

# STUDENT SUPPORT FUND POLICY

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| <b>Audience:</b>          | STUDENT                                     |
| <b>Requirement:</b>       | RECOMMENDED                                 |
| <b>Policy Owner:</b>      | DIRECTOR OF STUDENT EXPERIENCE & TRANSITION |
| <b>Review Delegation:</b> | ELT   |
| <b>Review Cycle:</b>      | 2 years                                     |
| <b>Last Review:</b>       | August 2024                                 |
| <b>Due for Review:</b>    | August 2026                                 |

# **SOUTH HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE GROUP STUDENT SUPPORT FUND POLICY**

## **1.0 Statement of Principles**

The purpose of this policy is to support students of The South Hampshire College Group, who face genuine financial barriers to effectively participate in education. SHCG may be able to support with essential course related items such as transport, essential equipment or uniform, UCAS administration fees, exam fees, and/or food to allow a student to fully participate and remain in education.

SHCG is comprised of Fareham, Eastleigh and Southampton Colleges. The Student Support Fund consists of;

- 16-19 and 19+ Discretionary Student Support Fund
- 16-19 Vulnerable Student Support Fund
- 19+ Advanced Learner Loans Bursary
- Apprenticeship Care Leavers Bursary

## **2.0 Scope**

Financial assistance is designed to provide support to all full and part time students aged 16+. All applications are considered individually and funds are approved where a genuine need for support has been demonstrated. This is dependent on where required, supporting evidence and the student meets the eligibility guidelines issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. (ESFA). Students must be applying for or currently attending a ESFA funded course at SHCG. Some exemptions may apply and more detail can be provided on request to the Student Bursary Officer, at the campus at which the student is applying. Students of any age who are enrolled onto a Higher Education qualification are not eligible for support.

Financial assistance is dependent on the student meeting the required expectations for attendance, behaviours and attitudes. Any purchases made through financial support of SHCG, remains the property of SHCG.

## **3.0 Support for students 16-19**

### **3.1 16-19 Discretionary Student Support Fund**

This fund is designed to provide financial support for full and part time students who are experiencing financial difficulty. All applications are considered individually and will only be granted

where a genuine need for financial assistance has been demonstrated and criteria has been met. The Discretionary Fund is specifically designed to meet certain priority groups such as:

- Young parent
- Young carer for adult or child relative
- Young people that have suffered parental bereavement
- Students that have a significant diagnosed mental health condition

This funding may also be available when the household annual income is under £29,000 and there is a proven need for financial assistance, or when students experience sudden changes in circumstances.

SHCG cannot offer cash payments but may be able to support with the costs of college related items such as travel, essential equipment, kit and /or uniform. To be eligible to apply to this fund you must be:

- Aged 16, 17 or 18 at the start of your course. Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive discretionary funding if they are continuing on a study programme, they began aged 16 to 18, or have an Education, Health, and Care (EHC) Plan.
- Studying a 'funded' course at one of the SHCG campuses. Students studying apprenticeships are not eligible.
- UK resident or meet sufficient residency criteria.

Please note:

- We cannot assess an application if proof of income is not provided.
- The Discretionary Fund is a limited amount and once it has been fully allocated to students, no further funding will be available.
- In cases of travel, distance of travel will be considered and a financial contribution may be required. Support is limited to term time/time tabled days only.

### **3.2 16-19 Vulnerable Student Support Fund**

This fund has been established by the Government to support any student whose financial situation acts as barrier to participation in college courses. The Vulnerable Student Support Fund may provide funding for transport, essential kits/uniform, course materials and equipment. Students are awarded the amount of support they need to participate in the course. Payments are conditional and dependant on attendance, behaviours and attitudes.

To be eligible to apply to this fund you must meet at least one of the following criteria. You must be:

- A young person claiming Universal Credit in your own name because you are financially supporting yourself, or financially supporting yourself and someone is dependent on you and living with you.
- A young person who is a recent Care Leaver or in care (Local Authority confirmation will be required)
- A Young person who is in receipt of both Universal Credit and Disability Living Allowance/ Personal Independence Payments in their own right.

This funding is not guaranteed. Students who may be eligible, are not automatically entitled to funding if they do not have educational financial needs and/or their educational financial needs are covered from other sources.

Where a student is eligible for the Vulnerable Student Support Fund and is participating on a study programme that lasts for 30 weeks or more, they can be awarded up to £1,200 per year. This figure will be determined by what is required to ensure participation. Students on study programmes of less than 30 weeks, or are starting later than the planned start date, will be paid a pro-rata amount based on an assessment of their actual needs.

Please note:

- We cannot assess an application if proof of income is not provided.
- In cases of travel, distance of travel will be considered and a financial contribution may be required. Support is limited to term time/time tabled days only.

### **3.3 Free Student Meals**

Free Student Meals are available for all eligible students for each day the student is timetabled and expected to attend their study programme. To be eligible for Free Student Meals as per current guidance students must be

- 16 to 18, but under 19 on the 31st August 2024
- Aged 19 or over continuing on a study programme that began aged 16 to 18, or have an Educational Health & Care (EHC) Plan.

