

Overview

Policy Title	Financial Support Policy 2020/21
Who does the policy apply to?	This policy outlines the guidance and implementation of student financial support. This policy and its underpinning guidance should be read by all students, staff and governors.
Aims	To provide financial assistance and guidance to eligible students enrolled on programmes funded by the ESFA. This process will be transparent and based on Government assessment criteria which ensures access to, and participation in, adult learning.
To be read in conjunction with	Fees Policy Student Financial Support Guidance 2020/21 Financial Regulations
Further advice may be sought from	Assistant Principal - Student Experience, Head of MIS
Review arrangements	<p>This policy will be reviewed annually.</p> <p>This policy may be reviewed outside of this cycle should operation and/or legislative guidance dictate it.</p> <p>Further details regarding revisions and the review cycle can be found at Sections 4 and 5.</p>

1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for the allocation and distribution of financial assistance and supporting guidance to eligible students on EFSA (Education & Skills Funding Agency) funded courses or students in receipt of a SFE (Student Finance England) Loan Bursary. Northern College is committed to supporting lifelong adult learning using funds where appropriate to remove barriers to education for those in financial hardship.

2. Aims

- 2.1. Northern College will have an appropriate and transparent framework to identify, administer, monitor and record spending within the context of student financial support.
- 2.2. The College will have robust systems to facilitate the allocation of student financial support.
- 2.3. To ensure accountability all allocations will be reported within the College Individual Learner Records.

3. Policy

- 3.1. All Northern College financial support will be assessed within the following categories; hardship, childcare and residential access. Three sets of procedures link to this policy and outline the detailed financial support available – the Adult Education Budget (AEB), Advanced Learner Loan and the Childcare Financial Support Procedures.
- 3.2. The College may make discretionary payments in exceptional circumstances. This must be approved by a member of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT).

Eligibility

- 3.3. To be eligible for financial support students must be:

- 3.3.1. enrolled onto an approved learning aim/qualification/course funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) or be in receipt of an Advanced Learner Loan from Student Finance England;
- 3.3.2. where applicants are eligible for a Student Loan Bursary, a loan application must have been approved before they can access a student support grant;
- 3.3.3. where applicants are on an ESFA funded programme they must satisfy the appropriate criteria for hardship within the threshold of a household gross taxable income of up to £29,600 (with a personal income of less than £17,004.00).

Home Status

- 3.4. Students must meet the residency requirements for a 'Home' student, therefore are:
 - 3.4.1. a citizen of a country within the European Economic Area (EEA) or have settled status or Rights of Abode in the UK;
 - 3.4.2. 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;
 - 3.4.3. 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;
 - 3.4.4. 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;
 - 3.4.5. an asylum seeker within the funding guidance rule of claims;
 - 3.4.6. a member of the armed forces.

Responsibility

- 3.5. Where a student has made a self-declaration in relation to their financial status, it is the responsibility of the student to inform the Department of Work and Pension of any income allowances through Student Financial Support.
- 3.6. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that they have a personal current bank account through which student financial support BACS payments can be made.
- 3.7. It is the responsibility of the College to ensure a fair and transparent process for administration and distribution of student financial support reflecting the principles of equality and diversity.
- 3.8. The College will ensure that the student is enrolled on to programme within their first day of attendance or before and that all enrolment documentation is signed and checked in line with funding guidance.
- 3.9. The College will have a transparent process for application and ensure students are made aware of this process pre course or on the first day of course programme.
- 3.10. The Student Services Officer will administer funds in accordance with funding guidelines as determined by the relevant funding agencies, and financial audit requirements.
- 3.11. Where a student receives child care funding it is the responsibility of the student to maintain the contract with the childcare provider and any subsequent financial payments.
- 3.12. The Head of Finance is responsible for ensuring funding guidelines and Northern College Financial Regulations are adhered to, including 5% administration management.
- 3.13. The Policy and Finance Committee is responsible for the approval of this policy and its review.
- 3.14. The Assistant Principal Student Experience and Head of Finance are responsible for the consideration of complaints and appeals with regards to financial support.

Monitoring, Review and Dissemination

- 3.15. The policy and administration procedures will be reviewed annually in line with:
 - 3.15.1. ESFA guidelines and audit requirements;
 - 3.15.2. annual budget, mid-year funding forecast and financial outturn;
 - 3.15.3. College strategic priorities and curriculum plan;

- 3.15.4. student feedback;
 - 3.15.5. Policy and Finance Committee approval.
- 3.16. The College will ensure that accurate records are retained to evidence students' financial eligibility, including application and enrolment alongside individual allocations and payments.
- 3.17. Adherence to this policy will be monitored through the internal audit process conducted by the Colleges Internal Audit Service.
- 3.18. Information on financial support will be disseminated via the following:
- 3.18.1. student enrolment and induction sessions;
 - 3.18.2. staff induction and training events;
 - 3.18.3. open days and IAG, interviews and enrolment;
 - 3.18.4. the College website/social media;
 - 3.18.5. Student Progress Meetings.
- 3.19. This policy and its underpinning procedures will be located on the Staff Net, Canvas and the College website.

Appeals and complaints

- 3.20. The Financial Support Service will make available details of the appeals procedure where appropriate. Only appeals relating to process will be considered.
- 3.21. All complaints will follow the College complaints procedure.

Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR (General Data Protection Rules)

- 3.22. Northern College is a data controller in terms of the Data Protection Act and GDPR. Personal information and any supporting evidence will be used by the Financial Support Service for College/audit purposes. The College has responsibility to administer public funds (financial support) in a manner which is in line with government guidance and the law. In the processing of submitted forms, the College will be mindful of unlawful applications and the prevention of fraud.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 3.23. Northern College work is aligned to the Equality Act 2010 which prohibits unfair treatment, eliminating discrimination and advances opportunity of all its 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.

4. Policy Sign Off and Ownership Details

Document Name:	Financial Support Policy 2020/21
Version Number:	1.0
Effective from:	1 August 2020
Next scheduled review date:	July 2021
Policy owner:	Assistant Principal – Student Experience
Approved by:	The Board of Governors

5. Revision History

Version No	Effective date	Revision description/summary of changes	Author
1.0		New policy which replaces previous student finance policies.	Assistant Principal – Student Experience (Diane Lawson)