

National policy for further education bursaries: 2016-17

Issue date: 12 April 2016

Reference: SFC/GD/04/2016

Summary: This guidance stipulates the conditions of use of bursary funds allocated to colleges by the Scottish Funding Council and sets out the rates of calculation for academic year 2016-17

FAO: Principals and Directors of Scotland's colleges

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National policy for further education bursaries: 2016-17

Introduction and updates for academic year 2016-17

1. This national policy supports the strategic priorities and outcomes of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Scottish Government.
2. The policy stipulates the conditions of use of bursary funds allocated to colleges by SFC and sets out the rates for calculation for academic year (AY) 2016-17.
3. The bursary fund is cash-limited. Students who are eligible for support from this fund are not automatically entitled to this support.

Changes to 2016-17 policy

Increase in maintenance rates

4. The Scottish Government has confirmed its expectation that as part of its budget settlement for AY 2016-17 that there would be extra funds available for student support. This has resulted in an increase in the maintenance awards for students again in AY 2016-17.
5. The detailed list of the updated student support rates can be found in Annex A of the Award Assessment section of the bursary guidance for AY 2016-17.

Review of Student Support

6. The main changes to the guidance for AY 2016-17 are to improve consistency in the application of the guidance across the sector. This reflects the next phase of the recommendations from the Student Support Review Group. The background to the review and the group's full recommendations can be found via the following link:

http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/Funding_Streams_Student_Support/Student_Support_Review_Group_Final_Report.pdf.

7. The following areas in the guidance are updated in order to deliver a more consistent approach to student funding across Scotland:
 - Variance: The policy has been amended so that colleges can no longer vary awards to students, by reducing to 80% of the calculated award. Colleges must now pay students 100% of the assessed award.
 - Attendance requirement: We have removed the 90% attendance rule and state that students should have full attendance. The policy emphasises that authorised absences are permitted under the attendance policy.

- Maternity / Paternity leave: Colleges are asked, when determining their the policies on authorised absence, to set out their position on maternity / paternity / adoption leave for students.
 - Study Costs: We have reviewed college spend on study costs and noted that, at a sector level, colleges spend between 6% and 7% of their total student support budget on study costs. Therefore, we are removing the 15% study cap and request that colleges aim to bring their study costs in line with the sector average spend. We have for the first time included sector data on study cost spend, detailing the overall levels of spend and an breakdown of the average study cost by subject level.
8. Colleges that anticipate they will have difficulty in implementing these changes in AY 2016-17 should contact the student support team (see 'further information' section below) to discuss and agree a timescale for implementation.

Universal Credit

9. In order to reflect the introduction of Universal Credit we have included a new section setting out that the maintenance award for any eligible student in receipt of Universal Credit is £28.00 per week.

Summary of changes

10. The updates to the paragraphs and relevant sections of the guidance are noted in the Annex to this announcement.

Further information

11. Please contact Jane Scott, Policy Officer, Funding Policy for further information, tel: 0131 313 6660, email: jscott@sfc.ac.uk.



Martin Smith

Chief Funding & Information Officer

Annex: Updates to FE Bursary Guidance for AY 2016-17

| Fund Management & Audit Information Section | | |
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| Subject | Paragraph number(s) | Reason for change to policy |
| Fund management (Variance) | 17 - 18 | As recommended by the Student Support Review Group, we have amended the policy so that colleges can no longer vary awards by reducing to 80% of the calculated total. Colleges must pay students 100% of the assessed award. |
| Fund management (Reporting on Study Items) | 20 and 32-33 Also referenced in the Award Assessment section | A review of data on study costs has indicated that the average / mean study cost spend across the sector is between 6% and 7% of colleges overall bursary allocations. We are therefore removing the 15 % study cap and requesting that colleges aim to bring their study costs in line with the average sector spend. |
| Administration of the award (Attendance requirement) | 40 - 45 | As recommended by the Student Support Review Group, we have removed the 90% attendance rule and stated that students should have full attendance. The policy emphasises that authorised absences are permitted under this policy. |
| Attendance requirement (Maternity/paternity leave) | 42 | When determining their policies on authorised absence, colleges should set out their position on maternity / paternity / adoption leave for students. |
| Data retention | 60 | Guidance updated to reflect increased retention periods for documentation relating to ESF students. |

Annex: Updates to FE Bursary Guidance for AY 2016-17

| Award Assessment Section | | |
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| Subject | Paragraph number(s) | Reason for change to policy |
| Calculation of Award (Maintenance allowances for care leavers) | 45 | We have included a new section indicating that, when assessing maintenance allowance for care leavers, colleges should award the optimum level of funding to the student taking into account the student's wider circumstances. |
| Calculation of Award (Maintenance allowances for students on Universal Credit) | 46 - 47 | We have included a new section indicating that the maintenance award for students eligible to receive student support who are also in receipt of Universal Credit is £28.00 per week. |
| Maintenance allowances for students on Universal Credit | Annex A | We have updated the table detailing Student Support Rates to indicate that the maintenance award for students eligible to receive student support who are also in receipt of Universal Credit is £28.00 per week. |
| Study Items | 48 – 55 | <p>A review of data on study costs has indicated that the average/mean study costs spend across the sector is 6%-7% of colleges' overall bursary allocations.</p> <p>We are therefore removing the 15 % study cap and requesting that colleges aim to bring their study costs in line with the sector average spend. We have also sought to present the guidance on study costs in a clearer manner, with a view to improving consistency of practice in the sector.</p> |
| Study Items | Annex B | We have included sector data on study costs spend – this sets out details the |

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| | | overall levels of spend and a breakdown of average study costs by subject level. |
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Annex: Updates to FE Bursary Guidance for AY 2016-17

| Advisors Notes Section | | |
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| Subject | Paragraph number(s) | Reason for change to policy |
| Definition of Adult Dependent | 2 | These definitions previously referenced eligibility for Child Benefit. Because universal entitlement to Child Benefit has been withdrawn, these references no longer apply. We have removed the references and updated the definitions. |
| Definition of Assessable Parent | 4 | |
| Definition of Child | 9 | |
| Bursary award letter | Annex A | <p>We have reformatted the guidance on the bursary award letter and have included two additional items which student's bursary award letters should contain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A reference to the student status as part-time or full-time. This was a recommendation of the Student Support Review Group. • A clear distinction between bursary funding allocated for maintenance and that awarded for specific purposes, such as travel and study costs. This is to provide clarity for students and specifically those in receipt of Universal Credit who may have to separately identify this funding to DWP. |