



**Further Education
Access Fund Policy
2021-2022**

New College Durham is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, as well as vulnerable adults, and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Policy Title	Further Education Access Fund Policy
Document Owner	Training, Development and Access Fund Manager
Owning Directorate	Corporate Services
Owning Department	Access Fund
Directorates and Departments affected by this Policy	All FE academic areas
Policy Effective From	1st August 2021 – 31st July 2022

Contents	
1. Introduction.....	4
2. Aims.....	5
3. Applications	5
4. Payments.....	5
5. Covid-19 response.....	6
6. Case Review.....	7
7. Appeals.....	7
8. Policy Review	8
Annex A - Support for Students Aged 16 to 18	9
Annex B - Support for students aged 19 and over	13

New College Durham

Further Education Access Fund Policy

(Equality and Diversity Assessment)

We will consider any request for this Policy to be made available in an alternative format.

We review our Policies regularly to update them and to ensure that they are accessible and fair to all. Whilst Access Fund Policies are based upon prevailing national guidelines all Policies are subject to Equality Impact Assessment which consider whether the Policy has, or is likely to have, a different impact on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or human rights.

We are always keen to hear from anyone who wants to contribute and we welcome suggestions for improving the accessibility or fairness of the Policy.

To make suggestions or to seek further information please contact:

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Access Fund Policy is written to allow students, and potential students, to determine their eligibility for support from the College to assist them with their study costs.
- 1.2 The Access Fund Policy is based on the prevailing national guidelines at the time of writing this policy; the College reserves the right to amend the policy at any time.
- 1.3 All payments under this scheme are based upon meeting the eligibility criteria regarding residency. A student must be 'settled' in the UK and have been ordinarily resident in the UK for the three years preceding the 1st September 2021. 'Settled' means having either indefinite leave to enter or remain (ILE/ILR) or having the right of abode in the UK.
- 1.4 Students falling into one of the categories below are specifically excluded from applying for support via the Access Fund:
 - Asylum seekers aged 19 and over
 - Prisoners on day release and
 - Non-EU nationals
- 1.5 The support detailed in this policy is subject to the College receiving funding from the external funding bodies; the College reserves the right to amend/cease the support detailed in this policy in light of changes to the funding received or changes in the requirements from the funding bodies.
- 1.6 The College reviews the Access Fund Policy on an annual basis. This annual review may change eligibility for any support detailed in the policy, and in some cases remove elements of support entirely. The support identified in this document is strictly for the period of the academic year 2021-22 and does not confer any entitlement for support outside of this period.
- 1.7 The budget for support to students is finite. Students who may be eligible for support may not automatically receive it once the limited funds have been exhausted (except for those who qualify for the Vulnerable Bursary Scheme). **Early application for support is therefore advised.**
- 1.8 For ease of reference this policy is sub-divided into two parts;

Annex A - support that may be given to students who are aged 16-19;

be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31st August 2021 or

be aged 19 or over at 31st August 2021 with Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or

be aged 19 or over at 31st August 2021 and continuing a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers) or

be enrolled on a full-time course as defined by New College Durham.

Annex B - the support that may be given to students who are aged 19 and above.

2. Aims

- 2.1 Ensure that the limited funds available to the College are distributed effectively and efficiently to those students with the greatest financial need. It should be noted that in a number of cases the limited funds available will only provide a contribution to the overall costs incurred by the student.
- 2.2 To clarify the different eligibility criteria for students studying a further education course at New College Durham. The range of support available to eligible students is detailed on the College website: www.newcollegedurham.ac.uk

3. Applications

- 3.1 Application forms are available via the College website or from:

Access Fund Office New College Durham Framwellgate Moor Durham DH1 5ES 0191 375 4218 access.fund@newdur.ac.uk	ASC (Advice Support Careers) New College Durham Framwellgate Moor Durham DH1 5ES 0191 375 4400 asc@newdur.ac.uk
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- 3.2 Applications will only be considered if the application is received prior to the stated application deadline as stated on the application forms and published on the College intranet and website.
- 3.3 Where a student is subject to disciplinary sanctions, consideration will be made regarding continued eligibility to receive Access Fund support.
- 3.4 Any fraudulent claim under this policy will automatically preclude the student from consideration of any benefits under this scheme.

