Reference Number: P59

HIGHER EDUCATION BURSARY, HARDSHIP FUND AND DIAGNOSTIC SUPPORT FUND POLICY 2026-27

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Policy Review				
Author/Owner Sian Pering	Position Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning	Approved by SLT Signed:	Approval date 06.07.26	Review Date Annual

Document Control – Revision History

Author/Owner	Summary of Changes	Date	Version	Date last reviewed by E&D	Recommend to E&D Y/N
Sian Deasy/Mark Bolton	Minor amendments	24.09.2019			
Sian Deasy	Increase of maximum bursary award to £500. Amendment to PT payment clause in order to not disadvantage PT students.	02.03.2020			
Sian Deasy	Minor amendments, including to academic year. Update to application form to ensure improved ease and accuracy of use for students.	04.07.2021			
Sian Deasy	Merging of YCUC Diagnostic Support Fund Policy and YCUC Bursary & Hardship Fund into one document for ease of student use. Minor amends to academic year and formatting of application form.	12.04.2022	v1		
Sian Deasy	More clarity on income evidence for self-employed individuals, specified steps that may be taken by the Bursary panel in cases of underspend of funds. Amendment of line spacing and justification and inclusion of contents page in line with accessibility good practice guidance.	18.06.2023			
Sian Deasy	Update to years referenced in document. Additional wording to further clarify non-eligibility of 'not recognised for funding purposes' programmes. Added specific reference in 5.4.1 that 'increasing cost of living' is a valid extenuating circumstance.	12.04.2024			
Sian Pering	Updating of financial thresholds in line with newly approved Access and Participation Plan commencing in 2025-26. Updating language to consistently refer to 'leaner', and 'the learner' rather than 'you'.	15/04/25	V1.1		
Sian Pering	Updating of references to academic years. Updating of URLs for current Student Finance rules. Updating scope in line with newly-approved courses. Adding reference to online application form (new for 26/27). Updating rules for Diagnostic Support Fund to allow guaranteed reimbursement for those referred into a formal assessment following a Cognassist profile suggesting neurodivergence. Updating of flowchart in Section 4 of application form into 'sections' to make this easier for learners to navigate.	15/6/26			

Initial Equality Impact Screening
Has anyone else been consulted on this policy and/or procedure? Members of the Bursary and Hardship Fund panel, as well as ad-hoc feedback received throughout the year from students using the paperwork.
What evidence has been used for this impact screening (e.g. related policies, publications)? Student Finance England payment rules and income assessment criteria. Provisions outlined in our Access and Participation Plan. Improved accessibility of paperwork since inclusion of flowchart and colour-coding of questions/answers/evidence required evidenced by increased accuracy and completeness of forms received since 2021.
Declaration (please tick one statement and indicate any negative impacts) **X** I am satisfied that an initial screening has been carried out on this Policy and/or Procedure and a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required. There are no specific negative impacts on any of the Protected Characteristics groups. ☐ I recommend that an Equality Impact Assessment is required by the Equality and Diversity group, as possible negative impacts have been identified for one or more of the Protected Characteristics groups as follows: ☐ Age ☐ Disability ☐ Gender Reassignment ☐ Race ☐ Religion or belief ☐ Sex ☐ Sexual orientation ☐ Marriage & civil partnership ☐ Pregnancy & maternity

Completed by:		**Position:**		**Date:**	

Reviewed by Equality & Diversity Group: YES/NO If Yes: Date:

I confirm that any recommended amendments have been made

Summary of Comments including Recommendations from Equality & Diversity Group Review:

Amended by Author:	Sian Deasy	**Position:**	Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning	**Date:**	18.06.2023

Contents

1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

1.1. Yeovil College University Centre is committed to ensuring that all students with the potential and desire to study are able to access, succeed in, and progress from, higher education. This policy outlines our approach to the provision of financial assistance to eligible learners, in line with the commitments made in our Access and Participation Plan. Please note that this policy is specifically for Yeovil College University Centre learners, undertaking programmes that are 'recognised for funding purposes' by the Office for Students. Learners on other programmes, such as 16-18 study programmes, part-time adult courses and courses that are funded by Advanced Learner Loans who might require financial assistance should contact izone@yeovil.ac.uk in the first instance.

