

POLAP 29 Discretionary Funds Policy

All College policies and procedures adhere to the guidelines and ethos of Equality and Diversity.

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1 Policy

- 1.1 This policy sets out the position from which New College Lanarkshire will administer the Discretionary Funds that it receives annually and how these funds will be distributed to Students. The Policy and related Procedures have been written to ensure that there are clear and fair guidelines for all Students and will provide a framework to ensure that all Students to achieve their full potential.
- 1.2 New College Lanarkshire is committed to providing opportunities for learning in a caring and supportive environment which respects the individual. The Discretionary Funds Policy and Procedures are designed to assist the College to enable Students to achieve their full potential.

2 Scope

- 2.1 The policy covers both Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) Discretionary Funds.

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. Discretionary Funds are supplementary to core sources of student funding such as Bursaries and Student Loans.
- 3.2 Hardship Funds is the name by which Discretionary Funds were previously known.

4 Key Principles

- 4.1 Discretionary Funds will be administered and distributed entirely in accordance with the relevant policies and guidance set out by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).
- 4.2 As such, the College may decide to transfer available monies between funds, including the Bursary Fund, in order to best meet the needs of students.
- 4.3 The assessment process is based on need and all funding is means-tested against total household income.
- 4.4 All alternative forms of funding available to the Student must be accessed before any application for funding from the Discretionary funds will be considered.

- 4.5 The amount of funds allocated to each Student is capped to maximize the number of Students qualifying for assistance.

5 Eligibility Criteria

- 5.1 All Discretionary funding is subject to the availability of funds.
- 5.2 Applications for financial assistance from the Discretionary Fund will be accepted from Students who are experiencing financial hardship, as a result of attending College, or whose financial circumstances prevent them from studying a College course. If you have a household income of over £26,000 you will not be eligible to apply for this fund. This is in line with HMRC Child Tax Credit Assessment <https://www.gov.uk/benefits-credits/tax-credits>
- 5.2a If you are in receipt of Universal Credit or Income Support you are not eligible to apply for this fund, you should contact the Department of Work and Pensions.
- 5.3 The submission of an application for Discretionary Funds is not a guarantee that funding will be awarded.
- 5.4 Priority for funding for accommodation costs will be given to Students whose Housing Benefit has stopped as a result of studying a full-time course.
- 5.5 No awards will be granted for accommodation costs for any Student living in accommodation owned by their parents or relatives. Students will be asked to produce tenancy and council tax documentation as part of the assessment process.
- 5.6 Awards will not be made to cover any part of tuition fees.
- 5.7 Awards will not be made to cover the lack of parental contribution.
- 5.8 Students who do not meet the eligibility criteria for Discretionary Funds will not receive an award and will be sent a letter informing them of this and detailing their reason for ineligibility.
- 5.9 These funds are cash limited and when they have been fully committed, no further funds will be allocated. However, the assessment process will be carried out for all application forms received and any Student who satisfies the criteria for an award will be placed on a reserve list, should further funding become available.

6 Assessment Process

- 6.1 All applications will be assessed in date of receipt order, providing all relevant documents have been submitted.

- 6.2 All applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application.
- 6.3 All applications will be means-tested.
- 6.4 Only essential outgoings will be taken into account in the application process. The Discretionary Funds Procedures document details essential and non-essential outgoings.
- 6.5 All household income will be used in the assessment process, regardless of who this income is paid for.
- 6.6 Taxable and non-taxable income will be used in the assessment process with the exception of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independent Payment. If Discretionary Funds are awarded it is the responsibility of the Student to inform the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as necessary.

7 Conditions of Awards

- 7.1 Before receiving any payment from the Discretionary Funds, Students will be required to accept their award via this hyperlink: <https://funding.nclanarkshire.ac.uk/CAMS>. This Acceptance statement is confirmation the Student wishes to receive the award, that they agree to the conditions attached to the award and that the payment details held by the College are accurate.
- 7.2 All acceptances of award must be submitted to the Student Funding section within **two weeks** of the award letter. After this period of time the award will be withdrawn.
- 7.3 The retention of awards is dependent on the Student maintaining satisfactory attendance (in accordance with the College's Learner Attendance Policy), conduct and progress on their course.
- 7.4 Where an award is terminated, the amount due will be calculated to the last **regular** date of attendance and the Student will be required to repay any overpayment.
- 7.5 Any changes in the Student's financial or personal circumstances which may have an effect on their award must be notified to the Student Funding section.
- 7.6 Where a Student has made a false statement on their form, or omitted to notify the College about a change in their personal circumstances, their application will be withdrawn and they will be required to repay all payments made to them.
- 7.7 If a Student is granted an award from the Discretionary Funds on the basis of a disability and the award is made in order to buy large items of equipment, such equipment will remain the property of New College Lanarkshire after the end of the

academic session. As such all equipment will be required to be returned by an agreed date.

8 Payment of Award

- 8.1 All payments for general hardship will be paid directly into the Student's bank account and may be a single payment or 2 weekly payments, paid in arrears.
- 8.2 Only in the event of an emergency need for financial help will payments be made by cash.

9 Appeals

- 9.1 All Students have the right to appeal against the level or refusal of an award or payment. Appeals should be in writing and e-mailed to funding.appeals@nclan.ac.uk with the subject heading 'Discretionary Fund Appeals'. **The decision of an appeal is final.**

10 Responsibilities

- 10.1 The Financial Controller has overall responsibility for this policy.
- 10.2 The Student Funding Manager is responsible for:
- Ensuring funds are distributed and administered in line with this policy and relevant SAAS/SFC Guidelines;
 - Overseeing the on-going development and improvement on the New College Lanarkshire Discretionary Funds Procedure;
 - Dealing with Student appeals and complaints relevant to Discretionary Funds;
 - Overseeing all preparation for audits;
 - Updating this policy.
- 10.3 The Student Funding Assistants are responsible for:
- Accurately and professionally advising Students on Discretionary Funds;
 - Distributing Discretionary Funds application forms;
 - Conducting interviews with Students submitting applications for Discretionary Funds;
 - Assessing applications and making effective judgments on Students' eligibility and award amounts in line with both this policy and relevant SAAS/SFC Guidelines;
 - Monitoring the Discretionary Funds budgets and providing the Student Services Manager with accurate, up to date budget data on request;
 - Gathering and checking student attendance information and using this to inform payments of Discretionary Funds awards;

- Maintaining all paper and electronic records relating to Discretionary Funds consistently, accurately and within confidentiality and Data Protection guidelines;
- Liaising with the Finance Team in coordinating the Discretionary Funds accounts;
- Carrying out all preparation for audits;
- Ensuring all work relevant to Discretionary Funds is carried out in line with this policy and the Discretionary Funds procedure;
- Leading the on-going development and improvement of the New College Lanarkshire Discretionary Funds Procedure.

10.4 Quality approval checking of the policy is the responsibility of the Director of Quality who will also arrange for the policy to be posted on the intranet and NCL Website.

11 Linked Policies/Related Documents

11.1 New College Lanarkshire Attendance Policy.

11.2 New College Lanarkshire Discretionary Funds Procedure.

12 Relevant Legislation/Guidance

12.1 2025/26 National Policy: Further Education Discretionary Fund.

12.2 SAAS Further and Higher Education Discretionary Funds Guidance 2025-26.

12.3 Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002.

12.4 New College Lanarkshire operates this policy in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the Data Protection Act 2018 and the College Data Protection and Data Security Policy. For more information on New College Lanarkshire's data protection compliance contact Data.Protection@nclan.ac.uk.