

# **Financial Contingency Fund Policy**

Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn y Gymraeg / This document is available in Welsh

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## **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The Welsh Government allocates the Financial Contingency Fund (FCF) to all Colleges for the purpose of providing additional financial support to learners. The FCFs are limited and each application will be considered on an individual basis to ensure fair and effective distribution of the funds. The College is governed by various instructions from DfES on the use and management of FCF and any further correspondence from DfES may impact on this Policy.

The funds will be disbursed on the system described below.

- 1.2.1 The FCF will be considered alongside the Welsh Government Learning Grant (WGLG) which is available for learners aged 19 years and over who meet certain criteria, mainly financial.
- 1.2.2 The FCF will also be considered alongside the Educational Maintenance Allowance which is available to learners aged 16, 17 and 18 and any other funds available to help learners meet the costs of staying in education. An annually revised statement on sources of funding for learners will be prepared prior to opening the application round for the following year, and will be available on the College website.
- 1.2.3 The previous years' spend will inform the following years priorities, to be discussed and approved at SLT prior to opening of the application process.

## **2. Applying**

- 2.1 Learners can apply for assistance from the Financial Contingency Fund via the LearnerHub website (<https://learnerhub.cymoedd.ac.uk>). Applications for the following academic year can be made from April in the preceeding year. If required, then proof of financial circumstances for the current tax year can be uploaded via the LearnerHub website.

- 2.2 Learners are entitled to apply at any time during their study though there is a finite allocation of this cash limited grant.
- 2.3 Learner and Campus Services staff are available to assist the learner with their application.
- 2.4 Proof of purchase will be required where applicable e.g. purchase of equipment.
- 2.5 Applications will be processed within 4 weeks. Unsuccessful applicants will be informed.

### **3. Eligibility**

- 3.1 To be eligible for support from the FCF a learner must fulfil the following criteria:
  - (i) Full time (normally residing in the UK for 3 years preceding the start of the course) learner.
  - (ii) Be an EU national with settled status under the EU Withdrawal Agreements or be a refugee or
  - (iii) Have been granted exceptional leave to remain and satisfied the 3 years residency requirements or
  - (iv) Be an enrolled learner at any of the College's campuses.
  - (v) Provide evidence of household income for applications in respect of Free School Meals or
  - (vi) Provide proof of entitlement to Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) or the Welsh Government Learning Grant (WGLG) for other types of FCF assistance.
  - (vii) Learners not eligible to attain financial assistance from the FCF may still be entitled in exceptional cases for financial support for hardship support from other sources of funding.

#### **4. Payments**

- 4.1 Payments will be made by BACS transfer into the account of a learner or Provider.
- 4.2 Any queries regarding the actual payment of funds should be directed to the responsible officer (elizabeth.butler@cymoedd.ac.uk)

#### **5. Appeals**

- 5.1 Appeals must be in writing to the reporting officer (contact details above) setting out the reason for the appeal with any additional supporting evidence.
- 5.2 Appeals will be considered by the Director of EMIS and a decision made within working 15 days of receipt. Their decision is final.
- 5.2 Any appeal will need to be made within 14 days of the disputed decision

#### **6. Use of the funds**

- 6.1 The overall fund is subdivided into categories to tackle areas where the need for financial support has been identified as an aid to overcoming barriers to study.
- 6.2 Financial support is currently prioritised into the following categories: Childcare, transport, meals, course specific resources, examinations/registrations, and, in exceptional cases, discretionary hardship payments. Priority is given to learners who have been/are in care and/or lone parents and/or are young carers.

- 6.3 Each year the FCF allocation received from government is divided into cash limited budgeted amounts, as decided in 1.2.3, and distributed on a first come, first served basis.

## **7. Guidance notes for completing the application form**

- 7.1 Applicants must complete all sections of the FCF form and return as soon as possible to the responsible officer. This is very important as the funds are allocated on a first come, first served basis.
- 7.2 If the forms are not fully completed they will be returned and this may cause delay. If a learner wants to discuss how to complete the form, they can obtain help from the responsible officer.

## **8. Declaration**

- 8.1 All applicants must complete the declaration.
- 8.2 The learner /parent /guardian must read and electronically sign the declaration on the LearnerHub website, giving accurate and complete information.
- 8.3 The responsible officer must be informed of any change in circumstances.
- 8.4 Applicants must be agreeable to any investigation being made, in order to verify the accuracy of the information given.
- 8.5 The applicant must repay the amount awarded if the information is subsequently proven to be based on inaccurate information.
- 8.6 Proof must be supplied if the applicant is in receipt of state benefits. This must be provided by submitting proof alongside the application form.

## **9. Home to College Transport**

- 9.1 Transport is one of the main barriers to getting to Colleges. In recognition of this, the College uses the FCF to supplement the transport provided by Borough Councils. The fund can be used to provide contract buses, season tickets or travel grants dependent on an individual's needs and eligibility. Certain areas suffering higher deprivation may have contract buses provided from the FCF. If funds suffice, the college may also support the costs of travelling to work placement where this is a mandatory element of obtaining a qualification e.g, some childcare qualifications. Learners will usually be expected to make a contribution to costs when required.

## **10. Childcare**

- 10.1 An amount of fund is set aside to support parents with a need for childcare. Each case is assessed individually and subject to eligibility. Learners will be expected to make a contribution to costs when required.

## **11. Meal subsidy**

- 11.1 The College provides a meal subsidy to learners under 19 who fall within certain financial criteria. The subsidy is for use in College facilities.

## **12. Course specific resources**

Where specific resources are required for the course chosen, such as equipment for hairdressing, then applications can be made to cover these costs. Such resources are generally ordered through the college, which helps reimbursement.