4. Payments

- 4.1 All payments are subject to receipt of a satisfactory Tutor Report and require the student to have an attendance record of at least 90% (on the whole programme of study) and be up to date with all course work/assignments (including maths and English, if appropriate).
- 4.2 The attendance threshold is set at 90% acknowledging that students may not be able to achieve 100% attendance. The schemes are in place to support students to attend College. For the purpose of calculating attendance in relation to a bursary payment being made this will be calculated using the number of occasions the student could have attended against the number of occasions they did attend (does not differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence), this data will be taken from the system used by the College to record attendance only.
- 4.3 For academic year 2021/22 and in response to Covid-19 where there has been an absence related to a student self-isolating because they have tested positive or because a family member has tested positive or

has suspect symptoms these absences may be considered when determining attendance. Any judgement made will be in line with the College Attendance Policy.

- 4.4 Tutor reports will be completed by the Academic Staff and will be reviewed by the Access Fund Coordinator to ensure fairness and accuracy. Tutor reports will not be questioned unless the Access Fund Coordinator determines that there is a discrepancy, query or amendment required.
- 4.5 Students may be eligible for support through the Colleges IT poverty Scheme. In order to access this support, the student should initially discuss concerns with their tutor, the tutor will determine a case for support and seek authorisation from their Head of School. A request for IT support would not impact on the bursary allocation to a student and would be in addition to any bursary support.
- 4.6 Payments will be allocated based on the following three criteria and are related to household income.

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
If the annual household income (including Tax Credits) is £16,190 gross per annum or less.	If the annual household income (including Tax Credits) is greater than £16,190 and less than or equal to £26,000 gross per annum or less.	If the annual household income (including Tax Credits) is greater than £26000 but less than or equal to £32,000.

- 4.7 All payments will normally be made directly to the student via BACS transfer. If the student does not have a bank account, they will need to liaise with the Access Fund Office to make alternative arrangements.
- 4.8 Payments to external childcare providers will be paid on receipt of an invoice from the childcare provider at the end of each month. There is no payment in advance for services yet to be provided.
- 4.9 For all other payments i.e. repayment of bus travel the College is unable to make retrospective payments. Any request for payment (where eligible) should be made in the term being claimed. Access Fund has the right to refuse accumulative requests collected from one term to the other.

5. Covid-19 response

- 5.1 The impact of COVID-19 and the transfer to online, remote learning may have been viewed as a challenge to both staff and students. Based on evidence to date, the College has continued to not just mitigating the risk but demonstrating exceptional practice to continue to support our students. Through the academic year the College will monitor Government guidelines and review any support accordingly.

5.2 Some areas which may continue to be impacted throughout 2021/22 include:

Travel – e.g. the distribution of bus passes to students.

Provision of free meals.

The process by which bursary applications can be made or are processed.

5.3 This continues to be a challenging, changing environment and where it is practical and possible the provision of Access Fund services will continue as normal, there may be occasions when practice will be reviewed or amended, any such change would be communicated to students in a timely manner.

6. Case Review

6.1 Based on the points outlined in the payment terms of this policy the Access Fund Coordinator will determine eligible applicants.

6.2 Applicants who are refused support have the right to have their case reviewed by the Access Fund Manager.

6.3 A request for a case review must be made in writing (letter or e-mail) within 10 working days of receipt of the College's decision to decline support. Please ensure that the following information is clearly stated in the written communication:

- The grounds for requesting the case review, (these grounds will normally be an error in procedure or error in fact).
- Sufficient detail and any evidence to support the case review request (i.e. evidence of mitigating circumstances that have affected attendance).
- The outcome that they are seeking from the case review.

Please address all case review requests - Case Review, Access Fund Office, New College Durham, Framwellgate Moor Campus, Durham, DH1 5ES or e-mail access.fund@newdur.ac.uk

6.4 Case reviews will aim to be undertaken and the decision communicated within 10 working days of receipt of the case review request.

7. Appeals

7.1 Applicants who have been refused support following a case review have the right to make a final appeal.

7.2 Appeals must be made in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the case review decision to decline support.

The Appellant should state, in their written communication:

- The grounds for the appeal, (these grounds will normally be an error in procedure or error in fact).

- Sufficient detail and any evidence to support the case review request (i.e. evidence of mitigating circumstances that have affected attendance).
 - The outcome that they are seeking from the Appeals process.
 - How they would wish to have their appeal considered either via correspondence or personally attending an appeal hearing.
 - How they would wish to receive any correspondence, including the appeal outcome decision (e.g. email, letter etc.). In the absence of any preference, the College's default method of communication will be via letter.
- 7.3 Please address all case review requests to the Access Fund Appeals Panel, Access Fund Office, New College Durham, Framwellgate Moor Campus, Durham, DH1 5ES or e-mail access.fund@newdur.ac.uk
- 7.4 The appeals panel will arrange to meet within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal communication. The outcome as determined by the panel will be communicated within 5 working days of the hearing. **The decision of the panel will be final.**
- 7.5 The panel will consist of:
- A Vice Principal (Chair)
 - Students' Union President
 - ASC Manager
- 7.6 The Appellant may be accompanied to the appeal by a representative of ASC (normally Learner Development Co-Ordinator).

