

# Discretionary and Childcare Funds Procedure

March 2018

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Ask Student Services for details.

[www.perth.uhi.ac.uk](http://www.perth.uhi.ac.uk)

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**Version Control History**



<b>Version Number</b>	<b>Date of Change</b>	<b>Summary of Revisions Made</b>
6.1	March 2018	<p>Footer updated to reflect new template model.</p> <p>Paragraph 2.1 updated scope of procedure.</p> <p>Paragraph 4.1 Head of Student Services has overall responsibility for procedure.</p> <p>Paragraph 5.7 Mentioned specific examples of where students might need emergency financial help and prioritisation of application.</p> <p>Paragraph 5.19 College Nursery fees no longer paid in a single instalment.</p> <p>Paragraph 5.35 Minor change to wording.</p> <p>Paragraph 7 Removed year-specific data for national policies.</p>
6.2	December 2018	Change of role to Quality Manager. Footer updated.

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# Discretionary and Childcare Funds Procedure

## 1 Purpose

- 1.1 This document sets out the procedure that will be followed in order to achieve the key principles of the Discretionary and Childcare Funds Policy.

## 2 Scope

- 2.1 The procedure covers both Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) Discretionary and Childcare Funds and applies to all eligible students.

## 3 Definitions

- 3.1 Discretionary Funds are intended to provide non-repayable assistance for students in financial difficulties in order for them to access and/or continue in education and are paid in addition to any other forms of student support.

Childcare Funds are intended to provide or fund childcare for students studying at College. These funds, which are discretionary and cash-limited, are intended to supplement existing resources used to directly support students' study-related childcare costs.

- 3.2 The Student Funding Team referred to in this procedure comprises the Head of Student Services and the Student Funding Adviser.

## 4 Responsibilities

- 4.1 The Head of Student Experience has overall responsibility for this procedure, including:

- Ensuring funds are distributed and administered in line with this procedure and relevant SAAS/SFC Guidelines;
- Overseeing the on-going development and improvement of the Perth College UHI Discretionary and Childcare Funds Procedure;
- Dealing with student appeals and complaints relevant to Discretionary and Childcare Funds.

- 4.2 The Student Funding Adviser is responsible for:

- Accurately and professionally advising students on Discretionary and Childcare Funds;
- Distributing Discretionary and Childcare Fund application forms or, where appropriate, providing the links to the online application portal;
- Assessing applications and making effective judgements on students' eligibility and award amounts in line with both this procedure and relevant SAAS/SFC Guidelines;

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Student Services Manager

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- Monitoring the Fund budgets and providing the Head of Student Services with accurate, up-to-date budget data on request;
  - Gathering and checking student attendance information and using this to inform payments of Discretionary and Childcare Fund awards;
  - Maintaining all paper and electronic records relating to Discretionary and Childcare Funds consistently, accurately and within confidentiality and Data Protection guidelines;
  - Carrying out all preparations for audits;
  - Liaising with the College Finance Team in co-ordinating the Discretionary and Childcare Fund accounts;
  - Liaising with UHI Executive Office on the HE Funds;
  - Ensuring all work relevant to Discretionary and Childcare Funds is carried out in line with this procedure and the Discretionary and Childcare Funds policy;
  - Leading the on-going development and improvement of the Perth College UHI Discretionary Funds Procedure.
- 4.3 Quality approval checking of the procedure is the responsibility of the Quality Manager, who will also arrange for the procedure to be posted on the web.

## 5 Procedure

- 5.1 The Student Funding Adviser will receive and review guidance documents on Discretionary and Childcare Funds that are annually updated and distributed by the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). This guidance will be used to inform the annual updating of the Perth College UHI Discretionary and Childcare Funds Policy and Procedure.
- 5.2 All application forms, guidance notes and other documentation associated with Discretionary and Childcare Funds will be reviewed and updated annually by the Student Funding Adviser, and approved by the Head of Student Services. HE documentation will be updated in conjunction with the amendments agreed by the UHI Student Finance Group. All materials will be ready and available by July each year.
- 5.3 The Student Funding Adviser and the Head of Student Experience will meet prior to the start of the academic session to agree maximum allocation amounts for the coming year, based on the overall allocations that have been made available to the College.

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## Application Stage

- 5.4 Application forms will be available for Further Education (FE) students to collect from locations around the main college campus from the first day of Induction Week onwards each year. Higher Education (HE) students will be able to collect instructions about how to apply online from the first day of Induction Week onwards each year. Paper forms require to be returned to the Student Services area within the Brahan Building and may be returned from Induction Week onwards. Online applicants will be able to submit their application in the same timescale.
- 5.5 Applications may be obtained and submitted at any point during the academic session until the end of the third last week of semester 2.
- 5.6 An application submitted after the end of the third last week of semester 2 may only be considered at the discretion of the Student Funding Adviser and with the agreement of the Head of Student Services.
- 5.7 If a student is Care Experienced or from a similarly identified disadvantaged group or is in need of emergency financial help when they first start at Perth College UHI, the Student Funding Adviser will treat their application as a priority and will ensure that funding is made available as quickly as possible, so long as the student is eligible.
- 5.8 An emergency situation would be one in which a student has not yet received their main source of funding (ie student loan or bursary etc) and has stopped receiving benefits or a salary, or a case in which a student has not received their funding due to an issue related to their course code being recognised by SAAS.
- 5.9 When a Discretionary or Childcare Fund application is submitted, the student will be advised that they will receive a letter notifying of the outcome of the application within a maximum of 21 days.
- 5.10 If an application has been submitted without all the necessary supporting documentation or information, a letter will be sent to the student advising them of the information that is still required and they may also be asked to attend a short interview to discuss their application.