2. OVERVIEW OF FUNDS AND ELIGIBLE LEARNERS

2.1. The purpose of the Higher Education Bursary is to provide learners with financial assistance towards the cost of studying. The Higher Education Hardship Fund is available to assist with the cost of studying, or with extraordinary or unexpected financial circumstances. The Diagnostic Support Fund is available to support learners who require access to a diagnostic assessment in order to access learning support through Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). Please note that the DSA application process is external to Yeovil College and whilst we can support learners in the application process, we have no control regarding the process or outcome. Learners who believe they might require DSA, access to the Diagnostic Support Fund, or other learning support are encouraged to share this with the University Centre as early as possible (either via speaking to the University Centre team in person, or emailing university.centre@yeovil.ac.uk) so we can put appropriate support in place.

2.2. Learners who will be entering onto an OfS-fundable (sometimes referred to as 'proscribed' or 'recognised for funding purposes') course for which they are registered with Yeovil College University Centre from September 2024 can be considered for an award. This includes learners studying on Foundation Degree programmes (FdAs / FDs), Higher National qualifications (HNCs and HNDs), and most of the Bachelor's Degree (BA / BSc / BEng) provision at the College. However, learners on other 'professional' HE programmes are not eligible. Learners studying 'Franchised' or 'Flying Faculty' programmes where they register with and pay fees to another HE provider are also not eligible - at the time of writing, that includes the BSc (Hons) Social Work and BA (Hons) Business Management and Strategy degrees with the University of Gloucestershire,. Learners studying the BSc (Hons) Social Work degree in partnership with Bristol UWE are eligible to apply. These specific parameters on funding are due to a combination of national funding regulations for financial assistance, and the contracts in place between the College and its University Partners.

3. FUNDS AVAILABLE

3.1. For the 2026/27 academic year the maximum individual payment available to eligible learners from the Bursary Fund is £350 within the academic year.

3.2. For the 2026/27 academic year the maximum individual payment available to eligible learners from the Hardship Fund is £350 within the academic year.

3.3 For the 2026/27 academic year the maximum individual payment available to eligible learners from the Diagnostic Support Fund is £600, or the cost of the diagnostic assessment, whichever is lower.

3.4 Learners can apply to any or all funds which they meet the relevant eligibility criteria for.

3.5 Please note that the YCUC Bursary, Hardship, and Diagnostic Support Funds are limited, therefore early application is recommended. Once the Bursary, Hardship and Diagnostic Support Fund limit as outlined in our Access and Participation Plan is reached no further applications can be processed during the academic year.

3.6 If payments from the YCUC Bursary, Hardship, and Diagnostic Support Funds are below expected levels, from February 2027 onwards the YCUC Bursary and Hardship Fund Panel may, with the consent of all members of the Panel, agree to provide additional funding opportunities for learners to maximise opportunities and support available for those who meet the Bursary, Hardship, and Diagnostic Support Fund's criteria. This may be, for example, offering learners the opportunity to access two Bursary payments over the course of an academic year, rather than one, or increasing the maximum payment available from one or more funds. Any opportunities to apply for additional funding would be clearly articulated to all eligible learners via their College email addresses, and timelines for application specified. Assessment of any additional applications would be in line with the criteria outlined in this document, including evidence requirements and application form pro-formas. Please note the provision of additional funding opportunities is not guaranteed, and would only occur in cases where the Bursary, Hardship, and Diagnostic Support Fund were notably under-spent compared to forecast levels.

3.7 If additional financial support for Higher Education learners becomes available during the academic year, for example, due to additional distribution of funds from the Office for Students or additional budget availability, the principles of application and assessment outlined in this policy will be followed, including evidence requirements and application pro-formas. Any opportunities to apply for additional funding would be clearly articulated to all eligible learners via their College email addresses, and timelines for application specified. Please note the provision of additional funding opportunities is not guaranteed.