8. Policy Review

- 8.1 Responsibility for this policy rests with the Deputy Principal (Human Resources and Corporate Services).
- 8.2 The College reserves the right to amend this policy, without prior notice considering experience, responding to changes to Government/funding body requirements and financial constraints.

Implementation Date	1 st August 2021
Termination Date	31 st July 2022

Annex A - Support for Students Aged 16 to 19

A1 Students aged 16 to 19

In considering support for students under Annex A of this policy, a student **must**:

- be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31st August 2021 or
- be aged 19 or over at 31st August 2021 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or
- be aged 19 or over at 31st August 2021 and continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers).
- be enrolled on a full-time course as defined by New College Durham.
- have an attendance record of at least 90%, be up to date with all course work/assignments and receive a satisfactory tutor report (including maths and English, where applicable).

Students who meet the General Eligibility Criteria stated above and have a gross household income of less than £32,000 in the previous tax year (2020/21) may be eligible for support under this scheme*.

*** In exceptional situations where a student's financial circumstances have significantly changed in year, current evidence of household income may be accepted. The Access Fund reserves the right to review this on an individual case basis.**

The bursary fund is finite and bursary payments will be calculated based on household income and the individual needs of the student, the available funds will be distributed according to the number of applicants who meet the above criteria.

A2 Students in Care/Care Leavers (Vulnerable Bursary)

To be eligible for consideration for the Vulnerable Bursary Scheme, students must:

- be aged 16 or over but under the age of 19 on 31st August 2021.
- be enrolled on a full-time course as defined by New College Durham.
- have an attendance record of at least 90%, be up to date with all course work/assignments and receive a satisfactory tutor report.
- fall within one of the defined vulnerable groups:
 - in care
 - care leavers
 - receiving Income Support or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them such as a child or partner.
 - receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right.

This funding will be used by the College to provide any support given to the student e.g. cost of bus pass/travel or support for equipment and/or uniform grant and bursary payment.

A student receiving support under this scheme will not be eligible to receive support via any other bursary scheme operated by the College.

Application deadline and payment dates.

	Application Deadline	Payment to be made
Term 1	Thursday 11 th November 2021	Friday 17 th December 2021
Term 2	Thursday 3 rd March 2022	Friday 8 th April 2022
Term 3	Thursday 5 th May 2022	Friday 24 th June 2022

For all bursaries, the attendance threshold is set at 90% acknowledging that students may not be able to achieve 100% attendance.

A3 16 – 19 application deadlines and payment dates.

In recognition that students start their learning journey at different points throughout the academic year, this year we will be accepting applications termly. Only one application will be accepted per student per academic year.

	Application Deadline	Payment to be made
Payment 1	Thursday 20 th January 2022	Friday 25 th February 2022
Payment 2	Thursday 5 th May 2022	Friday 24 th June 2022

For all bursaries, the attendance threshold is set at 90% acknowledging that students may not be able to achieve 100% attendance.

The schemes seek to support students attending College and does not differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. The attendance records for the bursary schemes include attendance across the whole study programme and specifically include attendance at Maths and English classes where applicable. For the purpose of calculating attendance in relation to a bursary payment being made this will be calculated using the number of occasions the student could have attended against the number of occasions they did attend.

A4 Travel Support

- 4.1 New College Durham operates a scheme which provides a contribution to the cost of students' travel via Arriva or Go North East.
- 4.2 Students who satisfy the eligibility criteria set out in **Annex A1** and live at least 3 miles from the College will qualify for travel support in association with Arriva or Go North East for the Academic year 2021-22.