Support may only be offered once a successful application has been made.

#### **Eligibility Criteria**

Free meals in further education may be provided where students are in receipt of, or have parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance

- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by H Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit (UC) with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 for each year (after tax and not including any benefits they get)

County Councils have an online service to check eligibility for Free Student Meals. Please follow the links below for the area in which you reside.

[Southampton](#)

[Hampshire](#)

#### **4.0 Support for students 19+**

##### **4.1 19+ Discretionary Student Support Fund**

The Discretionary Student Support Fund for 19+ students is a financial assistance fund comprising of post 19 discretionary and post 20 childcare funds provided by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The fund is intended to be used for students facing financial hardship to help with essential course related costs such as essential equipment, books, uniform, professional body membership fees and the cost of childcare while studying (for students aged 20 and over). Funds may be used for a wide variety of purposes to meet individual needs.

All applications are considered individually and will only be granted where a genuine need for financial assistance has been demonstrated and criteria has been met. Discretionary funding for a fully funded ASF or ASFL course may be available when the annual income is under £25000, a higher income threshold may be considered for childcare support.

To be eligible to apply to this fund you must be:

- Aged 19 or over at the start of your course
- Studying a 'funded' FE course at one of our SHCG Campuses (students studying Apprenticeships are not eligible)
- UK resident or meet sufficient residency criteria

Please note:

- We cannot assess an application if proof of income is not provided.
- The 19+ Discretionary Student Support Fund is a limited amount and once it has been fully allocated to students, no further funding will be available.
- In cases of travel, distance of travel will be considered and a financial contribution may be required. Support is limited to term time/time tabled days only. (See Student Financial Support Policy)

#### **4.2 19+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary (ALLB)**

Students who wish to study for a qualification at Level 3 and are 19+ years, at the start of their course, can apply for an Advanced learner Loan to cover the tuition cost of their study programme. The Bursary is designed to support students aged 19+ who have taken out an Advanced Learner Loan and face financial barriers to participation.

The fund may help pay for support such as accommodation (if a student needs to live away from home for their course), travel, course materials/ equipment, childcare and/or classroom assistance for a disability or learning difficulty.

To be eligible to apply to this fund students must be:

- Aged 19 or over at the start of your course
- Studying a Level 3 course at one of our SHCG Campuses
- Have had a 19 + Advanced Learning Loan approved by the Student Loans Company
- And be in receipt of at least one of the benefits below;
- Job Seekers Allowance (where there is an income-based payment)
- Housing Benefit
- Working Tax Credit (not solely Tax credit)
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Universal Credit (not solely child tax element and total household income must not exceed £29000 pa. which must include any universal credit payments, wages and benefits received).

#### **4.3 Free Student Meals**

Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a free meal if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 or have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan.

Students who meet either or the criteria above, can receive a free meal while they continue to attend education (in the case of a 19+ continuer, this must be the same programme they started before they turned 19), as long as their eligibility continues.

Free Student Meals are only available for each day the student is timetabled and expected to attend their study programme (as appropriate).

#### **4.4 Apprenticeships Care Leavers Bursary**

Apprentices who are under 25 and have been in local authority care, are able to access a £3,000 bursary from the Government. In order to access this bursary, you will need to provide proof of eligibility. For an apprentice to be eligible for the care leavers' bursary, they must:

- be aged under 25 at the time they start their apprenticeship
- not have received the care leavers' bursary before
- be either an eligible child, a relevant child or a former relevant child. For further information [click here](#)

#### **5.0 Childcare Support**

Young parents under 20 at the start of the course may be entitled for help with childcare whilst studying. The childcare provider must be Ofsted registered. You may also get help with the additional travel costs you have to pay so you can take your child from home to the childcare provider. Find out more about Care to Learn [here](#)

Students aged 20 or over at the start of their course can apply to the College for assistance with the cost of childcare while they study. The assistance offered will be considered for household income up to £33000 and other eligibility factors. It is always only available for Ofsted registered care.

#### **6.0 How to Apply**

Details of how to apply can be found on the individual college websites under Student Support. Applications are made online via the Pay my Student Portal. All applications are treated fairly and as per funding rules and regulations.

Where students are found to have intentionally given misleading or inaccurate information SHCG will claim back the award made and/or stop any future support. Providing false or incomplete information may result in wrongfully claiming financial help and may result in action being taken in accordance with the SHCG Behaviour Management Policy and a referral made to the Police.

## **7.0 Payments**

Methods of payment will be largely electronic and confirmed by the Student Bursary Officer at each Campus.

Essential Kit and/or uniform may be purchased by the Student Bursary Officer and will be delivered to the college. No purchases will be made until lessons have started.

Students who withdraw from college may be asked to return any items purchased or repay any financial assistance in full.

## **8.0 Appeals**

In the event a student disagrees with the result of their application an appeal should be sent via email: [info@shcg.ac.uk](mailto:info@shcg.ac.uk) marked "FAO Chief Operating Officer", stating the college and/or campus your application is to. You should have an initial response within two working days and any further investigation should take no longer than ten working days (term time only. Appeals made during school holidays may take longer to investigate but we will do our best to respond in a timely manner).