### **Examinations/registrations**

These can be applied for through FCF when they relate to costs incurred as a learner enrolled in the college.

**Discretionary hardship payments.**

Where learners are suffering financial hardships then evidenced and receipted commitments can be met in exceptional circumstances. In the first instance the best way forward is to discuss claims with the reporting officer.

**13. Management of FCF**

- 13.1 The responsible officer shall manage, review and where necessary, update appropriate policies and procedures for FCF. It is recognised that these procedures will from time to time be adjusted to take account of funds available, government guidance and priorities in supporting learners.
- 13.2 The responsible officer has a duty of developing working practices and making decisions on the disbursement of FCF in line with this policy.
- 13.3 The responsible officer will prepare monthly budget reports for review by the Director of EMIS supported by the grants team. These reports will be discussed with the Finance team and will be made available to OMT.
- 13.4 An annual report (as required by Welsh Government, see previous years report in appendix) will be produced to detail the impact of the previous year's allocation. This will be discussed with the Finance team and will be made available to OMT, SLT and governors.
- 13.5 The Director of EMIS has the authority to make decisions for discretionary payments to learners based on written evidence. In emergency situations, this authority can be delegated.

**14. Amendments**

- 14.1 This policy will be reviewed annually given the precarious nature of the funding.

- 14.1.2 Any changes/recommendations regarding this fund received from DfES or any other relevant outside organisation will be reported to the Senior Leadership Team.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **APPENDIX - The Financial Contingency Fund and the Welsh Language**

##### **The Welsh Language Standards**

Coleg y Cymoedd is committed to promoting the use of the Welsh language and will actively promote opportunities for staff and students to use the Welsh language.

The Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 establishes a legal framework to impose duties on public bodies to comply with standards in relation to the Welsh language – the Welsh Language Standards. The standards imposed upon Coleg y Cymoedd are set out in the Compliance Notice issued in September 2017.

Standard 100 relates to awarding grants or providing financial assistance:

*You must produce and publish a policy on awarding grants or providing financial assistance (or, where appropriate, amend an existing policy) which requires you to take the following matters into account when you make decisions in relation to the awarding of a grant or providing financial assistance —*

*(a) what effects, if any (and whether positive or negative), the awarding of a grant or providing financial assistance would have on—*

*(i) opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and*

*(ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language;*

*(b) how the decision could be taken or implemented (for example, by imposing conditions) so that it would have positive effects, or increased positive effects, on—*

*(i) opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and*

*(ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language;*

*(c) how the decision could be taken or implemented (for example, by imposing conditions) so that it would not have adverse effects, or so that it would have decreased adverse effects on—*

*(i) opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and*

*(ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language;*

*(ch) whether you need to ask the applicant for any additional information in order to assist you in assessing the effects of awarding a grant or providing financial assistance on—*

*(i) opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language, and*

*(ii) treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.*

### **Applying for the FCF**

Details of the fund are available on the College website and the College's application system. Details include eligibility criteria and details of the costs the grant will cover. All this information is available in Welsh and Welsh is treated no less favourably. The FCF policy is also available in Welsh and English and the English version notes that the document is available in Welsh.

The application form for this grant is bilingual. The form notes that applications submitted in Welsh will be treated no less favourably than those submitted in English. The application form asks the learner to note their language preference and whether they are completing any aspects of their course through the medium of Welsh.

### **Processing applications for the FCF**

Applications submitted in Welsh are treated no less favourably than those submitted in English (including, amongst other matters, in relation to the closing

date for receiving applications and in relation to the timescale for informing applicants of decisions).

Where possible, applications submitted in Welsh are processed by a Welsh speaker. If this is not possible, arrangements are made to translate the form.

When considering applications for the FCF grant, a Welsh language impact assessment form is completed by the officer responsible for processing the application. This form is approved by the Welsh Language Manager. If the impact assessment application form deems that awarding the FCF would have a negative effect on the Welsh language, the application in question will be reviewed.

When applicants are informed of the decision in relation to the awarding of the FCF, they are contacted in Welsh if the application was submitted in Welsh or if the learner has noted Welsh/bilingual as their desired language for correspondence (this information is captured during enrolment and is recorded on the EBS/Ontrack system).

### **Effects on the Welsh language**

The aim of the FCF is to provide financial help for those eligible students whose access to further education at a further education institution might be inhibited by financial considerations. In inviting Welsh-speaking learners from these socioeconomic backgrounds to apply for FCF in Welsh, the College's aim is to encourage them to retain, develop and use their Welsh skills. In turn, this may have a positive effect on their future career prospects as well as a positive effect on the use of the Welsh language.

The process related to the awarding of the FCF has a positive effect on opportunities for persons to use the Welsh language. Applicants are given the opportunity to complete the application form in Welsh and to send and receive subsequent correspondence related to the grant in Welsh. Applicants are asked

to note their language choice on the application form increasing opportunities to use the Welsh language.

The following steps related to the awarding of the FCF have a positive effect on treating the Welsh language no less favourably - Information related to the FCF grant and the application form itself notes that applications in Welsh are treated no less favourably and efforts are made to have Welsh speakers process applications made in Welsh.

### **Monitoring**

The Welsh Language Manager monitors the implementation of the FCF and assesses the effect on opportunities to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably. The Welsh Language Manager works with Learner and Campus Services to identify where steps can be taken to have an increased positive effect on opportunities to use the Welsh language and treating the Welsh language no less favourably. When the FCF policy is reviewed a Welsh language impact assessment form is completed by the author of the policy and reviewed by the Welsh Language Manager.