4. APPLICATION PROCESS

4.1 To apply, learners need to complete an application form (see Appendix 1) and provide the required evidence in support of their application. Learners can access this form via the YCUC Student HelpZone on Moodle and / or the YCUC pages on MyHub. There is both a digital form available, which learnres are encouraged to use, or a downloadable version of the Word document if that is easier. Learners experiencing difficulties accessing the form can request a copy of the form be sent to them via email by contacting university.centre@yeovil.ac.uk.

4.2 Each application will be assessed on an individual basis by the Bursary and Hardship Fund Panel at Yeovil College University Centre. The Bursary and Hardship Fund Panel includes in membership the Head of Higher Education and Adult Learning, a member of the Senior Leadership Team, a representative from the Finance department, and a member of HE Administration as minute-taker and administrator.

4.3 Applications will be assessed on a first come, first served basis. Applications are submitted and reviewed on an annual basis each academic year, and learners who are studying on a programme that lasts two or more years will need to reapply for the second and subsequent years of study if applicable. Applications can be made at any point once a learner has enrolled on their course and commenced their studies.

4.4 Once the Bursary and Hardship Fund Panel have met, learners will be notified in writing (typically via email) as to the outcome. At this point, successful learners will be asked to provide correct BACS details in order for payment to be made.

4.5 If a learner's application is unsuccessful, they are eligible to reapply if their circumstances change.

4.6 The Bursary, Hardship and Diagnostic Support Funds are available to learners studying on higher education programmes at Yeovil College University Centre that are 'recognised for funding purposes' by the Office for Students and validated by a university partner or relevant awarding body. More details of these criteria are explained above in point 2.2.

5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

4.7 As outlined in Section 2, the Bursary, Hardship and Diagnostic Support Funds are available to learners studying on higher education programmes at Yeovil College University Centre that are 'recognised for funding purposes' and validated by a university partner or relevant awarding body.

4.8 Financial eligibility applies to the Bursary, Hardship and Diagnostic Support funds as outlined below. Household income is based on the criteria used by Student Finance England (SFE)[1].

4.9 Bursary

4.9.1 Learners with household income:

- less than £25,000
- £25,000 or above (where student is a Care Leaver)

4.10 Hardship Fund

4.10.1 Learners with household income:

- less than £25,000
- £25,000- £45,000 (where learner is a Care Leaver)
- £25,000 - £45,000(where an individual has a specific requirement for funds due to an extenuating circumstance, such as redundancy, change in family circumstances, incurring unexpected costs, or increasing cost of living).

4.11 Diagnostic Support Fund

4.11.1 Learners with household income less than £45,000 who require a diagnostic assessment to be undertaken in order to successfully apply for DSA.

4.11.2 The YCUC DSA Diagnostic Support Fund is only available for learners who undertake a diagnostic test after Yeovil College University Centre has made them an offer of a place on a higher education course. This includes learners who undertake this test at any point during their studies at Yeovil College University Centre.

4.11.3 The funds will only be paid once a learner has enrolled on their course at Yeovil College University Centre and begun their studies.

4.11.4 There are two routes available to securing Diagnostic Support Fund assistance.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-finance-how-youre-assessed-and-paid/student-finance-how-youre-assessed-and-paid-2026-to-2027

4.11.4.1 **ROUTE 1 – available to all learners who meet the criteria in Section 2 of this policy, and as outlined in 5.5.1 – 5.5.3.** Learners will need to fund the initial cost of the diagnostic test themselves but can claim reimbursement from the YCUC DSA Diagnostic Support Fund if the test then allows the learner to make a successful application for DSA. Learners do not need to notify YCUC in advance of their intent to seek a diagnosis, but must understand that funds will only be reimbursed if the diagnosis leads to successful application for DSA.

