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| **Financial Support Procedures 2021-22**  **Adult Education Budget (AEB)** |

Northern College is committed to supporting students to access learning where hardship is a barrier to education. These procedures should be read in conjunction with the Financial Support Policy 2021-2022. The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance on how eligible students can access financial support. For Local Authority funded courses, students must satisfy the eligibility criteria stated within the appropriate Funding Guidance.

Students who are enrolled onto Local Authority approved learning aim/qualification/courses may be eligible to receive financial support should they meet the eligibility criteria. This is a means tested fund based on household, gross taxable income. Applications for financial support can be submitted once enrolled onto the programme of study.

It is advised that students familiarise themselves with this procedure before applying for the Student Financial Support Fund including the conditions for receiving support. This procedure will detail the evidence required to support an application.

Where students do not meet the eligibility for funding allowances and wish to stay resident students will be expected to pay full residential costs.

1. **Eligibility**

To be eligible students must;

* + 1. Be enrolled on a full-time and/or substantial part-time (5 hours and above) Local Authority funded programme.
    2. Be a member of the armed forces.
    3. meet the requirements of the fund for example:
* Be living either independently as a single person with a personal income of less than £17,374.50 based on the ESFA low pay threshold or,
* Reside within a household where the overall income doesn’t exceed the threshold of £29,900 per annum (in line with National Office for Statistics household disposable income 2020). The personal or household income will be considered against the eligibility criteria (the criteria will only consider the gross income, with the exception of both Child Benefit & Disability Living Allowance; **all** other income/benefits will be included in the household assessment taking into account all individuals living at the address including parents/guardians/step parents/partners/grandparents). Where students, who do not have a personal income, evidence will be required to demonstrate how they are being financially supported. If they are living in a household, they are expected to provide evidence of the household income.
  + 1. Be considered a ‘home’ student for the purposes of AEB funding meeting the residency requirements. ‘Home’ status is the same for the bursary as it is for fee eligibility purposes.

A ‘Home’ student therefore is;

* + - A citizen of a country within the European Economic Area (EEA) or have settled status of Rights of Abode in the UK.
    - A student who has been ordinarily resident in EEA or countries determined within EEA for at least 3 years on the first day of learning.
    - A non EEA citizen who has UK government permission to live in the UK, which is not for educational purposes, and have been ordinarily resident in the UK for at least 3 years before the start of learning.
    - A student with refugee status, exceptional or discretionary leave to enter or remain, humanitarian protection, leave outside the rules, Section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016, ‘Calais Leave’ to remain or the husband, partner or child of the previous.
    - An asylum seeker within the funding guidance rule of claims.

1.1.5 Students will **not be** eligible if:

* they are in receipt of an Advanced Learning Loan.
* an international student (for fee purposes)
* a student on a higher education (HE) programme
* a prison-based student or learning whilst released on temporary license

1. **Funding Awards: What can students apply for help with?**
   * 1. The Student Financial Support Fund is awarded through Government funding and it is assessed and distributed on the basis of Financial Hardship as a ‘contribution’. These funds are not an entitlement and should be viewed as a ‘contribution only’ towards the cost of course related costs including travel. However, in some cases the support awarded may not fully cover the costs incurred by the student.
     2. The College will provide the following financial support to students with identified needs within specific categories; hardship, 20 + childcare and residential access funding. Please refer to childcare funding procedures.
     3. Please note for students under 20 years of age on the first day of learning applications for childcare support should be made to Care to Learn at www.gov.uk/care-to-learn

