

Research Briefing

Student support in Further Education 2016/17: a guide for constituents

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National Assembly for Wales
Research Service

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Research Briefing

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This briefing provides information on the financial support available to students in full or part-time further education.



Contents

01. Background	1
Students aged 16-18	1
Students aged 18 or over	2
Students aged 19 or over	2
Contacts and resources	3
Financial Contingency Funds (FCFs)	3

01. Background

This briefing aims to provide information on the different types of support available to students who are planning to study a full or part-time further education course in 2016/2017. Further education normally refers to post-16 study and is usually provided by local colleges or schools.

Students aged between 16 and 18 will not normally have to pay tuition fees. Students aged 19 and over studying full-time may be charged tuition fees. Many individual institutions offer free or discounted tuition to learners aged 19 and over studying part-time from low-income families, disabled learners or learners on benefits. Advice on support available to part-time students can normally be obtained from individual colleges.

Students who are out of work and also studying part-time may also still qualify for Jobseeker's Allowance if the course totals less than 16 hours a week and the individuals are still available for work. Students should contact their local Jobcentre Plus office to check eligibility.

Contacts including college details can be found at the end of this document.

Students aged 16-18

Education Maintenance Allowance

The **Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)** is available to 16 to 18 year olds living in Wales continuing their education after school leaving age. Eligible new students in 2016/17 can receive £30 a week, paid every two weeks depending on household income. For academic year 2016/17 claimants have to be between 16 and 18 years old on 31 August 2016.

UK citizens living in Wales will normally be eligible for EMA, although non-UK citizens may also be eligible. Students do not necessarily have to study in Wales, as long as they live in Wales and their college or school are participating in the scheme. To claim EMA a student must be studying at a **participating school or college** on an **eligible course** that is:

- **Academic or vocational** up to and including Level 3;
- **Full time** at school, or a minimum of **12 guided hours at college**;
- At least **10 weeks in length**.

These courses include qualifications such as GCSEs, A/AS levels, BTEC, NVQ/GNVQ and Basic Skills courses.

The allowance is based on household income and whether a student is classed as a **dependent** or **independent** student. To receive an EMA, a student's annual household income must **be £20,817 or less** in households with one dependent young person and **£23,077 or less** in households with two or more young people eligible for child benefit. Students will **not** be eligible for EMA if their household income is **£23,078 or more**.

Youth Concessionary Fare Scheme

The Welsh Government operates a youth discount bus travel scheme. This provides discounted travel on buses for those aged between 16 and 18 who live in Wales and may be used for school or college transport. This provides a discount of a third of the cost of fares. Applications and further information can be found on the **Mytravelpass website**.

Students aged 18 or over

Professional and Career Development Loans

Professional and Career Development Loans (PCDLs) are available to anyone aged 18 or over wishing to undertake a vocational course or training which will equip them with the skills needed for an occupation, trade or profession. PCDLs are available for full-time or part-time learning and between £300 and £10,000 can be borrowed. They must be repaid. The PCDLs are available from three high street banks participating in the scheme. More detailed information can be obtained from the PCDL Information Line on 0800 100 900 as well as the **GOV.UK website**.

Students aged 19 or over

Welsh Government Learning Grant for Further Education

The **Welsh Government Learning Grant for Further Education (WGLG (FE))** aims to help students who come from families on a low income to continue in further education. It is available to students 19 years old and over, depending on eligibility criteria. Eligible claimants can receive a grant of up to £1,500 for a full-time course and £750 for a part-time course depending on the combined total household income.

For academic year 2016/17 applicants must be 19 years old or over on 1 September 2016. UK citizens living in Wales will normally be eligible for WGLG FE, although non-UK citizens may also be eligible. In order to qualify for WGLG FE a student must be studying at a participating college on an eligible course, that is at least 275 hours and leads to a nationally recognised qualification such as GCSEs A and AS levels, BTEC, GNVQs, NVQs and Basic Skills. Individual colleges can advise on whether a course is eligible for WGLG FE funding.

The amount of WGLG FE a student may receive varies according to their household income. To receive the full £1,500 grant a student would need to be studying a full time eligible course and have an annual household income of £6,120 or less. Students with a household income of £18,731 or more would not be eligible for WGLG FE. Household income is calculated depending on whether a student is classed as a **dependent** or **independent** student.