4.11.4.2 **ROUTE 2 – Available only by Advanced SEND Practitioner (ASP) referral, to students who meet the criteria in Section 2 of the policy, and as outlined in 5.5.1 – 5.5.3.** This route is available to learners who have undertaken a Cognassist screening with an Advanced Send Practitioner (ASP), due to a suspected learning difficulty or neurodivergence, and the ASP has reviewed the report and identified the learner is likely to have a neurodiversity for which they do not hold a formal diagnosis. In this instance, the ASP will contact the University Centre to confirm the learner's eligibility under Route 2 – should they wish to apply. This verification is necessary for funds to be approved. Learners studying on a YCUC programme 'recognised for funding purposes' by the Office for Students who suspect a neurodivergence for which they do not currently hold a formal diagnosis, and wish to undertake a Cognassist screening, should contact the University Centre (university.centre@yeovil.ac.uk) to request a Cognassist screening is undertaken. In these instances, funding will be reimbursed for the learner, both if their assessment identifies a diagnosis and the learner then applies for DSA but also if the assessment does not identify that the learner meets the threshold for diagnosis.

6. HOW HOUSEHOLD INCOME IS CALCULATED

4.12 Household income will be based on Student Finance guidance, looking at gross income (before national insurance and tax).

4.13 Household Income will be based on the learner's income*, plus the income of their spouse / civil partner / partner if either:

- The learner is under 25 and are married or in a civil partnership.
- The learner is 25 or over and married, in a civil partnership, or has a partner (who does not necessarily have to be a spouse / civil partner).

4.14 Household Income will be based on the learner's income* alone if they meet any one of the criteria for Independent Student (below) and either:

- They are under 25 and are not married or in a civil partnership.
- They are 25 or over and not married or in a civil partnership, and do not have a partner (who does not necessarily have to be a spouse / civil partner).

4.14.1 Independent Student Criteria:

- The learner has the care of a person under the age of 18 on the first day of the academic year.
- The learner is 25 or over on the first day of the academic year.
- The learner has been married or in a civil partnership before the start of the academic year, even if they are now divorced or separated.
- The learner has no living parents.
- The learner is classed by Student Finance as an Independent Student (whether because of parental estrangement, being financially self-supporting for at least 3 years in line with their guidance, or other reasons).

4.15 Household Income will be based on the learner's income* and their parental income if the learner does not meet the criteria for Independent Student (above). If a learner's parents are separated or divorced, this will include the income of whichever parent the learner is financially dependent on, including the income of that parent's partner, if they have one. A parent's 'partner' means one of the following:

- A spouse (husband or wife),
- A civil partner,
- A person ordinarily living with the parent as their spouse,
- A person ordinarily living with the parent as their civil partner.

4.16 *The learner's Income

4.16.1 A learner's income should include details of any taxable unearned income received from the following sources:

- Bank or building society gross interest,
- property, lettings or rent,
- dividends or investments,
- trusts or sponsorships,
- any other payment received for attending the course.

4.16.2 A learner should only include payments from an employer if they are being released from their employment by their employer to attend the course (e.g. as an

Apprentice, or if the learner still receives payment from their employer for time spent attending the course). Income from other earnings during an academic year of the course (including holiday, evening, or weekend work) doesn't need to be declared.

4.17 Household Income Ignores:

4.17.1 £1,130 for any child other than the learner who is totally or mainly financially dependent on their parent(s) or their partner (as appropriate).

4.17.2 £1,130 for any child who is totally, or mainly financially dependent on the learner or their husband, wife or civil partner or their partner if over 25.

4.17.3 £1,130 if the learner's parent is also a student.

7. PAYMENTS

4.18 Payments will be processed, subject to the provision of correct BACS details, payable by transfer into the bank account indicated on the application form.

8. RESPONSIBILITY AND AUTHORITY

4.19 Queries relating to the Bursary and Hardship Fund may be directed to the Yeovil College University Centre (university.centre@yeovil.ac.uk) in the first instance.

9. RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES, DOCUMENTS, DEFINITIONS

YCUC Access and Participation Plan[2]

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-finance-how-youre-assessed-and-paid/student-finance-how-youre-assessed-and-paid-2026-to-2027

[2] Available at www.yeovil.ac.uk/policies-reports

YEOVIL COLLEGE UNIVERSITY CENTRE
BURSARY, HARDSHIP & DIAGNOSTIC SUPPORT FUND APPLICATION FORM 2026-27

The blue boxes show questions, the white boxes either require you to type in an answer (e.g. type in your name / address), or include a list where you will need to highlight any options that apply to you. If you need help, contact university.centre@yeovil.ac.uk . For more information about eligibility & income criteria, visit the YCUC Bursary & Hardship Fund Policy on the website.

