

18 July 2022

Higher Education Short Course trial: Study Support Bursary scheme: invitation to participate

The Department for Education has made available £2.5 million for a 'Study Support Bursary' scheme (SSB) as part of the Higher Education Short Course Trial (HESC). The funding will be allocated to participating providers over three years, from 2022-23 to 2024-25.

Participation in the scheme is voluntary. This letter asks you whether your provider would like to take part.

The scheme is designed to provide support for study costs and will target students facing the most significant barriers to study. It will be part of the data gathering from the wider HESC trial which will support the development of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE). The SSB is for the time-limited trial only – broader decisions on LLE maintenance support are still subject to government policy decisions.

Please confirm whether you would like to take part by emailing shortcourse@officeforstudents.org.uk **before Friday 29 July 2022**.

Approach to funding

A total of £2.5 million will be available for distribution over the three years of the scheme. The SSB must only be used to support students on courses developed through the HESC and who are in receipt of a HESC tuition fee loan.

The amount allocated to each provider will be proportionate to the number of courses due to be delivered, course size (i.e. credits values) and projected student numbers. Providers that deliver fully online courses should consider the suitability of the bursary criteria in an online environment and distribute the bursary accordingly.

Providers will be able to use up to 5 per cent of their SSB allocation for administrative costs.

Terms and conditions of funding

We believe providers are best placed to assess the best way in which the bursary funds can support the needs of their students to overcome barriers to study. Providers should ensure that their bursary application criteria and processes have sufficient rigour to prioritise funding to those in greatest need. It is the discretion of the provider to make a judgement about whether a student's request is in line with the eligible costs outlined in Annex A and providers should be satisfied that the student is spending money for the purposes intended (i.e. making payments on students' behalf or seeing invoices/receipts from students).

The SSB must not be used for standard residential costs or membership of professional bodies. It should not duplicate or counteract any other existing support the student may be entitled to or receive.

The allocation of funding is subject to the general terms and conditions of funding for 2022-23. We will monitor providers' use of the funding and recover sums that are not used in compliance with the terms and conditions of grant within the time available.

Providers must inform the OfS by emailing shortcourse@officeforstudents.org.uk, as soon as they are aware, if they believe they will not be able to use their full allocation by 31 July 2023. The OfS reserves the right to recover funding if it believes the provider will not use it in compliance within the above terms and conditions.

Payment and monitoring

We will take a phased approach to the release of funds, and twice undertake monitoring of bursary funding awarded, to inform any required adjustments to allocations to ensure efficient use of funds. Annex B illustrates the indicative release for year one and indicates how we plan to monitor allocations. Years two and three will follow the same allocation pattern. Monitoring will also seek to gather information on the number of students supported by bursaries and the uses to which bursaries have been put (i.e. against which categories of eligible costs outlined in Annex A).

Evaluation

In addition to this light-touch monitoring, we will commission an external evaluation of the bursary scheme: providers taking part will be expected to engage with this. We will notify providers of this work accordingly.

Next steps

Please confirm whether you would like to take part by emailing shortcourse@officeforstudents.org.uk before Friday 29 July 2022. Please also let us know if you would not like to take part in the scheme.

Once we receive confirmation from all providers, we will calculate and notify providers of their allocation.

If you have any questions, please email shortcourse@officeforstudents.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Nolan Smith
Director of Resources and Finance

Annex A: Eligible costs

The Study Support Bursary scheme (SSB) may be made available for the following:

- a. Study support costs such as books, course material, trips not included in course fees.
- b. Travel costs for getting to and from the course.
- c. Equipment not included in the course fees. A laptop should only be provided in cases of hardship where its absence would prevent the learner from studying. Providers should consider loaning rather than providing laptops where possible.
- d. Childcare for students with parental responsibilities who are at risk of not starting or continuing learning because of childcare costs.
- e. Learning and learner support for disabled students. This should be for support over and above the reasonable adjustments that providers are required to make under the Equalities Act 2010.
- f. Emergency support funds for students, which must only be provided in exceptional circumstances.
- g. If the course necessitates a student being present for face to face activities (for example, to attend a clinical setting) and they are unable to reasonably access the activity by transport, temporary residential costs may be permitted.

Annex B: Payment and monitoring – Year one (2022-23) illustration

The following table illustrates the indicative phased release for year one. The payment and monitoring dates are subject to change. We will notify providers by email in advance if this is the case.

Date	Action
July 2022	Initial allocations for academic year 2022-23 will be announced based on projected student numbers.
August 2022	Providers will receive payment of 50 per cent of their 2022-23 allocation.
February 2023	The OfS will monitor the amount of bursary funding distributed, the number of students supported by bursaries and the uses to which bursaries have been put (i.e. against which categories of eligible costs outlined in Annex A). We will ask for projections of bursary spend to the end of the academic year (31 July 2023) and will use this to adjust allocations. This means providers may not receive the total stated in the July 2022 statement.
March 2023	Adjusted 2022-23 allocations will be made to providers. This will include the remaining 50 per cent of providers' allocations, adjusted to reflect projection reported in February.
July 2023	The OfS will monitor the total amount of bursaries distributed in 2022-23 (1 August 2022 – 31 July 2023). This includes the amount of bursary funding distributed, the number of students supported by bursaries and the uses to which bursaries have been put. Providers will receive 2023-24 allocations based on 2022-23 confirmed bursary spend.
August 2023	The OfS will reclaim any underspend from 2022-23. Providers will receive payment of 50 per cent of their 2023-24 allocation.