



University
Centre
Somerset

Part of Bridgwater & Taunton College

HIGHER EDUCATION

STUDENT SUPPORT FUNDING POLICY AND PROCEDURE 2020-25

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1 Introduction

The purpose of the Higher Education (HE) Student Support Policy is to provide financial support to applicants and enrolled students who, because of their background and personal circumstances, may not normally aspire to, or be able to access, higher education provision.

2 Policy Statement

The objective of the HE student support funds are to:

- Meet the requirements of the University Centre Somerset (UCS) / Bridgwater and Taunton College (BTC) Access and Participation Plan.
- Provide meaningful financial support to students who need it the most
- Ensure a fair and transparent approach to allocating funds.

Ensure information contained within this document is easily accessible to students and staff. This policy, and excerpts from it/reference to it, will be published on the UCS website www.somerset.ac.uk

3 Scope

Students who are able to access these funds are limited to **students studying prescribed higher education courses** during the academic year **2020/21 and up to 2025 unless this policy is amended prior to this date**. (This aligns with the 2020-25 Access and Participation Plan).

Prescribed courses are:

- Higher National Certificates (HNC)
- Higher National Diplomas (HND)
- Foundation Degrees (FD, FdA, FdEng, FdSc)
- Bachelor's degrees (BA/BSc/BEng) Top Ups
- Bachelor's degrees (BA/BSc/BEng)

Each fund has specific grounds of eligibility that should be consulted prior to making an application. Students will be considered for all funds for which they are eligible.

Students studying with any of the College's partner universities are able to access all of these funds, subject to eligibility.

Students studying higher level provision but with a professional body or awarding organisation are not eligible to access these funds.

The Access and Participation Plan has allocated £30,000 to be set aside for the following funds in each academic year from 2020/21 to 2025.

Funds will be allocated on a first come first served basis for those who meet the criteria until available funds have been exhausted after which no further funding will be available. Students can apply once they are enrolled on an eligible programme. Students should refer to the College's web site for further details and conditions linked to the awards.

Students studying with Oxford Brookes University, due to the franchise nature of the agreement, should access the Oxford Brookes financial aid offer instead of the UCS bursaries, subject to eligibility: (<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/studying-at-brookes/finance/financial-aid/financial-aid/>). Oxford Brookes students may though apply for the HE Diagnostic Support Fund and DSA Technology Support Fund detailed below.

Students studying higher level provision but with a professional body or awarding organisation are not eligible to access these funds.

4 HE Diagnostic Support Fund

The Diagnostic Support Fund aims to provide financial support for eligible higher education students who are undertaking a full diagnostic assessment that is being conducted by the College.

Funds available

A grant of £250 per eligible student to pay for the full diagnostic assessment when conducted by the College. Once the finances available to support this fund have been exhausted there will be no further funding available.

Eligibility criteria for students

- Must be studying a Higher National, Foundation Degree, BA/BSc/BEng or top up programme..
- Must not have had a previous DSA diagnostic assessment with Bridgwater and Taunton College.

How to apply?

- **When?**
You can apply for this fund once you are enrolled on an eligible programme.
- **How?**
You can apply for this fund by using the appropriate application form. The form is available upon request from our Learning Support Team, please contact them via learning.support@btc.ac.uk
- **Questions?**
If you have any questions relating to this fund please contact the College's Learning Support Team via learning.support@btc.ac.uk

Conditions of funding

- Funds are paid directly to the College and not to the student
- The student must apply for a Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) and provide evidence that they have done so
- The funds will pay for a diagnostic assessment conducted by the College or, in exceptional circumstances, on the College's express advice by an external provider during the current academic year
- To benefit from the funding the student must commit to specifying Bridgwater and Taunton College as the primary choice for providing their support

- Failure to accept Bridgwater and Taunton College as the primary support provider and to apply for the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), following a funded diagnostic assessment, may result in Bridgwater and Taunton College invoicing the student for the full £250 to reimburse the cost of the diagnostic assessment.

If it is later discovered that an application is based on false or partially false circumstances the College would seek to recover any payments and the student may be subject to the College's Disciplinary Policy.