Unfortunately, learners on Franchised Courses, including BSc (Hons) Social Work, BA (Hons) Business Management & Strategy through the University of Gloucestershire are not eligible to apply for this funding. Learners studying 'professional' HE programmes that are not 'recognised for funding purposes' by the Office for Students are also not eligible to apply for this funding. Section 2.2 of the Higher Education Bursary, Hardship, and Diagnostic Support Fund Policy outlines in more detail which courses are eligible.

SECTION 1 – LEARNER PERSONAL DETAILS

Title (Miss / Mr / Ms etc.)	
Full Name	
Student ID Number	
Date of Birth	
Email	

Do you meet any of the below criteria? (Please highlight any that you meet)
• You have the care of a person under the age of 18 on the first day of the academic year. • You're 25 or over on the first day of the academic year. • You've been married or in a civil partnership before the start of the academic year, even if you're now divorced or separated. • You have no living parents. • You are classed by Student Finance as an Independent Student (whether because of parental estrangement, being financially self-supporting for at least 3 years in line with their guidance, or other reasons).
Who do you live with? (Please highlight as appropriate)
• One Parent • One Parent and their Spouse / Civil Partner / Partner • Both Parents • With Spouse or Civil Partner • With Partner • Independently

Are you a Care Leaver*? (Please highlight as appropriate) ***i.e. you were in local authority care, such as foster care, when growing up**		
Yes / No		
Do you have a disability, learning difficulty, or long-term health condition? (Highlight as appropriate)		
Yes / No		
Are there any children, other than you, who are totally or mainly financially dependent on your parents / parent / parent and their partner (as appropriate)? Please highlight as appropriate		
Yes / No / N/A	**If yes, how many?**	
Are there any children, who are totally or mainly financially dependent on you, your spouse or civil partner? Or any children who are dependent upon your partner if you are over 25? Please highlight as appropriate		
Yes / No / N/A	**If yes, how many?**	
Is your parent also a student? (Please highlight as appropriate)		
Yes / No / N/A		

SECTION 2 – RESIDENTIAL STATUS

Which of these best describes your status? (Highlight as appropriate)	
British Citizen EU/EEA Asylum Seeker Refugee / Indefinite Leave to Remain / Settled Status Other (please explain ……………..)	
Country of Origin	
Date of entry into the UK (if appropriate)	

SECTION 3 – COURSE DETAILS

Course Title *(e.g. HND Sport)*	
Course Start Date *(e.g. Sept '26)*	
Course End Date *(e.g. Sept '28)*	

SECTION 4 – OTHER PEOPLE'S INCOME

Please tick the Category that applies to you and provide the relevant evidence (outlined in the yellow box below the category). Please note, only one category should apply to you. The categories for which you need to provide other people's income are determined using SFE rules, which are more complex than just 'who lives in your house?'. Sometimes 'Household Income' includes the income of people you don't live with. If you need help, contact the YCUC team.

Category 4a	
I am: • Under the age of 25 • AND not married or in a civil partnership • AND do not have any children of my own • AND am not classed by Student Finance as an Estranged Student.	
If you meet Category 1a criteria, you need to provide evidence of your "parental income". If your parents are separated or divorced this will be the income of the parent you're financially dependent on, and your parent's spouse / civil partner / cohabiting partner, if they have one. Income includes wages (provide evidence for the last 3 months), taxable benefits (provide evidence for the last 3 months), and any other source of taxable income (provide evidence for the last 3 months).	

Category 4b	
I am: • Over 25 and living with a partner (whether a spouse, civil partner, or cohabiting partner) • OR Under 25 and Married or in a Civil Partnership	
If you meet Category 1b criteria, you need to provide evidence of your spouse / civil partner / cohabiting partner's income. Income includes wages (provide evidence for the last 3 months), taxable benefits (provide evidence for the last 3 months), and any other source of taxable income (provide evidence for the last 3 months).	