**Financial Support for students on full time non-residential programmes** (**over 23 weeks).**

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|  | Information | Payment |
| **Travel**  Students can only apply for travel expenses if they are not living residentially at the College. | * Students must use the most cost effective way of travelling to College. Payment will be made for travel passes on shortest route. * It is expected that Students should utilise the South Pennine Community Transport where possible. * Supporting travel passes (e.g. senior/disabled) must be used to support travel arrangements to College. * The students home address will be used to calculate the shortest route utilising Google Maps as a measuring tool for all claims. * To qualify for assistance with travel costs, a student must live over a 3 miles’ radius from the College. * Exceptional circumstances will be considered on an individual basis for example safeguarding, return home journeys with evidence of request from staff member. * Cost of traveling to University interviews and open days up to a maximum of 3 visits. | * Mileage £0.45 capped @£1,500 * Travel expenses (e.g. bus/train fares) capped at £1,500 * Travel expenses to be paid monthly upon submission of receipts (bus/train tickets) |
| Non-essential course related costs (books and equipment) | * Books * Resources to support studies. * Trips. * Costs relating to these categories may be reimbursed on production of proof of expenditure (receipts, tickets and associated documentation). | £120.00 max |
| Domestic emergencies | * Emergencies which may impact on student ability to study. * Emergency accommodation provided by others. * All domestic emergency funds must be approved by the Assistant Principal Student Experience or a member of ELT. | £750.00 max |
| Emergency Fund | * The Emergency Fund is in place to assist students experiencing a sudden, unexpected and emergency situation, which may impact on their studies. * All emergency funds must be approved by the Assistant Principal Student Experience or a member of ELT. | £50.00 Maximum |
| Examination fees | * Retake fees will be paid for where there is no further period of learning. * Fees will be paid directly to exam board on student behalf. | Limited to one retake per academic year (if the student is not continuing to study). |
| UCAS application costs | * Where students apply for University via UCAS the cost can be reimbursed. | £22.00 (one choice) and up to £26.50 for max of five choices |
| Accommodation costs related to University admission days or College closures. | * Students who may wish to visit University open days may receive support towards accommodation. * To qualify for financial support, the University should be in excess of 4 hours travel distance. | Up to £60.00 per night.  Maximum 1 night. |
| Hardship Bursary | * A bursary living allowance to support living costs whilst studying. * Allowance will be paid in 10 monthly payments during the course. * Payment will not be made in advance unless exceptional circumstances and by authorisation of ELT member. | £600 maximum per academic year paid in 9 monthly instalments. |

**Financial Support for students on full time residential programmes** (**over 23 weeks).**

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|  | Information | Payment |
| Travel | Students can only apply for travel expenses to return to their personal residence twice per academic year. | Application on an individual basis through Financial Support Team. |
| Non-essential course related costs (books and equipment) | * Books * Resources to support studies. * Trips. * Costs relating to these categories may be reimbursed on production of proof of expenditure (receipts, tickets etc.). | £120.00 max in one academic year |
| Emergency Fund | * The Emergency Fund is in place to assist students experiencing a sudden, unexpected and emergency situation, which may impact on their studies. * All emergency funds must be approved by the Assistant Principal Student Experience | £50.00 max |
| Examination fees | * Retake fees will be paid for where there is no further period of learning. * Fees will be paid directly to exam board on student behalf. | Limited to one retake per academic year(if the student is not continuing to study). |
| UCAS application costs | * Where students apply for University via UCAS the cost can be reimbursed. | £22.00 (one choice) and up to £26.50 for max of five choices |
| Accommodation costs related to University admission days or College closures. | * Students who may wish to visit University open days may receive support towards accommodation. * University should be in excess of 4 hours travel distance. * Cost of travelling to University interviews and open days up to a maximum of 3 visits. * Mileage claims will be made by Google maps shortest distance. | Up to £60.00 per night.  Maximum 1 night.  Mileage £0.40 or cheapest train/bus ticket. |
| **Residential Access** | * Residential accommodation costs payment will be made directly to Estates/catering. * A meal allowance will be loaded onto student ID card. * The ID card must be worn at all times whilst at Northern College. * Meal allowance will cover a breakfast, lunch and evening meal. Payment made directly to Estates/Catering Team. * An allowance for one dry and one wash laundry token per week. * All break time food and beverages must be paid for by student. |  |

