



SFC Guidance

2019-20 National policy: Childcare funds for Further and Higher Education students in Scotland's Colleges

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Summary: This guidance sets out the conditions for use of childcare funds for AY 2019-20.

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2019-20 National policy: Childcare funds for Further and Higher Education students in Scotland's Colleges

Introduction

1. This guidance sets out the conditions for use by colleges of childcare funds (CCF) for academic year (AY) 2019-20. These funds are for students studying both Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) courses in college.

Background

2. The joint guidance *Further and Higher Education Discretionary Childcare Funds* (see [Annex A](#) to this document) is produced by Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) on behalf of the Scottish Government to assist colleges in the distribution of CCF to support students studying FE and HE courses at college.
3. These funds contain two elements:
 - All eligible FE and HE student parents attending courses at college will be able to apply for help with registered childcare costs from the college.
 - The Lone Parent Childcare Grant (LPCG) element, which is an entitlement payment of up to £1,215 per year to all eligible FE and HE students who are lone parents and who have formal registered childcare expenses while studying.

Policy changes for AY 2019 -20

4. There have been no substantial policy changes for AY 2019-20.
5. One point to note is that estranged students are now considered a priority group for childcare funding. The details are set out in [the guidance \(Annex A\)](#).

Purpose of the funds

6. The CCF is to provide or fund childcare for students studying at college. These funds, which are discretionary and cash-limited, are intended to supplement existing resources used to directly support students' study-related childcare costs.
7. FE and HE LPCG is an entitlement-based grant to be managed by colleges. It is cash-limited and any additional funds required to meet demand will need to come from college resources.
8. Where a college chooses to add to these funds from its own resources, it may use the additional resources as it sees fit.

Legislative context

9. College governing bodies have power under section 12(2)(c) of the *Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992* to provide students of the college such assistance of a financial or other nature as it considers appropriate.
10. It is a condition of the *Education (Access Funds) (Scotland) Direction 2018*, that SFC shall administer student support funds, in conjunction with the post 16 education bodies, in accordance with the requirements of section 73ZA of the *Education (Scotland) Act 1980*, the *Education (Access Funds) (Scotland) Regulations 1990*, the *Education (Access Funds) (Scotland) Determination 2018*.

Joint guidance

11. The [guidance \(Annex A\)](#) for AY 2019-20 is available on the SFC website.
12. This policy guidance has been written for bursary and student support officers within FE colleges as well as for advisors in HE institutions. We recommend that for communication with their students on student support, colleges publish their own college policy. This will ensure the students receive information that is relevant to their own circumstances and local community.
13. More [information for college student support officers](#) can be found on the SFC website.

Conditions of grant

14. These funds must be used by colleges for student support purposes, in accordance with this policy and any changes made to this policy.
15. Colleges should also follow all applicable legislation and any supplementary guidance SFC may issue from time to time when using these funds.
16. General conditions of grant also apply, as set out in outcome agreements.
17. The Chief Executive Officer must ensure that all accounts and records are adequate and that there are systems in place to minimise incorrect payments.
18. Under no circumstances can the college use the funds for:
 - Students who are below their statutory school leaving date, as defined in the *Education (Scotland) Act 1980*.
 - Students who are beyond their statutory school leaving date, attending college, but also still studying at school.
 - Administration costs (including the costs of any recovery of overpayments).
 - Capital purposes.

- Top-up fees, such as tuition and/or exam fees.
 - Compensation for a lack of parental contributions.
 - Communal facilities, adaptations to buildings or to meet staff salaries.
19. Colleges may choose to build on this policy for the use of these funds, but must not introduce anything that goes against the existing policy.
 20. It is the responsibility of the college to ensure that students are familiar with the availability of these funds and the procedures they must follow to access funding.

Conditions of award

General conditions of award for FE childcare funds

21. Students who are in receipt of other funds - public or private - are still eligible to receive these funds. Colleges should advise students in receipt of benefits to check with their benefit paying office to establish how these funds will affect their individual circumstances.
22. Colleges can access general advice and guidance on benefits on the [UK Government's website](#).
23. In addition, more information about students and their benefits can be found on the [Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland \(CPAG\) website](#).
24. Students must have reached their statutory school leaving age to be eligible for assistance.
25. Only students on SFC-fundable non-advanced and advanced courses are eligible. For an explanation of 'SFC-fundable', please refer to SFC's [credit guidance](#).

Transfer of funds

26. Colleges can transfer money between the FE/HE CCF and FE Bursary and FE Discretionary funds. They are encouraged to do so to enable them to effectively meet the needs of their students. Colleges must account for total spend on each fund, including transferred money, in their audited data returns.

Using FE and HE childcare funds as bursaries

27. Colleges may use their FE and HE CCF to meet shortfalls in their bursary allocations. This allows flexibility between bursary and CCF to meet the needs of students.

28. Any CCF used in this way must meet the conditions of the bursary policy in full. Colleges cannot use CCF to meet bursary needs of students who are not eligible. Please ensure that you have met the childcare needs of students who are already being supported at the college before considering using these funds for bursary purposes.

Using bursary funds for childcare

29. Colleges may use bursary funds as HE or FE CCF. The original FE and HE CCF allocation must be fully committed before bursary funds are used.

Clawback of unspent funds

30. Colleges cannot carry-forward any unused funds. Unspent funds for AY 2019-20 will be recovered by SFC during AY 2020-21.

Timing of allocation of childcare awards

31. Where childcare providers require upfront payment of childcare funding, colleges should take this into account in their allocations to students and, if necessary, should consider advance payments to students to cover upfront costs incurred by the student. Upfront payments to cover childcare costs should also be made to students where there are delays in processing awards.

Reporting mechanisms and data collections

32. The Chief Executive Officer of each college must ensure that all accounts and records are adequate and that there are systems in place to minimise incorrect payments.
33. Colleges are required to complete the student support elements of the Further Education Statistics (FES) return to confirm their final spend on student support. The AY 2019-20 FES data return is due on **2 October 2020**. Guidance on [completing the data returns](#) can be found on the SFC website.
34. Colleges are no longer required to complete an aggregate return on student support spend. However an auditor will still be required to sign-off the FES online student support funding report.
35. Colleges should ensure that their auditors receive a copy of this policy, together with the:
 - Student support audit guidance.
 - National policy for further education [bursaries](#) and [discretionary funds](#).
 - College outcome agreement and [guidance](#) for the relevant year.

36. Colleges may wish to provide their auditors with details of our [student support web pages](#) and SFC student support staff contact details (see paragraph 38).
37. Colleges should refer to the Accounts Direction for Scotland's Colleges and Universities 2019-20 when presenting information on the student support funds in their annual accounts. We aim to publish the Accounts Direction for 2019-20 and audit guidance on our website in summer 2020.

Further information

38. Please contact Jane Scott, Funding Policy Officer for further information, tel: 0131 313 6660, email: jscott@sfc.ac.uk.



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