- 4.3 For those eligible students who live in County Durham the College will pay the bus operator for a bus pass which will allow the student to travel to and from College only and is valid during term time.
- 4.4 The College will arrange for bus tickets/passes (Smartcard or Mobile App) to be provided for weekday term-time travel to and from the College only.
- 4.5 Students cannot be issued with tickets/bus pass for both Go North East and Arriva. Upon applying for a bus pass Students must select the bus company of their choice which operates the most direct and suitable route to enable them to travel to/from College.
- 4.4 The College will not refund the cost of any bus tickets purchased prior to the receipt of the termly or academic year ticket. The College will not refund the cost of any bus tickets for periods where bus tickets do not operate, enquiries should be directed to the relevant bus company customer service department.
- 4.7 For those eligible students **living outside of County Durham** the College's primary support will be through the provision of a bus ticket which will allow travel to and from College. We may consider refunding travel tickets each term up to the value of either a termly ticket or total cost of an academic annual ticket from either Arriva or Go North East depending upon which bus company is used for travelling to College. The determination will be based upon whichever is most cost effective for the College. Contact the Access Fund Office for Outside County Durham travel advice access.fund@newdur.ac.uk
- 4.8 The college will seek to provide travel assistance to those eligible students by the most cost-effective means. The Access Fund Team will regularly review ticket/pass utilisation and the college reserve the right to cancel/remove any tickets which are underutilised. There is a significant cost to the college in providing travel support and students are encouraged to return any passes which are not in regular use and/or where other modes of transport are utilised. Students who only require a travel ticket/pass for infrequent use should contact the Access Fund Office to explore alternative arrangements. **NB The annual travel ticket/pass will only be provided to students who use the bus as their primary and regular mode of transport.**
- 4.9 The college will seek to provide travel assistance to those eligible students who are unable to travel independently because of a medical condition or Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). The college will provide support each term up to the value of either a termly bus ticket or total cost of an academic annual bus ticket whichever is most cost effective for the College. Students are required to submit up to date, written supporting evidence from a doctor or other relevant health professional, stating specifically that the student is unable to travel independently, along with the application form.

NB Refunds to the value stated above will only be made on production of valid dated taxi fare receipts. Contact the Access Fund Office access.fund@newdur.ac.uk for more information.

Further details of the Travel Scheme and associated terms and conditions can be found on the College Website, www.newcollegedurham.ac.uk and/or from the Access Fund Office on 0191 375 4218 or e-mail access.fund@newdur.ac.uk

A5 Childcare Support – Students Under 20

- 5.1 Students aged under 20 at the start of their course, may be eligible to apply for the Government's "Care to Learn" Scheme.
- 5.2 The Care to Learn Scheme is **not** a New College Durham Scheme, but guidance on the application process and eligibility criteria can be obtained from the College's Advice, Support and Careers Service (ASC) by telephoning 0191 375 4400.

A6 Further Education Free Meals

- 6.1 The College will provide free meals to eligible students. To qualify for this support the student must be enrolled on a full-time course and be in receipt of, or have parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
 - Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
 - Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than **£16,190**, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs)
 - Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa.
- 6.2 To receive support for the free meals scheme the student, or their parent/guardian, must apply to the Access Fund Office with supporting evidence of the entitlements identified above.

A7 Hardship Grant (Uniform/Equipment)

- 7.1 Students who are required as part of the curriculum to wear an occupational specific uniform e.g. Hair, Beauty and Catering students, may receive assistance to purchase one set of uniform, subject to them satisfying the General Eligibility Criteria set out in **Annex A1 and A2** (above). **NB costs incurred for the provision of uniform will be deducted from any subsequent bursary payment.**
- 7.2 In exceptional circumstances support will be given to purchase of the equipment required for the course, but such equipment remains the property of the College.

Annex B - Support for students aged 19 and over

B1 General Eligibility Criteria for Students aged 19 plus

In considering support for students under Part B of this policy, a student **must**:

- be aged 19 and over at 31st August 2021 (students aged 19 or over who have an EHCP or are continuing are covered in Annex A)
- be enrolled on a full-time course as defined by New College Durham
- have an attendance record of at least 90%, be up to date with all course work/assignments and receive a satisfactory tutor report

*** NB the attendance threshold is set at 90% acknowledging that students may not be able to achieve 100% attendance. The bursary schemes seek to support students attending College and do not differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. The attendance records for the bursary schemes include attendance across the whole study programme and specifically include attendance at Maths and English classes where applicable.**

B2 19 plus Bursary Scheme

2.1 Students aged 19 and over, at the commencement of their course, and who meet the General Eligibility Criteria in **Annex B1** and have a gross household income of less than £32,000 in the previous tax year (2020/21)** may be eligible for support under this scheme. If living independently household income should not exceed £11,810 in the previous tax year (2020/21)*.

