

UHI | ARGYLL



UHI Argyll

Student Support Funds Procedure 2022-23

UHI operates to a common set of Student Support Funds procedures across all academic partners. These procedures are set out below, and will be reviewed annually by the Student Support Funds Policy Ownership Group.

Please refer to the Student Support Funds Policy for further information. The Student Support Funds Policy contains link to the relevant Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) guidelines, which all members of the University partnership follow.

Course Application Stage

1. Applicants for courses will be able to access information about the types of financial support that may be available to them during their studies, via the college's website. Information for the forthcoming academic year will be available prior to the course starting once details of SFC/SAAS policy and guidelines for the year have been released. If applicants have any questions, they should contact the college to which they have applied.

Applying for Student Support Funds

2. Once the applicant has accepted a place on a course and the Student Support Fund Application is available online (normally June prior to the course start date), they will be able to log in to their Student Hub and apply for funding through the online application form.

The Student Hub is the system for all communication regarding the Student Support Funds application process and during the course when the student may experience a change in circumstances which may affect their eligibility.

No letters will be sent by post to the student. Documentation and information which support the completion, calculation, claiming (Childcare Expenses) and payment of the award is available on the Hub. Students are directed to familiarise themselves with the Hub as soon as they are granted access to it. Students should also monitor their Hub account regularly.

3. The application is used to determine eligibility to access funds available to applicants. FE applicants will be assessed as appropriate for one or more of Educational Maintenance Allowance, Bursary, Discretionary and Childcare Funds. HE applicants will be assessed for one or both of Discretionary and Childcare Funds.
4. The student will provide information about their living arrangements and household income. Once submitted, requests will be automatically generated for evidence of the appropriate documentation to support the application.
5. The evidence requested will be based on the information provided by the student in their application. It is therefore vital that accurate information is provided, as any changes may result in new evidence being requested and a delay to the application being assessed.
6. Once all requested documentation has been received the application will be put forward for assessment. Staff will normally complete the assessment within twenty-eight days.
7. Students will be notified of the outcome of their application via the Student Hub once the assessment is complete. For applications resulting in an award, payments will be made in accordance with the relevant payment schedule to the bank account nominated by the student in the Online Funding Application. The Student Hub has several documents to support the award letter which gives information on the Terms and Conditions of Award, an Award Explained document and real-time Payment Schedules for each fund. These documents should be read in conjunction with the Award Letter and the student can see the process status of each award payment.
8. The onus is on the student to provide all necessary documentation. Where this information is not provided, or where the college believes a student or relevant parent or partner is withholding information that may be relevant to the student's application, colleges may use their discretion to refuse to offer the student an award or offer the student a provisional award.
9. In exceptional circumstances, a provisional award may be offered where the college believes that the student is likely to be eligible for funding once the required documentation is available and presented. In these circumstances the partner college will require the student to refund any overpayment resulting from the provisional assessment. If no documentation is provided, the student will be required to repay the award in full.
10. Where the provisional award is less than final award the student will receive the full award including any underpayments.

Attendance and Engagement

11. Students in receipt of Student Support Funds must adhere to the guidelines set out by SFC and SAAS. This includes fulfilling the attendance and engagement requirements.
12. Colleges will monitor student attendance and engagement in line with the Attendance and Engagement Appendix to the Student Support Funds Policy. The Appendix is available on the Student Hub. Students will be contacted by the college should their attendance and engagement fall below expectations.
13. Students who do not meet attendance and engagement requirements should expect to have their funding withdrawn immediately.
14. Students should also be aware of other college policies that require to be followed e.g. Student Code of Conduct etc.

Appeals

15. Applicants for student support funds are advised of their right to appeal against the outcome of any funding application in the notification of award document issued on the Student Hub.
16. In the first instance, queries or dissatisfaction about awards or award levels should be discussed informally with relevant staff. This is intended to ensure that there has been no misunderstanding of the application by either the student or staff.
17. If the student is not satisfied with the informal resolution, a formal appeal can be submitted in writing in paper form, email or the reassessment button on the Student Hub within fourteen days of receiving the application outcome. The grounds for appeal must be clearly stated. The student will receive an acknowledgement of their appeal once received.
18. The formal appeal will be considered by a senior member of college staff impartial to the application process. The student will receive a response within twenty-eight days. This decision is final.

Overpayment and Debt

19. The college must submit withdrawal/cease dates in the student record system in accordance with SFC policy, which states that the withdrawal/cease date must be the last date of regular attendance. This date is the date used for determining the amount of overpayment.
20. Student Support staff may however exercise discretion of up to normally four term weeks award (disregarding holidays, reading weeks and exam periods) where there has been support given to the student under the Attendance and Engagement provisions. Consideration may also be given to the student's circumstances regarding care experience, minority groups and those on low incomes. These students are more likely to cease a course early for reasons which mean they revert to being benefits claimants; under Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) rulings amounts already received by the student determine the award of benefit entitlement.

21. Students who receive an overpayment of Student Support Funds will be expected to return the overpayment in full. Students will be notified by the college of an overpayment by letter and will receive details of the amount overpaid and acceptable methods of repayment.
22. Should the student not return the overpayment within the requested timescale college debt management procedures will be followed to recoup the funds.

Retention of Records

23. For record retention information, staff and students should refer to the UHI Retention and Disposal Policy.