## Assessment Stage

- 5.11 When an application from an eligible student is ready to be assessed, the Student Funding Adviser will work through the paper or online form and the evidence supplied and make a judgement as to whether to award the student funding to help with Housing Costs, the cost of registered or formal Childcare, or Emergency Hardship.
- 5.12 The amount awarded will be based directly on the level of need demonstrated by the information on the application and the evidence supplied, up to the maximum agreed allocation.

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- 5.13 If the Student Funding Adviser feels that an application warrants an award greater than the maximum allocation, they will discuss this with the Head of Student Services and a decision on the award will be reached on a joint basis.
- 5.14 When assessing an application, the Student Funding Adviser will complete the Discretionary and Childcare Fund assessment sheet with information on the assessment they have carried out and attach this to the back of the application. When the assessment is complete, the amount to be awarded will be added.
- 5.15 Once assessed, applications move to the payment stage.

### **Payment Stage**

- 5.16 A letter will be sent to each student who is to receive an award from the Discretionary or Childcare Fund detailing their award, the conditions attached to the award, and information on how to receive payment.
- 5.17 Payments will be made to students in monthly instalments throughout the Academic Year. In some cases, a student may receive an emergency one-off payment of Discretionary Funds.
- 5.18 Payments for child-care costs will be made directly to the registered provider by BACS. Discretionary Fund payments will be deposited into the student's bank account by BACS. No payments will be made in cash.
- 5.19 Payments to Perth College UHI Nursery will be made directly to the Nursery.
- 5.20 Before each payment, the attendance of each student receiving an award will be checked to confirm that he/she is still enrolled on their course, and is continuing to attend.
- 5.21 Prior to receiving their first payment, students will be required to provide signatory confirmation that they wish to receive the award, that they agree to the conditions attached to the award and that the payment details held by the College are correct.
- 5.22 Students who have already been given a Discretionary Fund award can make a second application during the same academic year. This can be done by contacting the Student Funding Adviser with evidence of changed circumstances. Awards will be considered on the basis of any changed circumstances from the first application.
- 5.23 A Discretionary and Childcare Funds Database will be used by the Student Funding Adviser to record student details and payment arrangements, and to allow the Student Funding Adviser to monitor amounts allocated.

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- 5.24 The monitoring of allocations is essential in ensuring that awards are made within budget and that funds continue to be available throughout the academic session as much as possible.

### **Reconciliation**

- 5.25 When all payments to students have been made and payments for withdrawn or non-attending students cancelled on the database (usually early June), a spreadsheet report detailing totals committed will be run from the database.
- 5.26 This is done for both FE and HE students.
- 5.27 The spreadsheet is then checked against the Discretionary and Childcare Fund Application forms and Signing Sheets to ensure that they correspond accurately.
- 5.28 Each of the funds will then be reconciled by recording all BACS payments, cheque payments and Nursery transfers and also returned BACS and cancelled cheques. These details will then be entered on a new spreadsheet and the total spend from each fund calculated.
- 5.29 These totals should correspond fully with the database totals.
- 5.30 A reconciliation should then be carried out based on information received from the Finance Team.
- 5.31 Once this reconciliation has been agreed, the figures will be entered on the Audit Reports.

### **Quality Checking and Audit**

- 5.32 A quality check of a random sample of 10% of applications takes place in February/March in order to confirm that applications are assessed in line with guidance and agreed policy and procedure. The check is carried out by a nominated member of staff, usually from the Finance Team, subject to availability, and is facilitated by the Student Funding Adviser.
- 5.33 A check of a random sample of 10% of applications takes place in March in order to check the estimated expenditure detailed in a student's application against actual expenditure. This check is carried out and documented by the Student Funding Adviser.
- 5.34 After Reconciliation has taken place, all application forms, student signing sheets, attendance checking sheets and administration paperwork is checked, finalised and closed in preparation for audit.
- 5.35 Audit Reports are completed by the Student Funding Adviser and are available to the Head of Student Services, signed by the Principal and sent to relevant third parties prior to audit taking place.

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5.36 FE and HE audits are completed by October 31 for previous academic session.

## 6 **Linked Policies/Related Documents**

Perth College UHI Discretionary and Childcare Funds Policy

## 7 **Relevant Legislation/Guidance**

National Policy: Further Education Discretionary Fund (SFC)

Higher Education Undergraduate and Postgraduate Discretionary Funds Guidance (SAAS)

National Policy: Childcare Funds for Further and Higher Education Students in Scotland's Colleges (SFC)

Further and Higher Education Childcare Funds Guidance (SFC/SAAS)

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