

COVID-19 FE Student Support in Colleges

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Information for Further Education (FE) Students:

If you are a student studying a FE course (below HNC level) at a college in Scotland, please be reassured that colleges are working hard to ensure that your bursary maintenance payments continue to be made as normal.

Q: Who should students contact if they have COVID-19 related questions about their student support?

In relation to any COVID-19 related health concerns, individuals must engage directly with the health authorities (see [NHS Inform](#)).

If students have questions about their FE student support funding, they should contact their college's own student funding office.

Information for Colleges

Q: Has SFC put in place any contingencies regarding potential COVID-19-related student support funding implications for colleges?

SFC does not currently have any additional funding set aside to respond to potential COVID-19-related student support funding implications for colleges. It is expected that any additional costs due to COVID-19 would, in the first instance, be met by individual colleges. If a college finds itself running out of student support funds for COVID-19 related reasons, the college should contact its Outcome Agreement Manager (Regional Strategic Body for assigned colleges) at the earliest opportunity to discuss financial options at that point. If such a situation looked like it may be affecting a substantial proportion of the sector, SFC would then conduct an overall assessment in coordination with the Scottish Government.

Q: Will colleges be allowed to fund students beyond 43 weeks if it is necessary to extend a course?

Yes, colleges will be allowed to fund students beyond 43 weeks if required for COVID-19 reasons, where that is necessary to allow students to complete their course and achieve their qualification, and if funding is available. But colleges must seek individual approval for any such extensions by contacting their Outcome Agreement Manager in the first instance (Regional Strategic Body for assigned colleges).

Q: Will student support funding be available in the event we need to extend our courses into June and/or July to allow students to finish the course and achieve their qualification?

There is currently no rule that prohibits student support being provided in any particular month. Colleges will be allowed to fund students beyond 43 weeks if that is required for COVID-19 reasons, where that is necessary to allow students to complete their course and achieve their qualification, and if funding is available. But colleges must seek individual approval for any such extensions, by contacting their Outcome Agreement Manager in the first instance (Regional Strategic Body for assigned colleges).

Q: Should colleges still be paying out student support funding if the student is not meeting the usual attendance criteria?

Where possible, colleges should still try to monitor engagement in the local digital / remote learning activities that have been put in place. If the student reports that they are unable to engage due to illness and if the illness is not related to COVID-19, then this should be treated by the college in the usual way. If the illness is considered to be related to COVID-19 (for example, if the student is reporting symptoms in line with the NHS Scotland national guidance), then this absence should be considered as outwith the college's usual student absence / sickness absence allowances, and student support funding (except travel costs) should be paid throughout.

Q: Will students continue to be paid if they advise the college that they are self-isolating? If yes, how long can this continue for?

Yes, students should continue to receive all student support funding (except travel costs, see below), when they are self-isolating in accordance with NHS Scotland COVID-19 guidance.

Where colleges are providing online teaching, if the student is well enough to do so, and they have access to the appropriate equipment required, then they should continue to engage with the local remote / digital learning provided by the college throughout their self-isolation and afterwards. If the student is not well enough to engage in any remote learning, they should advise their college appropriately, and subsequently let their college know once they are well enough to begin engagement again. They should continue to receive student support funding throughout.

Q: Do colleges require evidence students have been advised to self-isolate because they are experiencing some symptoms?

No.

Q: Do colleges require evidence of diagnosis if a student has COVID-19?

No, as widespread testing is no longer available, the college should not require any evidence to be submitted. They should continue paying student support (except travel costs).

Q: Do students still have to show engagement in their studies?

Yes, if they are self-isolating with no symptoms, and have the access to be able to engage remotely / digitally. If they have symptoms that make them too unwell to study, or indeed receive a positive diagnosis for COVID-19, then they would not be expected to show engagement throughout the duration of their illness.

For colleges which have moved to online teaching, where possible, colleges should still try to monitor engagement in the local digital / remote learning activities that have been put in place. However, we understand that this may not always be possible. In these circumstances, colleges should continue to pay students (minus travel expenses) without evidence of engagement.

Q: Should colleges continue to pay travel costs to students if they are off sick / self-isolating / there is no teaching on campus?

No, if the student is self-isolating either with or without symptoms, the student should not be travelling anywhere outside of their home. If there is no longer any teaching taking place on campus, the student does not need to travel to the college. In either of these circumstances, the student should not require any travel costs.. Colleges maybe in a position to redirect some of the student support funding that they had earmarked to support student travel needs.

Q: Should college continue to pay childcare costs?

Yes, childcare support costs should continue to be paid until the end of the academic year.

Q: In the event of the college having to change access to buildings and facilities due to COVID-19 would we still be able to pay our direct third-party providers such as Childcare providers and Transport companies?

Yes, as national guidance currently stands, no external providers should be left out of pocket. However, if the external companies are able to recoup this source of income through other means, such as insurance, then the college should not be required to pay for services not used. It will depend on the conditions in the contracts that colleges have with their external providers. It will also depend on advice or

provisions announced by the Government relating to access to institutions' buildings and facilities.

At present, there is **no general requirement on colleges and universities to change access to their buildings and facilities.**

Education Maintenance Allowance

Q: If schools/colleges close will EMA continue to be paid?

The guidance states that an authorised absence would include a scenario where the learning centre is closed due to unforeseen circumstances. This would apply in this instance.

Q: Will students who are in Self Isolation because of Coronavirus receive their EMA payments?

Yes. The guidance states that an authorised absence includes ill health and additionally the breakdown of a student's method of transport to and from the institution, a scenario which could arise in future. This also applies to those who have self-isolated due to their parents/carers having health issues which put them at risk.

Q: Will everyone whose application has been authorised on the system continue to receive EMA over any self-imposed isolation and/or complete shutdown of the schools/colleges?

Yes. As stated above the guidance allows for absence for unforeseen circumstances, which is applicable in this current situation. We appreciate that many doctors surgeries will not be in a position to issue medical certificates in most cases and would urge that you view such cases sympathetically and follow the discretion which the guidance allows.

Q: Do schools/colleges require evidence that students have been advised to self-isolate because they are experiencing some symptoms?

No.

Q: If the college office closes, will SFC accept an electronic copy of a claim authorisation instead of a signature?

Yes, in these exceptional times with many people being advised to work from home we would accept an email authorisation, from one of the college's authorised signatories.

The college should complete the EMA return information as required on EMA online and then download the document, which would under normal circumstances be passed to an authorised signatory for signing before being emailed to SFC.

In the current environment, the alternative process to follow is:

1. The EMA return document should then be emailed to one of the college's authorised signatories for an electronic authorisation;
2. The authorised signatory should include the following text in their email :

I approve the EMA claim made by (College Name) for the amount of (£XXX)

3. The EMA claim should then be forwarded by the authorised signatory, including the above text and the downloaded EMA claim, to EMAreturns@sfc.ac.uk by the usual monthly deadline.