



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

**Additional FE Student Support
Winter COVID-19 Discretionary
Funding for Colleges in FY 2020-21**

SFC Announcement

Issue Date: 19 February 2021

Additional FE student support Winter COVID-19 discretionary funding for colleges in FY 2020-21

Issue date: 19 February 2021

Reference: SFC/AN/05/2021

Summary: Announcement of £3 million of additional student support discretionary funding for colleges in FY 2020-21 to support Winter payments for FE students in hardship due to COVID-19.

FAO: Principals / Executive Directors / Finance Directors / Chairs / Board Secretaries / Student Support contacts in Scotland's colleges/Regional Strategic Bodies

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Additional FE student support Winter COVID-19 discretionary funding for colleges in FY 2020-21

Summary

1. I am writing to announce £3 million of additional student support discretionary funding for colleges in Financial Year (FY) 2020-21 to support Winter payments for Further Education (FE) students in hardship due to COVID-19.
2. This announcement compliments the [HE Coronavirus Discretionary Fund guidance](#) published by the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) in February 2021. It also supplements SFC's student support [FE Discretionary Fund guidance](#) and should be read in conjunction.

Background

3. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the extended lockdowns and the lack of temporary employment, many students are facing financial hardship. On 26 January the Scottish Government announced [£20 million of additional funding](#) to support students experiencing hardship as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. Of that funding, £3 million has been allocated to SFC for FE students and £17 million has been allocated to SAAS for HE students at college and university.
4. This additional £3 million is in addition to the £5 million of student support funding that has been redistributed to colleges following the [AY 2020-21 In-Year Redistribution](#).

Purpose of funding

5. This funding should be allocated to students, at the discretion of colleges, who are in immediate need of additional financial support. Priority should be given to those students who have been impacted financially by COVID-19 and are facing hardship, particularly international students (including EU), both full and part-time, who have not previously had access to student support discretionary funds. There may also be students who are facing additional accommodation costs and are unable to secure rent rebates while not returning to their term-time accommodation.
6. Colleges are encouraged to be flexible in exercising their discretion in assessing the needs of students, and should note that there is no maximum cap per student. (This is consistent with SFC's current FE discretionary fund policy where the normal £4,000 cap has been removed since March 2020 due to COVID-19 circumstances).

7. These ring-fenced funds cannot be transferred into any other fund and should only be used to help students impacted financially by COVID-19. Equally, you should not transfer any funds from your core SFC student support/discretionary fund budget into this Winter COVID-19 allocation. Colleges can of course continue to use their core student support budget to support eligible students affected by COVID-19 through discretionary funding.
8. Colleges can use this additional funding to assist with the administration or advertisement of this new fund.

Allocation of funds

9. Most of this additional funding (£2.5 million) has been allocated to colleges/regions in proportion to their core SFC student support budgets for AY 2020-21. £0.5 million has been allocated in proportion to international student numbers.
10. Individual college/region allocations are shown in **Annex A**.
11. Colleges should receive their allocation of additional funds on 24 February 2021. **These funds are required to be spent by 31 March 2021** and any unspent funds must be recovered.

Eligible students

12. This guidance should be read in conjunction with SFC's student support [FE Discretionary Fund guidance](#). It should also be read in conjunction with [The Education \(Access Funds\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Scotland\) Determination 2021](#) and [The Education \(Access Funds\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Scotland\) Direction 2021](#).
13. The main change in terms of eligibility with this fund is that it can be used to support **all** students. This includes international (including EU) students, full and part-time, who have not previously been eligible to apply for support from student support discretionary funding.
14. Colleges can only provide financial support to international and EU students from this additional ring-fenced 'Winter COVID-19' fund, as they remain ineligible for support from colleges' existing core discretionary funds. However, this additional fund is not solely for international and EU students, and all other students can also be supported.
15. In order to maximise the support available for students, and given the tight timescales attached to this additional fund, we would encourage colleges to maximise its use; particularly for those students who are not eligible for support from your core student support/discretionary fund budget.

16. Following discussions with NUS Scotland we ask colleges, where possible (and if applicable), to provide support to students from this fund in the form of cash or bank payments rather than supermarket vouchers.

Assessment

17. In recognition of the timescales attached to the administration of this fund, colleges should take a proportionate approach when considering each application in regards to evidence submitted/assessed.
18. In addition to their application, colleges may wish to request that students provide a recent bank statement (which can be screenshot) as the evidence for them seeking support for hardship reasons. For any students seeking support for accommodation costs that have not been refunded by the college, proof of accommodation (rent/tenancy agreement) may be requested.

Reporting requirements and monitoring

19. To allow SFC to recover any funds that are unspent by 31 March, colleges must provide a report of their spend to SFC **by 16 April** at the latest. This will allow unspent funds to be recovered in May.
20. Any additional reporting requirements for these funds will be confirmed in the coming weeks. We are conscious of adding further administrative measures for sector staff, but for the moment we ask colleges to keep a record of the number of international and EU students supported by this additional funding.

Conditions of grant

21. The following conditions of grant apply to this funding:
 - Funds must only be used for the purpose(s) for which they are being allocated.
 - Funds must be spent by the end of the current FY 2020-21 (by 31 March 2021).
 - Funds not spent by the end of the current FY 2020-21 (by 31 March 2021) will be recovered.

Further information

22. If you require any additional information or have any queries, please contact the SFC Student Support team by emailing studentsupport@sfc.ac.uk.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'L. MacDonald'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Lorna MacDonald
Director of Finance