**Financial Support for students on part time programmes** (**up to and under 23 weeks)**

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|  | Information | Payment |
| Travel | Students **can only** apply for travel expenses if they are **not** living residentially at the College.   * Students must use the most cost effective way of travelling to College. Payment will be made for travel passes on shortest route. * It is expected that Students should utilise the South Pennine Community Transport where possible. * To qualify for assistance with travel costs, a student must live within over a 3 miles’ radius from the College. * Supporting Travel passes (e.g. senior/disabled) must be used to support travel arrangements to College. * Exceptional circumstances considered on an individual basis for example safeguarding, return home journeys with evidence of request from staff member. * Claims will be based on the most economical route and students will be expected to take advantage of any cheap fares available for students and/or weekly/monthly travel passes. | * Mileage £0.45 capped @£50.00 per course. * Travel expenses (e.g. bus/train fares) capped at £50.00. * Claim for up to 5 courses per year. * Up to £250.00 per academic year. |
| Non-essential course related costs (books and equipment) | * Books * Resources to support studies * Award limited to £120.00 per academic year (up to 5 courses) * Costs relating to these categories may be reimbursed on production of proof of expenditure (receipts, tickets etc.) | £120.00 max |
| Examination fees | * Retake fees will be paid for where there is no further period of learning. * Fees will be paid directly to exam board on student behalf. | Limited to one retake per academic year (if the student is not continuing to study). |
| **Residential Access**  Students | * Residential accommodation costs. Payment made directly to Estates. * A meal allowance will be loaded onto student ID card. * The ID card must be worn at all times whilst at Northern College. * Meal allowance will cover evening dinner and breakfast. Payment made directly to Estates/Catering Team. * All lunches, break time food and beverages must be paid for by student. |  |

1. **Application and Assessment Process**

* + 1. Financial Support Fund application forms are available from Student Support Services or Northern College website.
    2. Students must apply for the support fund with supporting evidence as soon as possible after their place on the course has been confirmed.
    3. Application forms will be considered by the Student Support Services Officer and authorised by the Finance Manager and Assistant Principal Student Experience.
    4. Assistance with the application process will be available on request. **Any student found to have made a false claim for financial support or anyone who disregards the conditions of assistance will have their support suspended and may lose their College place.**
    5. All students are responsible for alerting the Work and Pensions Department of College financial support where applicable.
    6. The College reserves the right to review and adjust payments to meet student need and the availability of funds. Payments may therefore increase or decrease according to availability and distribution of funds. Allocation of financial support will depend on availability of funds.
    7. Where there is a significant change to circumstances (personal or otherwise) during the academic year i.e. a transition into residential, an application for re-assessment may be required.
    8. Where a student is unwilling to provide evidence of income no assessment or resulting support can take place.
    9. Students may be invoiced for repayment of any funds allocated to them and will be requested to return any items of equipment if they withdraw from College before completing their studies and where students withdraw from their programme of study prior to their application being processed/approved, no support will be awarded.
    10. Students must have their own bank account, and bank details will be retained for payment processing.
    11. Financial support may be withdrawn should students be subject to disciplinary procedures. Where a student is in receipt of payments these will be stopped from withdrawal date if a student leaves course or the date of exclusion if excluded from programme.
    12. All applications are treated as confidential. However, there may be occasions where it is necessary for the Student Support Services Officer to contact staff within College for additional information for processing or monitoring purposes.
    13. Students will be notified of declined applications by email. If a student wishes to appeal against the declined application this must be made in writing within 10 working days of date of decline. Appeals can only be made based on either a change in circumstances or household income changes.
    14. The information given within the application is used in line with ESFA funding guidance and Northern College Financial Support Policy 2021/2022.
    15. All application data is stored confidentially and retained for a period of seven years and is subject to Northern College Financial Regulations.
    16. All information given within application is subject to GDPR and Data Protection regulations. Personal information and any supporting evidence will be used by the Financial Support Service for College/audit purposes.
    17. Northern College work is aligned to the Equality Act 2010 which prohibits unfair treatment, eliminating discrimination and advances opportunity of all it students. Within this context this policy aims to remove financial disadvantage and take steps to meet the needs of those students who are most financially vulnerable.

1. **Assessment Evidence**
   * 1. Students who apply for financial support must provide evidence that they meet the criteria for personal or household income. This is based on the taxable income during the course.
     2. A single student living alone must have a net personal income of less than £17,374.50
     3. Students who are married, or living with a partner or civil partner must have a net household income of less than £29,900. Assessment will be based on personal income and spouse/partner’s gross taxable income combined.
     4. For students that are living with their parent(s), assessment will be based on personal income and parents’ gross taxable incomes combined. If a parent has remarried, lives with a partner or has entered into a civil partnership, this income will be included.
     5. If a student is married or living with a partner or civil partner *and* lives with parents’, an assessment will be based on personal income and spouse/partner’s gross taxable income. In these circumstances parental income will not be taken into account.
     6. Students will be regarded as independent where:

* They are 25 or over at the start of the academic year in which the course begins
* They have been married or entered into a civil partnership before the start of the academic year in which the course begins
* They have care of a child or children on the first day of the academic year in which the course begins

In these circumstances parental income will not be taken into account.

