

LEARNER RELATED POLICY: FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS: CODE OF PRACTICE

This policy is annually reviewed to ensure compliance with current regulations

| Approved/reviewed by | |
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| Approved by: Vice Principal: Finance & Corporate Services | |
| Reviewed by: Head of Learner Services | |
| Date of next review | May 2024 |

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1. Document Control

1.1. Document Details

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|---------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| Title | Financial Support for Learners: Code of Practice Policy |
| Author | Debbie Holland / Sharon Posey |
| Version | 3.0 |
| Date | May 2023 |
| Status | Published |

1.2. Revision History

| Version | Date | Author | Comments |
|---------|----------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1.0 | Dec 2019 | Dawn Telford | Definitive Release |
| 2.0 | Feb 2022 | Dawn Telford / Vicki Locke | Definitive Release |
| 3.0 | May 2023 | Debbie Holland / Sharon Posey | Definitive Release |

1.3. Distribution

| Name | Email | Organisation |
|-----------|------------------------|----------------|
| All Staff | Uploaded to SharePoint | Boston College |

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The College aims to assist learners with financial support where there is a barrier to join, participate in or continue on a programme of study.
- 1.2 The College will provide up to date advice and information on financial support available through Learner Services. This includes information on: -
 - HE Financial Support Scheme
 - Care to Learn
 - Learner Support Funds, including the 16-19 Bursary Fund, Further Education Free Meals, 19+ Learner Support Fund and Loans Bursary Fund
 - Advanced Learner Loans
 - Be Brilliant Fund
 - Other types of funding that become available
- 1.3 The College will refer to other agencies that can assist with financial advice on government benefits and local support arrangements e.g. CAB, Job Centre etc.
- 1.4 The College will prioritise financial support to learners who are suffering financial hardship, as identified through national guidance such as that provided by ESFA and AoC.
- 1.5 The funds available are limited and therefore cannot be guaranteed to all learners. The College identifies and prioritises financial support through a tiering system, however, funds may not cover all learner expenses.
- 1.6 The overriding principle for providing financial support is: -

To assist learners with the costs of accessing, participating in or remaining on their chosen course of study where the absence of such assistance would result in the learner not enrolling, withdrawing early or failing to gain their qualification.
- 1.7 The College will use its financial support funds specifically to: -
 - a) assist with participation in post-16 education, particularly amongst people who may otherwise not participate;
 - b) support the retention and achievement of learners.

2. LEARNER SUPPORT FUNDS

- 2.1 The procedures for operating the College's Learner Support Funds, including the 16-19 Bursary Scheme, are developed in accordance with national guidance and the principle set out in section 1.6 above.
- 2.2 These procedures will be reviewed annually by the Head of Learner Services, in conjunction with relevant team members and cross-college managers.
- 2.3 Notes for guidance will be reviewed and updated annually by the Head of Learner Services, and training or updates on financial support will be provided to appropriate staff.
- 2.4 All application forms and guidance will be made available on our website and via hard copy

3. TYPES OF SUPPORT

- 3.1 Claims for assistance will be considered for the following purposes, depending upon the age of the learner and prioritised dependent upon funds available and criteria set by funding bodies: -
 - Transport
 - Equipment, books and stationery
 - Extreme hardship
 - Child care
 - Course or examination fees
 - Subsistence in way of food credits/allowance
 - Other education relevant costs
- 3.2 Where assistance is provided, this will normally take the form of a grant (which does not have to be repaid); please note that in some circumstances, equipment or books may be required to be returned if a learner leaves the programme early, and at the end of their study programme.
- 3.3 Wherever possible and appropriate, financial support will be directly paid to suppliers of goods or services rather than cash payments (payment in kind).
- 3.4 All financial support is conditional upon learners meeting attendance and progression criteria as set out in the guidance.

4. PUBLICITY

Learner and staff awareness of financial support available will be promoted via posters, review/offer letters, emails, staff training, Learner Services staff, College website and Learner Cross College Teams.

5. THE APPLICATION PROCEDURE

5.1 The procedure is designed to identify those learners in greatest hardship and enable applicants to receive a prompt assessment and response to their application. Decisions will always be given in writing and an appeals process is in place for learners who require it.

5.2 The application process is as follows: -

- i. Learner completes relevant application form/s and submits, together with relevant documentation, to Learner Services.
- ii. If the learner requests support with the application process, they should contact the Learner Services team; in this case an appointment will be made within five working days.
- iii. The Bursary Team will assess the application against the written guidance and criteria and approve or decline support. A decision will be made within fifteen working days of receipt.

All awards will be approved by Head of Learner Services.

- iv. Written confirmation of the decision, and where applicable, details of the support awarded, will be sent to the learner via their personal email. If the learner is under 18 and has agreed sharing permissions an email will also be sent to parent/carers where we hold those details.
- v. Where the learner falls into the eligibility criteria, but support is declined through lack of available funds, the application will be retained on a waiting list should any funds become available later in the year.
- vi. The Finance Department will make direct payments to service providers on behalf of the learner. Where payments are to be made direct to a learner, these will normally be made in advance and via bank transfer other than in exceptional circumstances which must be agreed by the Head of Learner Services.
- vii. Learners have a right to appeal decisions. Learners can appeal in the first instance to the Head of Learner Services, if still not resolved to learners' satisfaction then they must appeal in writing to the Quality Manager within ten working days.
- viii. Learners have the right to request additional financial support using a 'change of circumstances' form, especially if household circumstances have changed. However, their application will still need to meet criteria and awards may not be made if funds are not available.