

Name of Policy

DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUND – STUDENTS AGED 19+

Purpose

The objective of the policy is to ensure transparency for students regarding their eligibility for support from the Learner Support Fund.

The aim of the Discretionary Learner Support Fund (dLSF) is to support and assist students aged 19 and over on their course of study by ensuring that finance is not a barrier to their learning. It is provided to increase access, retention and achievement.

Author / Job Title

Enrichment Lead

Equality Assessment By Whom

Enrichment Lead

Date

05/2023

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10

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Approved by

	Date
SMT	June 2023
Corporation	July 2023

Related policies or procedures or parent policy if applicable

Discretionary Learner Support Fund – students aged 16-18
Advanced Learning Loan Bursary Policy

Groups/bodies consulted in the development of the policy

ESFA Funding Guidance

To be published on College website

Yes

To be published on Student Hub

Yes

**Discretionary Learner Support Fund (dLSF)
Policy for students aged 19+
2023-2024**

Discretionary Learner Support Fund (dLSF) is provided through the Education and Skills Funding Agency to Colleges to enable them to provide financial support for learners with a specific financial hardship that prevents them from taking part in learning.

The College will use this to aid access, retention and achievement of eligible students on their chosen course.

It is available to students aged 19+ enrolled on an ESFA funded course whose household income is below £28,000. (Parental income will not be taken into consideration but the income of any spouse or co-habiting partner will). It is not available to students aged 19+ enrolled on a programme eligible for the Advanced Learning Loan (please see Advanced Learning Loan Bursary document).

It is available to students if they are a "home student" i.e. have been resident in the country for three or more years or meet the ESFA residency criteria.

The following 'categories' will be used when assessing a student's needs.

- Hardship for those aged 19+.
- Childcare for those aged 20+.

The fund is not an entitlement and is dependent on the amount of funding allocated to the College each year. Applications are welcome from those with a household income over £28k where a specific hardship can be demonstrated and if funds are available an allocation may be made.

Administration

When making decisions about awarding DLS funding the College will take into account the availability of other financial support available for learners, for example Job Centre Plus or a Work Programme.

Payments will be dependent on an attendance level of at least 90%. Consideration will be given to mitigating circumstances such as: child protection, family illness, safeguarding concerns, caring responsibilities or any other issues that might affect attendance. Students must notify the Enrichment Lead of any such mitigating circumstances as soon as they become aware there may be an issue. Where attendance is still deemed unsatisfactory or if no notification is made to the Enrichment Lead, payment will be either withheld or reclaimed.

Payments will also be dependent on satisfactory behaviour i.e. no disciplinary action above Stage 1.

The College reserves the right to reclaim monies paid to students where information given on the application form is found to be false.

The College reserves the right to reclaim monies paid to students where the student has withdrawn before the end of the course.

It is the students' responsibility to tell the Department for Work and Pensions about any direct funding support that they receive from the College as payments received may affect their eligibility for some benefits.

The College, as per ESFA guidance, will not use DLS to support the following:

- The purchase of essential equipment or facilities required by the learner if the learner is fully funded by the ESFA, as these items are already included in the funding rate.
- If the learner is eligible but it is more appropriate for them to receive support through Learning Support for the same purpose.
- If the learner is already receiving help with travel or childcare costs from Jobcentre Plus or a Work Programme provider in connection with pre-employment training.
- If the learner is in prison or a young offender institution, or has been released on temporary licence (RoTL), for example, on day release.
- If the learner is carrying out Community Learning, a higher education course, or provision with learning aims that are identified as fully funded from other sources.
- If the learner is receiving an income and does not have a financial need.
- Weekly attendance allowances or achievement and attendance bonuses

Application Procedure

Students will need to complete an application form for assistance. Forms are available from the Enrichment Lead or via the website www.macclesfield.ac.uk.

Completed forms should be handed in to the Enrichment Lead with all supporting documentation. The application will be delayed should the student provide insufficient evidence. Where a student is applying for Childcare support, official documents must be provided eg child benefit letter or full birth certificate.

A letter/email confirming eligibility for support will be sent within 15 days of receiving a fully completed application

Hardship

Hardship funding is provided to support vulnerable and disadvantaged learners and to remove barriers to education or training.

Learners will be supported based on their needs and local circumstances. Types of support available include the following.

- Course-related costs, including stationery, course trips, books and equipment (where these costs are not included in the funding rate), support with domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation
- Individual transport costs
- Examination fees (re-sits not included). Should the learner fail to attend an exam financed by the learner support fund they will be invoiced

- Accreditation fees, professional membership fees and any fees or charges due to external bodies
- Support provided by others, or by providing items or services or cash direct to the learner. This can be in the form of a grant or repayable loan (except asylum seekers who will not receive support in the form of cash but can receive a travel pass, course-related books and equipment)

20+ Childcare

20+ Childcare funding is provided to support students aged 20 or older on the first day of learning who are at risk of not starting learning, or not continuing learning, as a result of difficulty getting childcare.

You can only use childcare funding to pay for childcare with a childminder, provider or agency that is registered with Ofsted.

Childcare will be calculated over a 44 week period and on this basis will cover half terms, Christmas and Easter holidays. dLSF will not pay retainers over the summer holidays. The maximum weekly amount payable for any one child is £175 unless by prior arrangement.

The childcare allowance within the Child Tax Credit and any free places will be taken into account when assessing eligibility for support if appropriate.

Each student will be responsible for 5% of the bill up to a maximum of £25 each month.

The Student will be responsible for paying any deposit due prior to enrolling at College.

the Enrichment Lead will notify the Childcare provider of the parameters of the funding. They will also be notified that all invoices must be addressed to the student and not the College and should include their registration number.

Should a student withdraw from their course the College will only be responsible for payment whilst the student was in attendance at College.

Where a student continues to use childcare provision after completing their course the student will be liable for all childcare costs.

Students aged under 20 on the first day of learning must be directed to the ESFA 'Care to Learn' programme. dLSF cannot be used to top up childcare payments for those receiving 'care to learn'.

PAYMENT METHOD

All claim forms, except childcare, will be processed by the Enrichment Lead on the 1st Monday of each month. Childcare claims will be processed each Monday (Tuesday in the case of a bank holiday).

In all cases the student's attendance is checked to ensure that it is 91.5% or above in each element of study.

On rare occasions it may be necessary to pay claims where the attendance is below the College minimum. This is usually at the recommendation of the Course Leader and after discussions with the student. Details are recorded on pro-monitor.

All payments will be made by BAC's into student accounts therefore students are required to provide bank details

Appeals Procedure

In the event of your application being refused by the College, you will have the right to appeal. This should be in writing to the Deputy Principal, detailing the reasons for the appeal. A decision will be made within 10 working days and you will be notified of the outcome and reasons.

For further help and advice about any aspect of applying for student financial support please contact the Enrichment Lead on 01625 410055 or studentservices@macclesfield.ac.uk