

Higher Education Hardship Fund Policy

1. Policy Statement

- a. This policy allows Higher Education Students to determine their eligibility for support from City of Bristol College (referred to as the College thereby after) to assist them with their study costs.
- b. The support detailed in this policy shall be subject to the college receiving funding from the external funding bodies and the college reserves the right to amend the support on considering changes to the funding received.
- c. The policy is reviewed annually, and the college may change eligibility for support detailed in this policy.
- d. Students eligible for support may not automatically receive it once the limited funds are exhausted; timely application for support is advised.

2. Scope

- a. The policy aims to ensure that the limited funds available to the College are distributed effectively to students with the greatest financial need.
- b. To clarify the different criteria for students studying higher education courses at City of Bristol College.
- c. To provide information on the Hardship fund arrangements.

3. Responsibilities

- a. This policy is overseen by the Director of Further and Higher Education and the Head of Higher Education to ensure that the application, process, approval and payment of the hardship fund is complied with
- b. It is the responsibility of students to familiarise with the policy when undertaking any application for the hardship fund
- c. It is the responsibility of the Higher Education Quality and Partnership Manager and the Curriculum Administrator to ensure all applications are processed accordingly and reviewed

- d. It is the responsibility for the Head of Department to consult the relevant Finance Business Partner for the Directorate of Further and Higher Education in ensuring that all fees are up to date
- e. It is the responsibility of the Higher Education Quality and Partnership Manager to check individual student records to ensure eligibility are met and in compliance of the policy
- f. It is the responsibility of the Higher Education Quality and Partnership Manager to notify on all decision to the Director of Further and Higher Education and maintain all records of the application

4. Eligibility Criteria for Higher Education Students

- a. Eligibility is set by the guidelines from the Office for Students (OfS) and the National Association of Student Money Advisors.
- b. To qualify the student must satisfy all the following criteria:
- c. Have an attendance record of at least 85%. The attendance threshold is set at 85% acknowledging that students may not be able to achieve 100% attendance; attendance records for the Hardship fund do not differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence.
- d. Have provided evidence of their approved full Student Loan entitlement.
- e. Have been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom and Islands throughout the three-year period preceding that date other than wholly or mainly for the purpose of receiving full-time education.
- f. Full-Time Undergraduates; applications for support can be made by 'home students' undertaking the following full-time courses at undergraduate level:
 - i. Higher National Diploma (HND)
 - ii. Higher National Certificate (HNC)
 - iii. Certificate of Higher Education
 - iv. Foundation Degree
 - v. Top Up Degree
 - vi. Full Batchelor degrees
- g. Part-Time Undergraduates; applications for support can be made by 'home students' on part-time HE courses who are studying at least 50 per cent (60 credits) of a full-time equivalent course.

5. Applications

- a. The Hardship Fund is open for applications between September 1 and March 31 of each academic year. No applications will be accepted after March 31. Applications for the Hardship Fund must be submitted no later than March 31 of the current academic year.

Applications submitted after this date, or from students nearing the end of their course, may not be eligible for funding.

- b. To ensure support is targeted where it is most needed, students applying must demonstrate continued academic engagement (e.g., attendance, coursework submission) at the time of their application).
- c. If a student is subject to disciplinary or academic sanction such as plagiarism, it will be considered as to whether to continue to receive support from this fund.
- d. All students must sign and submit the 'Declaration of Authenticity' form when providing their evidence and application for the Hardship Fund. Please refer to Appendix A for a copy of this form.

6. Payments

- a. All payments will be made directly to the student via BACS transfer.
- b. The Hardship Fund is finite, and available funds will be distributed according to the number of applicants who meet the above criteria.
- c. Students must be up to date with their Tuition Fee Loan and fees payments, however if fees are being paid by an employer and there is outstanding payments outside of the control of the students, then payments can be made subject to individual cases.
- d. All payments must be approved and checked with the Higher Education Quality and Partnership Manager in conjunction with the Finance manager
- e. Payments that are approved will be made monthly and will be subject to the above criteria remaining in place
- f. Payments to a previously approved application can be ceased if there is any significant change if:
- g. Instalment of tuition fee payments are not made to the college.
- h. Attendance drops below the required threshold of 90%
- i. The student is subject to disciplinary or academic sanction

7. Appeals

- a. Applicants refused support after a case review have the right to make an appeal.
- b. Appeals must be made in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the Case Review decision to decline support. These must be submitted in writing to HEAdmin@cityofbristol.ac.uk

- c. The appeal should state the grounds for the appeal, these grounds are usually a fault in due process or error in fact.
- d. Appeals must include:
 - i. Supply sufficient detail to sustain the grounds of appeal;
 - ii. The outcome that they are seeking from the Appeals process.
 - iii. How they would wish to have their appeal considered either via correspondence or personally attending an appeal hearing.
 - iv. How they would wish to receive any correspondence. In the absence of any preference, the College's default method of communication will be via letter.
- e. The appeals will be heard by a panel chaired by the Director of Further and Higher Education. The panel will arrange to meet within 10 working days. The outcome as determined by the panel will be notified within 5 working days of the hearing.
 - i. The decision of the panel will be final
 - ii. The panel will consist of:
 - iii. Director of Further and Higher Education
 - iv. Head of Department or Programme Manager
 - v. A representative from the Finance department

8. Policy Review

- a. The College can amend this policy, without prior notice, considering experience, and responding to changes to funding body requirements.
- b. The college will always aim to provide as much notice as possible for changes, however external factors outside of the control of the college may impact the notice period.

9. Linked policies (or Linked policies and procedures)

- a. This policy is linked to the Bursary Policy and Procedure.

Version 2	
Approved by:	SLT
Date of approval:	June 2025
Date for Review:	July 2025
Lead Officer:	Higer Education Quality and Partnerships Manager
Senior Manager responsible:	Deputy Principal

Appendix A – Student Declaration of Authenticity Statement

Student Declaration of Authenticity.

Please read the following carefully before submitting this application;

I confirm that I am registered and in attendance on my course.

I declare that the information that I have given on this form is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge.

I understand that giving false information will automatically disqualify my application.

I have provided my supporting evidence here, and I understand that the college reserves the right to request additional evidence it deems necessary.

I understand my application may be subject to an audit.

I understand that the Hardship Fund should not be relied upon as a guaranteed source of income, and I cannot normally expect to receive repeat funding for the same issue in any future applications.

I agree for City of Bristol College to pay any award via BACs to my nominated account.

Your name (CAPITALS).....

Your signature.....

Date.....