* + 1. When assessing applications, the following documents **are included** in the

assessment and will be required as evidence

* Earned income (3 x monthly wage slips or 4 x weekly wage slips)
* Out of work benefits for example Income Support/universal Credit, JSA, ESA, Incapacity Benefit etc. (to be dates within last 3 months, Universal Credit document must contain all pages)
* Bank statements dated with last 3 months
* Unearned taxable income for example rental income
* Self-employment proof of most recent tax return
* Working and Child Tax credits (full letter)
* CSA or private Maintenance payments
* State pensions (including War/Military pensions)
* Private pensions
  + 1. The following **will not be included** in the assessment.
* Child benefit
* Housing /Council tax benefit
* Carers allowance
* Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independent Payments
* The ‘childcare element’ of Working Tax Credit
  + 1. It is the students’ responsibility to provide all supporting documentation. Failure to do so will delay the application process. It is advised that where a student sends their application (including supporting evidence) by post, postage should be via Recorded or Special delivery. Supporting documentation may also be scanned and sent digitally but must be the original copy. Please note; students may be asked to provide the original paper copy if submitted digitally.
    2. Northern College will not be responsible for lost or stolen documents.
    3. All original copies of supporting evidence will be returned to the applicant. Copies will be retained for audit purposes.
    4. Assessments for Financial Support Funds will only be undertaken once enrolment processes are completed.
    5. Applications may take up to six weeks to process during the enrolment period at Northern College. Allocated financial support funds will be backdated to the start of the course.
    6. Once a Financial Support Fund application has been assessed and where the support is awarded, students will be notified by Northern College email.
    7. It is the students’ responsibility to monitor emails to ensure financial support notifications/updates are read and understood.

1. **Payment of Financial Support Fund**
   * 1. Payments are attendance based and will be limited to term time attendance unless

the student is a full time residential student. All payments will be made directly into the student’s bank account unless payment is being made to a service provider i.e. a childcare provider or in the form of a bus pass.

* + 1. Failure to achieve the minimum attendance criteria of at least 100% may result in payments being stopped for the week in question and, with the exception of childcare payments, within this context there is no recourse for appeal.
    2. Student payments cannot be made into accounts on the student’s behalf other than where Power of Attorney is in place. Student Financial Support payments cannot be made into a Credit Union account.
    3. Student Financial Support is awarded as a set monthly payment based on the fund from which they are receiving support and the number of planned learning hours.
    4. Where Asylum Seekers are eligible for support this will be made ‘in kind’. This means the Northern College will pay directly to a provider or to the Northern College department on the students’ behalf; no support will be given in the form of cash.
    5. Students will be paid in line with the attendance policy and as such any authorised absences will be seen as a negative mark which will impact on financial support payments.
    6. Any absence from classes may result in the support being suspended and payments may be stopped. Authorised absence will include the following:
* Sickness supported by a medical certificate, hospital or doctor’s letter
* Attendance at medical appointments
* Parental leave to care for a sick child
* Attendance at the funeral of a family member or close friend
* Confirmed breakdown of travel arrangements
* Attendance at course or mandated probationary proceedings
* Work experience placements or work interviews
* Study leave where authorised by the programme manager
* Religious festivals
* Driving tests
* Adverse weather conditions
* Authorised absence will not be granted for holidays taken during term time

**6. Appeals and complaints**

6.1.1 Appeals can only be made against the ‘process’.

6.1.3 All appeals should be made in writing to the Head of Finance. Appeals should be submitted in writing or by email to; Student Support Services Officer, Student Support Services, Northern College, Wentworth Castle, Stainborough, Barnsley, S75 3ET.

6.1.4 Appeals will be considered by the Head of Finance and approved by member of ELT. Where an appeal is upheld the student will be notified in writing and there will be no further recourse.

6.1.5 All appeals will take into account presented evidence from the student in relation to their financial circumstances with any relevant information from the Student Support Services and other key staff within Northern College.

6.1.6 All appeal decisions are final.

6.1.7 Complaints should be made in writing in the first instance in line with Northern College complaints procedure.

If you require further information or support, please contact Student Support Services on: 01226 776000 or email studentservices@nothern.ac.uk