Category 4c	
I am: • Under the age of 25 AND Classified by Student Finance as an "Independent Student" (perhaps as I have no living parents, grew up in care, or am irrevocably estranged from my parent(s)). • OR Under the age of 25, have a child of my own, but am neither married nor in a Civil Partnership. • OR Over the age of 25 and not living with a spouse / civil partner / cohabiting partner. (NB – students over 25 who are living with a parent/carer, or in a house-share with friends would be included in this category).	
If you meet Category 1c criteria, no evidence is required of anyone else's income.	

SECTION 5 – YOUR INCOME

Please use the white box to tick whichever categories below apply to you. It may be that multiple categories apply, in which case, select multiple boxes. If you select a category, you need to supply evidence of this income along with your application form. Usually, you need to supply 3 months' income evidence, however, if your income statement is only provided annually, please provide this instead.

Income Type	Tick if you receive this
Any taxable unearned income you receive from bank or building society gross interest.	
Any taxable unearned income you receive from property, lettings or rent.	
Any taxable unearned income you receive from dividends, investments, trusts or sponsorships.	
Payment received for attending the course (apart from a Maintenance Loan from SFE).	
Your salary / wages if you're being released by your employer to attend your course (i.e. you're still being paid for the day(s) you're at College). Apprentices' salaries would come under this category.	
If you receive any of the sources of income outlined in the table above, you need to provide evidence of this. Usually, you need to supply 3 months' income evidence (i.e. 3 months' payslips if you are paid to attend College as an apprentice), however, if your income statement is only provided annually, please provide this instead.	

If you receive other income (i.e. if you work part-time and come to College on your non-working (unpaid) days), this does not need to be declared.

SECTION 6 – STUDENT LOANS

Are you in receipt of a Student Maintenance Loan? (Please highlight as appropriate)	
Yes / No	
If yes, please attach evidence of your current maintenance loan amounts.	
If no, please explain why	

SECTION 7 – PERSONAL STATEMENT

Personal Statement **Please include any additional information you would like the panel to be aware of.** *This is included to ensure that learners who are facing financial hardship are able to access support in line with our policy – we do ask learners to provide evidence as to how money has been spent.*
If you are applying for the Diagnostic Support Fund, please also attach evidence of (a) the cost of your diagnostic assessment, including the date it was undertaken, and (b) your subsequent successful application for DSA.

SECTION 8 – COMPLETION CHECKLIST

Action	Mark 'X' as complete
Sections 1-3 fully completed	
All relevant boxes ticked in Section 4 & 5 (income details)	
All evidence required in sections 4, 5 & 6 (income and student loans) included and attached to email	
Personal statement provided in section 7	
Declaration (Section 9, below) read, signed and dated by you	

SECTION 9 – LEARNER DECLARATION

Please confirm which fund(s) you are applying for, by marking 'x' in the corresponding box(es) below:	
YCUC Bursary Fund	
YCUC Hardship Fund	
YCUC Diagnostic Support Fund (if applying to this fund, please outline specific amount, up to £600, requested in the box to the right)	

I certify that the information given is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, correct. I will inform the College of any change in circumstances, and I understand that money may be claimed back if information provided is known to be false.

I, the learner, understand that I may be asked to repay some of the monies awarded should I fail to complete my studies.

I, the learner, understand that all awards are conditional on learners adhering to the College Student Code of Conduct.

I, the learner, understand that there is limited Bursary, Hardship and Diagnostic Support funding available each year, and so it is not guaranteed that my application will be successful.

I, the learner, agree that the information on this form can be used for the purpose of reviewing my request for Bursary or Hardship funding, under GDPR Regulations (http://www.yeovil.ac.uk/Footer/Privacy.html).

Learner Signature *(can be digital – you don't need to print out & sign)*		**Date**	

Applications for funding will be assessed by the YCUC Bursary and Hardship Fund Panel. Please ensure all supporting evidence is attached to the completed application form and submit it to university.centre@yeovil.ac.uk . You will be informed of the decision in writing.

SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT BANK DETAILS COLLECTION FORM

Where applications approved, payment will usually be made directly into your bank account. Please complete the following:									
Bank/Building Society Name:									
Branch Address:									
Sort code			-			-			
Account Number									
Account holder's name									
Account holder's signature									