***** In exceptional situations where a student's financial circumstances have significantly changed then more current evidence of household income may be accepted. The Access Fund reserves the right to review this on an individual case basis.**

2.2 Subject to meeting, and continuing to meet, the above eligibility criteria detailed in **Annex B1** and **B2** the College will seek to pay the 19 plus Bursary once per term. The 19 plus fund is finite and the available funds will be distributed according to the number of applicants who meet the above criteria.

2.3 In recognition that students start their learning journey at different points throughout the academic year, this year we will be accepting applications termly. Only one application will be accepted per student per academic year.

	Application Deadline	Payment to be made
Payment 1	Thursday 20 th January 2022	Friday 25 th February 2022
Payment 2	Thursday 5 th May 2022	Friday 24 th June 2022

For all bursaries, the attendance threshold is set at 90% acknowledging that students may not be able to achieve 100% attendance.

The schemes seek to support students attending College and does not differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. The attendance records for the bursary schemes include attendance across the whole study programme and specifically include attendance at Maths and English classes where applicable. For the purpose of calculating attendance in relation to a bursary payment being made this will be calculated using the number of occasions the student could have attended against the number of occasions they did attend.

B3 Childcare Support – Students 20 plus

Students aged 20 and above on 31st August 2021 may be eligible for support with childcare costs from the Student Support Fund if they satisfy the General Eligibility Criteria in **Annex B1** and **B2**. **There is no entitlement to Childcare support and each application will be assessed on a first come first served basis.** If funds are available, the support to eligible students will be provided on the following basis:

- 3.1 The childcare provider who is receiving payment via the Student Support Fund **must** be registered with Ofsted.
- 3.2 Where students are required to pay retainer fees in order to retain the place in the nursery in non-term time, for example Christmas, Easter, half terms, it is vital that this information is reflected in any application of childcare support.
- 3.3 The College will only pay a retainer fee, which equates to no more than 50% of the fees normally incurred in term time.
- 3.4 If a student engages in employment during the non-term times, they are **not** eligible to receive support via the Student Support Fund during the period of employment.
- 3.5 Childcare payments are normally available only to support attendance at College classes/tutorials/placements except for retainer fees. In exceptional circumstances the College may consider an extension to this to allow completion of academic work.
- 3.6 The College payments will be solely for childcare and there will be no payment for penalty charges which are levied by some providers (e.g. late payment fees). Where insufficient notice is provided to the Childcare provider by the parents, the College will not meet the payment for this notice period.
- 3.7 Each household will be limited to a maximum childcare support of £100 per child/per week for a maximum of 2 children. The student will be liable for any childcare costs incurred over and above the stated limits.

B4 Travel for Full-Time 19+ Further Education Students

- 4.1 New College Durham operates a scheme which provides a contribution to the cost of student travel via Arriva and Go North East.

Students who satisfy the eligibility criteria set out in **Annex B1** and **B2** and live at least 3 miles from the College will qualify for a contribution towards travel costs for the Academic year 2021-22.

- 4.2 The College will only make payments for weekday term-time travel to and from the College, up to the value of the termly ticket cost to the College of either an Arriva or Go North East ticket depending upon which bus company is used for travelling to College. Payments will only be made in arrears and only on production of tickets used on the days of attendance at college. Contact the Access Fund Office for travel advice access.fund@newdur.ac.uk
- 4.3 For those eligible students who are unable to travel independently because of a medical condition or Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND). The college will seek to provide travel assistance to college each term up to the value of either a termly bus ticket or total cost of an academic annual bus ticket whichever is most cost effective for the College. Students are required to submit up to date, written supporting evidence from a doctor or other relevant health professional, stating specifically that the student is unable to travel independently, along with the application form. **NB Refunds to the value stated above will only be made on production of valid taxi fare receipts.** Contact the Access Fund Office access.fund@newdur.ac.uk

B5 Hardship Grant (Uniform/Equipment)

- 5.1 All full-time students aged 19 years and over who are required as part of the curriculum to wear an occupational specific uniform e.g. Hair, Beauty and Catering students, may receive assistance to purchase one set of uniform, subject to them meeting both of the General Eligibility Criteria set out in **Annex B1** and **B2**.

NB costs incurred for the provision of uniform will be deducted from any subsequent bursary payment.

- 5.2 In exceptional circumstances support will be given to purchase of the equipment required for the course, but such equipment remains the property of the College.

B6 19 Plus Free Meals

- 6.1 Students who satisfy the eligibility criteria set out in **Annex B1** and **B2** will qualify for a free meal from the College on their days of study. To access this benefit the student must have registered on the Biometric system in the Curriculum Information Services Office on Orange Ground Floor.