



Scottish Funding Council  
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

## 2021-22 National policy: Childcare funds for college students

**SFC Guidance**

Issue Date: 13 July 2021

## 2021-22 National policy: Childcare funds for college students

Issue date: 12 July 2021

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Summary: This guidance sets out the conditions for use of childcare funds for FE/HE college students in AY 2021-22.

FAO: Principals and Finance Directors of Scotland's colleges

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## **2021-22 National policy: Childcare funds for college students**

### **Introduction**

1. This guidance sets out the conditions for use by colleges of childcare funds (CCF) for Academic Year (AY) 2021-22. These funds are for students studying both Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) courses in college.

### **Background**

2. The guidance Further and Higher Education Discretionary Childcare Funds (see Annex A to this document) is usually produced by Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) on behalf of the Scottish Government to assist universities and colleges in the distribution of CCF to support students studying HE and FE courses. SAAS will separately publish its guidance to universities for AY 2021-22, so the guidance in Annex A relates only to the distribution of CCF in colleges. It has been produced by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), but is aligned with the SAAS CCF guidance for universities.
3. There are two elements to CCF:
  - 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 2021-22**

4. The policy changes for AY 2021-22 are summarised below. The details are set out in the guidance (Annex A).
  - Rules on eligibility on the basis of residency have been changed to reflect changes to the status of European Union (EU) nationals.
  - Any eligible students impacted financially by COVID-19 remain on the list of priority groups.
  - To provide colleges with flexibility during the COVID-19 recovery phase, for AY 2021-22 colleges can use unspent CCF to supplement both their FE and HE Discretionary Funds.
  - The guidance relating to evidence required from students has been simplified to give colleges more flexibility during the COVID-19 recovery phase.

### **Purpose of funding**

5. The purpose of 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.
6. FE and HE LPCG is an entitlement-based grant to be managed by colleges. It is also cash-limited and any additional funds required to meet demand will need to come from college resources.
7. 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**

8. 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.
9. It is a condition of the Education (Access Funds) (Scotland) Direction 2021, 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 2021.

### **Joint guidance**

10. The policy guidance provided in Annex A has been written for bursary and student support officers within colleges. We recommend that for communication with students on student support, colleges publish their own college policy. This will ensure that students receive information that is relevant to their own circumstances and local community.
11. More [information for college student support officers](#) can be found on the SFC website.

### **Conditions of grant**

12. These funds must be used by colleges for student support purposes, in accordance with this policy and any changes made to this policy. (SFC retains the right to audit relevant institutional documentation to satisfy itself that this is the case.)
13. Colleges should also follow all applicable legislation and any supplementary guidance SFC may issue from time to time when using these funds.

14. General conditions of grant also apply, as set out in annual AY college main grant funding announcements.
15. Under no circumstances can colleges use these 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.
16. 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.
17. It is the responsibility of each college to ensure that their 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 CCF***

18. 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 impact on their individual circumstances.
19. Colleges can access general advice and guidance on benefits on the [UK Government's website](#). Further information related to benefits can be accessed through the [Student Information Scotland portal](#). In addition, more information about students and their benefits can be found on the [Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland \(CPAG\) website](#).
20. Students must have reached their statutory school leaving age to be eligible for assistance.
21. Only students on SFC-fundable non-advanced and advanced courses are eligible. For an explanation of 'SFC-fundable', please refer to SFC's 2020-21 [Credit Guidance](#). The credit guidance for AY 2021-22 will be published later in the summer.

## Transfer of funds

22. 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.
23. Colleges were not previously permitted to transfer funding from their joint FE/HE CCF to their HE Discretionary Fund. However, in order to provide colleges with maximum flexibility to respond to student demand during the COVID-19 recovery phase, for AY 2021-22 colleges who have fully met student demand for CCF in the coming year and have remaining CCF which are not required, can also use unspent CCF to supplement HE Discretionary Funds. Colleges should contact the SFC Student Support team ([studentsupport@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@sfc.ac.uk)) to request any transfer from their CCF to their HE Discretionary Fund.

## Recovery of unspent funds

24. Colleges cannot carry-forward any unused funds. Unspent funds will be recovered by SFC as part of the annual in-year redistribution exercise.

## Timing of allocation of childcare awards

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

## Reporting mechanisms and data collections

26. 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.
27. 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 2021-22 FES data return is due on **30 September 2022**. Guidance on completing the data returns can be found on the [SFC website](#).
28. 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.

29. Colleges should ensure that their auditors receive:
- This policy.
  - The student support audit guidance.
  - The national policy for FE bursaries.
  - The outcome agreement for the relevant year.
30. Colleges may wish to provide their auditors with details of our [student support web pages](#) and SFC student support staff contact details (see paragraph 32).
31. Colleges should refer to the Accounts Direction for Scotland's Colleges when presenting information on student support funds in their annual accounts. The Accounts direction for Scotland's colleges AY 2020-21 can be accessed on the [SFC website](#).

#### **Further information**

32. Please contact the SFC Student Support team, email: [studentsupport@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@sfc.ac.uk).



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