

Discretionary Support Funds 19+ 2011-12

WHAT ARE THE DISCRETIONARY SUPPORT FUNDS?

The Discretionary Support Funds (DSF) are provided by the government to help Warwickshire College learners who have difficulty meeting some of the associated costs of learning and face the greatest barriers to continuing education or training.

WHO CAN APPLY?

- ▶ All FE full-time and part-time learners can apply if they have been in full-time residence in the EEA/EU for the last 3 years, and have a low income.
- ▶ The low income threshold is a **household** income of £16,190 net, increased by £1,500 for each dependent child.
- ▶ If your income is higher but you are in hardship, you can still apply and your case will be considered, however, a supporting statement and evidence of serious financial difficulties must be included.
- ▶ Learners who are eligible for support are not automatically entitled to it.
- ▶ Attendance must be at least 80% at any time to receive funds.

Priority is given to:

- learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 19-25;
- those on probation;
- those eligible for fee remission because they are themselves, or they are the dependant of someone else who is, receiving a means tested state benefit or tax credit;
- adults undertaking a first full level 2;
- learners aged 19-25 undertaking a full first level 3 qualification;
- learners taking a skills for life programme of study;
- learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities;
- those recently made redundant;
- those learners supported through the unemployed training package;
- those who recently left care.

WHO CANNOT APPLY?

- ▶ Those not resident in the EU/EEA for the last 3 years (except where a refugee status was confirmed in the 3 years prior to starting the course).
- ▶ Asylum Seekers over the age of 19.
- ▶ Learners on HE courses, waged Apprenticeships or provision with learning aims that are identified as wholly funded from other sources.
- ▶ Learners in prison or a young offender institution who have been released on temporary licence, ie day release.
- ▶ Learners enrolling on a course which is not sponsored by the government ALR programme, eg full cost recovery courses.
- ▶ Level 4 (unless previously helped at L3 with good attendance record – College fees only).
- ▶ Those who have received a grant for the last two consecutive years are unlikely to be eligible for a grant this year unless there is clear career progression.

WHEN CAN I APPLY?

You can apply between September 2011 and mid-June 2012. Applications are considered if funds are available. If you need advice in advance of enrolment you can contact us at any time. Applications will only be considered for the current year September 2011 – July 2012.

Students must be enrolled and beginning a course before an award can be made.

WHAT WILL THE FUNDS HELP ME WITH?

The Discretionary Support Funds may be able to help with a specific financial need as follows:

- ▶ Material/concessionary fees – but not admin charges, ie charges for extending payments.
- ▶ Tuition fees – a limited amount of funding is available.
- ▶ Examination fees.
- ▶ Compulsory trips.
- ▶ Most equipment ESSENTIAL for the course (the College reserve the right of ownership).
- ▶ Residentials/trips which are a compulsory part of the course. A statement of need is required.
- ▶ Transport costs for those aged 19+, where specific need is identified which could prevent attendance on course. Termly payments will be made for public transport – evidence of travel and cost is required. Travel by car will be considered in the spring term, subject to availability of funds and a statement of need. All transport payments are subject to attendance.
- ▶ Emergency Accommodation costs.
- ▶ Childcare costs in the College Nurseries (other childcare will be assisted only if a place is not available in our own nurseries). An interview is required. Maximum award £160 per week per child, £32 per day. Weekly attendance sheets must be handed in.

The funds will not normally help with ALL of the above costs. The maximum assistance is 75%. Tuition fees 50% to max £400. 75% for compulsory trip costs to maximum £255

HOW DO I APPLY?

- ▶ Complete an application form (available from any Student Services Centre).
- ▶ All forms need to be completed and returned with the relevant up-to-date proof of household income / income-based benefit. Learners aged 25 and under living with parents must include parental income unless evidence of having previously received an income of c£10,000 is provided – Hardship will then be considered by the DSF panel.
- ▶ Applications, MUST identify any specific financial needs.
- ▶ (Note: Hair, Beauty and Therapy kits (uniform is not eligible) will be ordered by the HB&T department at enrolment if eligible for DSF. The College reserves the right of ownership).
- ▶ We require proof of costs, ie: enrolment form for fees/exams; bus pass application form/pass/ticket; equipment list (from tutor) and/or receipt; trip information (from tutor).
- ▶ If you are applying for fees, and are not yet enrolled, bring your enrolment form and evidence of benefits and household income with you to Student Services for authorisation.
- ▶ Help with bus passes for those who are 19+ can only be made during or after enrolment. Payment will be termly subject to attendance.
- ▶ You should bring 25% of the cost of the course and/or equipment with you to enrolment.
- ▶ If you need help with applying for financial support call into Student Services where staff can help you to complete the form, make it available in other formats (eg large print) or discuss other sources of funding.

Applications will be dealt with on presentation of a fully completed application form together with relevant household income, evidence of enrolment fees, appropriate bus pass application and/or equipment costs from your tutor. Payments will be made internally (ie to an account within the college), to a third party or by cheque.

Appeals Procedure

If you are unhappy with a decision you can appeal informally in the first instance to the Student Services Manager on 01926 318189. If you are still not satisfied, you can appeal to the Director of Learner Services, who will respond within fifteen working days of receiving your appeal.

For Discretionary Support Fund queries visit Student Services at any Warwickshire College centre or call 01926 318 049 or 01788 883 241.

You may also like to consider applying independently for other educational grants at www.family-action.org.uk