5 DSA Technology Support Fund

The Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) Technology Support Fund aims to provide financial support for eligible higher education students towards the cost of higher specification equipment, as identified by their Technical Needs Assessment (TNA).

Funds available

A grant of £200 per eligible student to pay for the first £200 required towards higher specification equipment as identified by the TNA. Once the finances available to support this fund have been exhausted there will be no further funding available.

Eligibility criteria for students

Must be studying a Higher National, Foundation Degree, BA/BSc/BEng or top up programme..

Must have had their Disabled Student Allowance (DSA) confirmed with Higher Specification equipment identified as part of the TNA.

How to apply

- **When?**
Students can apply for this at any time after they have formally enrolled with the College and have their DSA confirmed.
- **How?**
The relevant application form must be used to apply for this fund. It is available from the College's Learning Support Team. Please contact them via learning.support@btc.ac.uk.
- **Evidence**
Please be aware that you will need to submit an application form and this must be accompanied by relevant supporting evidence as detailed within the conditions of funding.
- **Questions?**
If you have any questions relating to this fund please contact our Learning Support Team on learning.support@btc.ac.uk.

Conditions of funding

- Students must be in receipt of a Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).
- Students must be eligible for higher specification equipment as specified in their Technical Needs Assessment (TNA).

- Funds are paid as a reimbursement to the student for the first £200 of their higher specification equipment purchase that meets the needs identified in their TNA and upon production of adequate proof of purchase. The College retains the right to refuse to pay the fund if insufficient evidence of the proof of purchase is not provided.
- The College will not purchase equipment on behalf of students.
- The funds are only available within the current academic year. Applications for equipment from previous academic years will not be eligible.

If it is later discovered that an application is based on false or partially false circumstances the College would seek to recover any payments and the student may be subject to the College's Disciplinary Policy.

6 The HE Bursary Fund

The HE Bursary Fund is a means tested bursary to support higher education students from low income backgrounds with costs directly related to their studies. This fund is only available to students who are studying an eligible course during the current academic year.

Funds available

A grant of up to £600 per eligible student, payable during the current academic year. Applications will be considered on priority basis. Funds are paid per term in equal instalments. Eligible students studying on a part time programme will receive a pro-rata amount. Once the finances available to support this fund have been exhausted there will be no further funding available.

Eligibility criteria for students

- Students must have a household income threshold of £25,000 or less as assessed by Student Finance England (SFE).
- Students must be entitled to and approved to receive, or are in receipt of, the full student Maintenance Loan for the current academic year.
- Do not already hold a higher-level qualification such as a Degree, Foundation Degree, CertHE or HNC/D.
- If students receive full or part sponsorship (for example from an employer) for their tuition fees they are not eligible for this bursary.
- The College will prioritise applications based on the conditions specified. This means that there is a limited amount of funding, eligible students within the groups identified will receive funding before those who are not.

How to apply

- **When?**
Applications can be made from September onwards during each academic year, after formal enrolment on the programme, and then throughout the current academic year until the funds available for this bursary have been exhausted.

Please note that payments for eligible applications will only be made at set points and only to students who are currently enrolled.

- **How?**
Applications must be made using the appropriate application form. This is available within the appendices of this policy, or from the College's Student Support Team,

please contact them via studentsupport@btc.ac.uk. Please be aware that you will need to provide the correct evidence in support of your application at the time you submit your application, or you may not be able to access the bursary on grounds of eligibility.

- **Questions?**

If you have any questions relating to this bursary please contact the College's Student Support Team via studentsupport@btc.ac.uk

Conditions of funding

- If a student changes their mode of study during the academic year (e.g. from full time to part time or vice versa) they will continue to receive the bursary as originally awarded.
- If a student postpones or suspends their studies during the academic year, they will not be eligible to continue to receive this bursary. If they defer, postpone or suspend their studies and do not notify the College's Student Support they will be liable to repay any bursary funds received after they deferred, postponed or suspended their studies. The student can re-apply for a bursary fund, as available, once they recommence their studies.
- If a student transfers into Bridgwater and Taunton College from another provider during the academic year (although this is rare as it is more normal for transfers to occur at the beginning of the academic year) they will be able, if eligible, to apply for this bursary but will only be entitled to a proportion of the full amount. For example, if they transfer in halfway through the academic year and are on a full time course, they will only be eligible for a maximum of half of the full bursary.

