learner Support Fund Committee.

Students with a percentage of 85% attendance will receive support.

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

- A loan may be granted to a student at the discretion of the LSF Committee the Committee 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. This can be over several loans or one loan but cannot exceed this amount. However, higher amounts will 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 Finance Officer and should take into consideration the instalments of the student's maintenance loans 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 Finance Officer (SSFO) via the agreed communication procedure.
- One month before the end of semester two the SSFO will contact all students with an unpaid debt to advise and assist on repaying the debt. The LSF Committee will consider writing off the debt based on their financial situation and status of the fund.

10. 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; the £200 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.

11. Debt

Students with debts should be 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 any other member of the LSF Committee 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 LSF Committee 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 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 LSF Committee on an individual basis and at their discretion.

12. Application procedure for Student Opportunity (Hardship) Fund

12.1 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 Pay my Student) and supporting documents, as listed below.

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

12.3 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)
- 1-month bank statement. All credits/debits over £100 must 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)

- Travel costs will be calculated using the mileage rate set by the SLG annually. This will be for the entire journey, and will be applied subject to supporting evidence received to confirm the reason why 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 For debts, written evidence must be included to show debts and current repayment arrangements.

12.4 Requests for support with course-related costs must have receipts and must be essential to their course.

13. Communication procedure

13.1 Once the application form has been received by the Student Services Finance Officer, the student will be contacted to complete a Request Form. The student will be contacted:

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

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

13.3 Applicants will be notified via email of the decision made by the Learner Support Fund Committee within five working days of the meeting and the email 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.

13.4 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.

14. Staff Responsibilities

14.1 Student Services Finance Officer (SSFO)

Based in Student Services, this SSFO is responsible for the effective and efficient operational workings of the funds from initial promotion through to timely returns to funding authorities. The SSFO is the primary communication link between the student and the Committee.

14.2 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 may also support the student at an interview if required. Important information linked to the student's application will also be communicated to the SSFO.

14.3 Learner Support Fund Committee

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

The 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. For a decision to be agreed via e-mail, a minimum of 6 of the 12 members of the Learner Support Fund Committee must respond.

Decisions will be communicated as detailed in Section 14 above.

All awarding decisions regarding all funds are at the discretion of the Committee who have the jurisdiction to override the aforementioned criteria if appropriate.

The Learner Support Fund Committee is chaired by the Student Services Manager. Other committee members include;

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Head of Hospitality and Catering
Transport and Security Manager
Health and Welfare Officer (Bishop Burton)
Life Coach Team Leader
Student Services Officer (Riseholme)
Learning Resources Manager
Head of Higher Education Faculty
Higher Education Academic Lead – Animal Science
SEND Reviewing Officer (RH)
SEND Reviewing Officer (BBC)

14.4 Attendance at Committee Meetings

The Committee requires an attendance of 6 out of the 12 members in order to be quorate.

15. Appeals

Any appeal against a decision must be received in writing to the SSFO within 10 working days of the student receiving the letter informing them of the Committee's decision. 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.

16. Equality impact

This policy has taken into consideration priority groups, as identified in the College Access and Participation Plan. The LSF Committee is made up of both academic and support staff, from within the college, in order to ensure all the 'learners' needs are considered from different viewpoints. The LSF Committee cannot make a decision unless a minimum of 6 of 12 members of the Committee are involved. Through the implementation of the support funds, under-represented students will be supported to complete their programme of study therefore reducing, and eradicating the continuation and attainment gaps.

17. Bishop Burton Bursary Programme

17.1 As part of the Access and Participation Plan, Bishop Burton College is committed to distributing specific bursaries and the Bishop Burton Bursary is aimed at new students to higher education during the academic year 2023-2024.

17.2 The Bishop Burton Bursary Programme (BBBP) offers financial support to students from households with a taxable income of less than £25,000. The allocation for 2023-2024 is £60,000, representing 100 full time awards of £500 per student (pro rata to part time students). Also 20 awards of £500 for students from under-represented groups such as household income (£25,001-£45,875) mature students, low participation neighbourhoods, care experienced, black, Asian and minority ethnic students and students with disabilities.