Annual Household Income	Welsh Government Learning Grant (FE) available (part time /full time)
up to £6,120	£750 / £1,500
£6,121 - £12,235	£450 / £750
£12,236 - £18, 370	£300 / £450
£18,371 and over	£0

Contacts and resources

- Student Finance Wales can be contacted for information on EMAs or WGLG(FE) Monday to Friday: 8:00am - 8:00pm and Saturday 9:00am - 1:00pm on **0300 200 4050**, or email **emawales@slc.co.uk** (for EMAs) or **WGLGFE@slc.co.uk** for WGLG(FE).
- The **Careers Wales website** provides further information on funding for students with learning difficulties and disabilities.
- **National Union of Students** information on funding
- The Research Service has produced a factsheet entitled *Funding for adult and post-graduate learners 2016/17: a guide for constituents*. This guide aims to signpost sources of information relating to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Study but it also contains information on databases, charities, trusts and foundation that may provide individuals with financial assistance, which may also be useful to those studying in Further Education.

Financial Contingency Funds (FCFs)

The Welsh Government provides funding to further education colleges in Wales to operate a hardship fund for their students, known as **Financial Contingency Funds (FCF)**. Some institutions also refer to these as Students Support Funds or Student Hardship Funds. They may be in the form of grants or loans. FCFs are available for both full-time and part-time students.

FCFs are usually allocated to students to help with meeting costs which are not already being met from other sources of funding, to provide emergency payments in respect of unexpected crises and to assist in cases where a student may be considering leaving their course of study because of financial problems, such as:

- **Childcare costs** – assistance with paying for childcare costs whilst attending college;
- **Transport costs** – such as bus or rail passes or petrol allowances;
- **Essential course equipment** – such as books or other specialist equipment required to study a particular course.

The high-level eligibility criteria are published by the Welsh Government annually in the FCF Scheme. It is for each institution to consider applications and make payments to eligible students subject to these terms and conditions. However the Welsh Government has indicated that institutions should prioritise help to students who fall into certain priority groups. In previous years, these have included students with children, especially lone parents; students living in areas of multiple deprivation and care leavers and students on low income.

College contacts

The contact details below are taken from the individual college websites as of May 2016. Where possible, contact numbers and email addresses are to student support services within organisations. The hyperlinks also lead to student finance or student support sections on individual college websites.

These contact details may be useful to students seeking advice on the Financial Contingency Funds and further support for part-time FE study.

<p>– Coleg Gwent Tel: 01495 333776, Email: contact form</p>	<p>– Cardiff and Vale College Tel: 02920 250 250 Email: info@cavc.ac.uk</p>
<p>– St. David’s Catholic Sixth Form College Tel: 02920 498555 Email: enquiries@stdavidscollege.ac.uk</p>	<p>– Coleg y Cymoedd Tel: 01658 887500 (Aberdare) Tel: 01443 662800 (Nantgarw) Tel: 01443 663202 (Rhondda) Tel: 01443 816888 (Ystrad Mynach) Email: enquiries@cymoedd.ac.uk</p>
<p>– Coleg Merthyr Tydfil Tel: 01685 726000 Email: contact form</p>	<p>– Bridgend College Tel: 01656 302302 Email: enquiries@bridgend.ac.uk</p>
<p>– NPTC Group (Neath Port Talbot College) Tel: 01639 648000 Email: enquiries@nptcgroup.ac.uk</p>	<p>– Gower College tel: 01792 284000 (Ty Coch) Tel: 01792 890700 (Gorseinon) 01792 284021 (Llwyn y Bryn) Email: info@gowercollegeswansea.ac.uk</p>
<p>– Coleg Sir Gâr Tel: 01554 748036 / 748102 Email: financialsupport@colegsirgar.ac.uk</p>	<p>– Pembrokeshire College Tel: 01437 753133 Email: guidance@pembrokeshire.ac.uk</p>
<p>– Coleg Ceredigion Tel: 01970 639700 (Aberystwyth) Tel: 01239 612032 (Cardigan) Email: enquiries@ceredigion.ac.uk</p>	<p>– Llandrillo Menai Group - Coleg Llandrillo Tel: 01492 542330 Email: studentfinance.llandrillo@gllm.ac.uk, Coleg Meirion Dwyfor Tel: 01341 422827 Email: studentfinance.meiriondwyfor@gllm.ac.uk, Coleg Menai Tel: 01248 383255 Email: learnerservices.menai@gllm.ac.uk</p>

– **Coleg Cambria**
Tel: 0300 3030008
Email: enquiries@cambria.ac.uk

– **YMCA Wales Community College**
Tel: 02920 755444
Email: info@ymca-wales.ac.uk

– **WEA Cymru** tel: 0345 4500 607
Email: info@weacymru.org