Prioritisation of funding

Funds are granted on a priority basis to identified priority groups. High priority students are those who are:

- Care leavers:
To be eligible as a care leaver you must:
 - Have been in local authority care for a minimum of three months
 - Be a permanent resident in the United Kingdom and be a 'home' student for fee purposes
 - Have proof of being in care from an official source, such as a local authority
 - Be enrolled on an undergraduate course at Bridgwater and Taunton College
 - Not already hold a previous HE qualification
 - Have not been adopted
- Registered as disabled (or in receipt of Disabled Student Allowance)
- From Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups
- Students with children, especially single parents
- Carers with responsibility for caring for others

Evidence of eligibility

- Evidence of eligibility must be provided at the time of application.
- To be eligible students must have a household income of £25,000 or less, evidence as follows must be provided:
 - The income assessment is that used by SFE to assess entitlement to funding. No alternative income assessment will be used.

- To be eligible, students must also be in receipt of the full student Maintenance Loan for the relevant academic year. Students must provide evidence of their loan which will be the maximum loan entitlement for the current academic year.
- Students will not be eligible for this bursary if they are being sponsored to pay for their course by a third party, such as an employer or parent.

Payments to eligible students

- Payments made to the student only and no other third party.
- Payments are paid by equal instalments to eligible students on a termly basis. There are three terms in an academic year so, as an example, a full grant of £600 will be paid at a rate of £200 per term.
- Students must remain as enrolled to be allowed to continue to receive the grant. If a student withdraws during the current academic year, before the final grant payment is made, all future grant payments will cease.
- Payments will normally be made during months of December, February and April.
- If an eligible application is made later during the academic year and there are still funds available, the funds will be paid retrospectively for past payment dates.
- Students studying on a part time basis will receive a pro-rata amount, for example a student studying half the hours of a full-time student will receive half the amount, £300 overall payable in termly instalments at a rate of £100 per term.
- Students failing to meet all of the eligibility criteria or to produce full and appropriate evidence within the timeframes specified by the College may risk being considered for this fund.
- If a student is in debt with the College their bursary instalment will not be paid until the students arranges repayment with the College's Finance Team.

If it is later discovered than an application is based on false or partially false circumstances the College would seek to recover any payments and the student may be subject to the College's disciplinary policy.

Allocation of bursaries

- Decisions regarding the allocation of bursaries will be made by the Student Support Team based only on the evidence provided.
- If there is a delay in processing of funding applications, or an applicant has applied late, the income information may not be received in time to allocate a bursary.

7 Reassessments

If evidence is omitted at the point of making the application that would otherwise have supported the application this may still be accepted and can be submitted within 10 working days. Students should notify the relevant team as soon as they become aware of this, detailing when they expect to be able to provide the evidence. The College reserves the right to delay processing the application if substantial evidence is still to be provided. This may affect whether funds are still available once the application is then considered.

8 Appeals

It is Bridgwater and Taunton College's responsibility to operate a transparent and fair process for allocating bursaries and funding awards. Should an applicant be dissatisfied with the decision regarding their application they have the right to appeal.

Appeals must be made by the applicant in writing or by email. Third parties (e.g. parents or family members) cannot appeal on behalf of the applicant.

Grounds for appeal

Applicants can request an appeal on the basis that there has been a fault or irregularity in the consideration of their application under one of the following grounds:

- The decision was not in accordance with the conditions specified within the College's HE Student Support Funds Policy
- The judgement was affected by personal bias
- There was a material administrative error or some other material irregularity in the process of considering the application that, if it had not occurred, would have led to a different decision being made about the application.

Appeals are made to the Higher Education (HE) Team at Bridgwater and Taunton College; their email address is he@btc.ac.uk

When making an appeal please ensure that you specify:

- Your name and Bridgwater and Taunton College student ID number
- Name of the programme you are studying
- Provide a copy of your original application
- State clearly why you are appealing the decision
- Provide any additional information that was not provided when you originally made your application and explain why it was not previously provided
- State clearly what you are hoping to achieve from the appeal

Appeals must be lodged with the HE Team within 10 working days from the date of the decision made regarding the application. Appeals submitted after this time period will not normally be considered.