17.3 The Learner 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 application process for this funding. The awards will be made to the 100 students with the lowest household income as shown in the data from Student Finance England. The Support Fund Committee can only consider allocating the funding to students who have agreed to share their financial data with the College.

17.4 The funding will be made up of a cash bursary of £500. First year students will take priority, but the bursary may be offered to second and third year students. A deadline of the first payment date to hand in their bank details will be set before the bursary is offered to other students. Third year students will take priority. 17.5 The funding will be paid in 4 instalments across the academic year subject to confirmation of 85% present attendance between the payment dates. The payment dates are outlined in the correspondence sent to eligible students at the beginning of the academic year.

18. Childcare Bursary

The Childcare Bursary is aimed at supporting students with their childcare costs. A student can apply to SFE for the Childcare funding and they will pay 85% directly to the childcare provider dependent on eligibility criteria being met. To note, this is available to students whose children are under 5 years of age, and the childcare provision must be OFSTED registered. A student can apply for support to cover the remaining 15% of these costs by the College's Childcare Bursary. If awarded, we will pay 15% directly to the childcare provider on submission of invoices. This is to cover the timetabled days the student attends College, and is semester time only.

18.1 Application Procedure for the Childcare Bursary

18.2 For applications to be considered, a student must complete a HE Student Support Fund Application Form and submit the appropriate income evidence to be assessed. The student must also provide evidence that SFE have awarded them with the Childcare Grant. The College will then request the Childcare provider to invoice the 15% to the College to allow for direct payments to be made. These payments will cover the timetabled days of attendance during the academic year only.

18.3 All committee decisions must be communicated to the student using the communication procedure in section 13.1, within 5 working days of the committee meeting.

18.4 All appeals can be made in writing to the SSFO within 10 working days of the committee decisions.

19. Employability Bursary

19.1 The bursary is aimed at supporting eligible students to complete additional qualifications or engage with industry specific development which will support career opportunities. Student

groups listed in section 8, will take priority of the awards. Students must have a current attendance of 75% to receive the employability bursary.

19.2 30 Employability bursaries of up to £300 are available in 2023-2024.

20. Application procedure for employability bursary

20.1 For applications to be considered, all students must follow the college procedure which includes the completion and submission of a Employability Bursary application form and supporting documents, / An interview may also be required in order to identify the benefits of the additional learning goal.

20.2 Students must submit a supporting statement to 'pitch' for the award which identifies how this will support their career ambitions. The LSF committee will take these into consideration when making their decision.

20.3 All payments will be made via BACS, upon receiving evidence that the student has purchased or completed the additional qualification.

20.4 Support with work placement costs such as; travel, will be based on the student's individual needs.

20.5 All committee decisions must be communicated to the student using the communication procedure in section 13.1, within 5 working days of the committee meeting.

20.6 All appeals can be made in writing to the SSFO within 10 working days of the committee decisions.

21. Operating Procedure for Higher Education Support Funds.

As a supporting document to this policy, the College has developed Operating Procedure (8.10) for reference. This can be accessed online, or be requested through the Student Finance team based in Student Services.

**LEARNER SUPPORT FUND COMMITTEE
TERMS OF REFERENCE 2023-2024**

PURPOSE:

The Discretionary Student Support Fund and Student Opportunity (Hardship) 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 Student Services Manager

Current membership:

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
Head of Hospitality and Catering
Transport and Security Manager
Health and Welfare Officer (Bishop Burton)
Student Services Officer (Riseholme)
Life Coach Team Leader
SEND Reviewing Officer (Riseholme)
SEND Reviewing Officer (Bishop Burton)
Learning Resources Manager
Head of Higher Education Faculty
Higher Education Academic Lead – Animal Science

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.

REPORTING PROCEDURES:

A summary of spend will be available for each Senior Leadership Group meeting and an update on spend will be given to the Senior Leadership Group three times a year, including any end of year OfS data monitoring returns.