The HE Team will be responsible for investigating your appeal by checking that the application was processed correctly and consider any additional information or documents that are provided in support of the case. Evidence provided after the original application was made and timeframe for reassessment have passed will not be considered.

Please note that it is not possible to allocate a bursary or funding award where the College's eligibility criteria have not been met in full or where the student's interaction becomes vexatious or malicious.

We aim to investigate and respond to your appeal within 20 working days.

The decision following an appeal is final.

9 Allocation of extra-ordinary funds

It should be noted that in extra-ordinary circumstances, should further funds be made available, such as those provided by Government during the Covid-19, pandemic for allocation to those most in need, that these funds will be allocated in line with fair principles and in accordance with any instructions, terms and conditions under which the additional funding has been made available. Records will be kept in order to complete any reporting obligations in relation to these funds.

10 Appendix 1 - Application Forms

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Application for HE Diagnostic Support Fund

Section 1 Your Details

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Student Finance Ref Number: _____

Course: _____

Section 2 Evidence

Evidence of Support Needs:

Section 3 Declaration

I understand that I may be invoiced for the £250 given by the diagnostic support fund if either

- I do not access my support from University Centre Somerset/Bridgwater and Taunton College where possible
- I do not attend my HE course at University Centre Somerset /Bridgwater and Taunton College

I confirm that the information I have given is correct. I understand that if I give false information, I will be subject to the college disciplinary procedure.

I am happy to be contacted using the contact information I have given.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Please send, hand in or email your completed application form to learning.support@btc.ac.uk or to Learning Support, Bridgwater and Taunton College, Bath Road, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 4PZ

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Application for HE Technical Support Fund

Section 1 Your Details

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Student Finance Ref Number: _____

Course: _____

Contact Details: Email: _____ Phone: _____

Section 2 Evidence

Please attach your Technical Needs Assessment (TNA)

Please attach the receipt for your equipment

Section 3 Declaration

I confirm that the information I have given is correct. I understand that if I give false information, I will be subject to the college disciplinary procedure.

I am happy to be contacted using the contact information I have given.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Print Name: _____

Please send, hand in or email your completed application form to learning.support@btc.ac.uk or to Learning Support, Bridgwater and Taunton College, Bath Road, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 4PZ

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Higher Education Bursary Application Form

Section 1 Your Details		
Title: Mr / Miss / Mrs / Ms / Other		
Surname:		
Forename:		
Date of Birth:		
Address:		
Day Time Telephone Number:		
Email Address:		
Bank Sort Code:		
Bank Account Number:		
Building Society Roll number (if applicable):		
Do you meet one, or more, of these priority areas? If 'yes' please ensure you provide evidence at the time of application		College assessment (office use only)
Care Leaver	Yes/No	
Registered as disabled	Yes/No	
From an ethnic minority group	Yes/No	
Childcare, particularly single parents	Yes/No	
Carers with responsibility for others	Yes/No	
Section 2 Course Details		
Name of Course you are studying:		
Is the course Full or Part time?		Full / Part
Is this the first year of your degree programme?		Yes / No
Are you in receipt of the maximum student funding available to you? (this includes the Student Maintenance Loan, Student Loan and any other relevant funds that may be available to you)		Yes / No
(Please attach a copy of your Student Finance England Maintenance Loan schedule for the academic year)		
Section 3 Declaration		
<p>I confirm that the information I have given is correct. I understand that if I give false information, I will be subject to the College's Disciplinary Procedure. I understand that continued payment of the Bursary is on the condition that I remain enrolled as a student on an eligible HE programme at the College for the duration of this academic year. I am happy to be contacted using the contact information I have given.</p>		
Signature:	_____	Date: _____
Print Name:	_____	

Please send, hand in or email your completed application form to studentsupport@btc.ac.uk or to the Student Support Centre, Bridgwater and Taunton College, Bath Road, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 4PZ

Please note that if you require assistance in completing this form, help can be provided.