

All you need to know about the Care-Experienced Students Bursary and Further Education in Scotland



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Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Care-Experienced Students Bursary?

We've put together some commonly asked questions about the Care-Experienced Students Bursary (CESB) and Further Education. It is relevant to those studying below Higher National Certificate (HNC) level in Scotland and covers details about who is eligible for the CESB, how to apply and practical information about how payments are made. For information relevant to Higher Education (HE), see our separate information sheet.

The CESB is a non-income assessed, non-repayable grant of £8,100 per year or £202.50 per week. It is only payable during the academic year so the amount may vary depending on the length of your course. It is available to care-experienced students taking a full-time course below HNC level study.

Who is eligible for the Care-Experienced Students Bursary for Further Education?

You are entitled to the CESB if you are:

- care-experienced, within the UK
- a student taking a full-time college course below HNC level (i.e., up to and including SCQF Level 6 courses)
- studying at a Scottish college/place of study. It is not available to those studying outside of Scotland
- AND a Scottish domiciled student (i.e. you normally live in Scotland).

The care-experienced bursary should be seen as part of a wider suite of support.....As such, this award is intended to enhance rather than replace any existing financial and practical support provided by Local Authorities and other relevant Corporate Parents.

(John Swinney, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, 2019).

Am I care-experienced? What does this mean?

If you are care-experienced you are someone who has been in care or 'looked-after' at any stage of your life, no matter how short (e.g. only temporarily or prior to adoption). Your care-experience could have been provided by a local authority (council), a religious organisation or a charity.

This care could be in one of many different settings, such as:

- foster care
- living with close family or friends under kinship care arrangements
- living at home with a compulsory supervision order
- living away from home with a compulsory supervision order
- living in residential care, secure care or a List D school, a borstal, a close support unit or a children's home
- formal care leaver (looked after on or after your 16th birthday under a formal order).

Students who were in informal care arrangements (for example, grandparents, aunts, uncles, family friends) do not automatically qualify for funding as care-experienced students in further education. However, the college may take a decision on an individual basis that you are eligible for the bursary.

Different types of care-experience can be described in different ways, and often this has changed over time.

Still unsure? You can contact the care-experienced named person at your college or the [HUB for Success](#) in confidence for further advice.

What evidence do I need to show I am care-experienced?

Once you have applied for the CESB you will need a signed letter from a professional person who can confirm you are care-experienced. This is usually someone from the social work service that was responsible for you.

Don't worry if you are not in contact with any relevant individuals as you can contact the local authority where you were 'looked after', try your doctor's surgery who can check your records, or any other organisation or charity that you were involved with at the time. The college will assess each application on a case by case basis to take into account your individual circumstances.

It can be hard to gather evidence particularly if you were in care or looked after a while ago. If you are struggling to get evidence, contact the local authority who looked after you, the care-experienced contact at your place of study or the [HUB for Success](#) for advice.

What age must I be?

You must be beyond your statutory school leaving date (for most students this will mean a minimum age of 16). There is no upper age limit for the CESB.

What if I am under 16 and starting college?

If you are under 16 and aren't able to leave school until 20th December then you won't be able to apply for any college funding until after this date.

Should I disclose my care-experience?

If you want to access the CESB you need to tick the box on the college application form to let college know you are care-experienced. This does not mean you have to tell your personal care-experience; this is your private information. Ticking the box is important if you want to reach out for support. It is not compulsory, but you may miss out on vital support if you do not.

How much is the CESB and why do I get this amount?

The CESB is £8,100 per academic year or £205.50 per week. The amount may vary depending on the length of your course. It is a non-income assessed bursary and is based on the current living wage. It is designed to help support you with living costs you have whilst you study.

Will I be better off staying on benefits?

In most cases students on full-time further education courses will no longer be eligible to claim benefits such as Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. You may still be able to get Personal Independence Payment. However, you should contact the DWP or Citizens Advice Scotland for further advice on what benefits you might be entitled to whilst you are studying.

How and when will my bursary be paid - when is my first payment?

The bursary will be paid directly into your bank account. The bursary is paid in "arrears" which means after you have started your course, not before. You are normally paid 3 weeks after your course start date if you have formally enrolled and had positive engagement with the college

What happens if I miss a class, a full day or more - will this impact on my bursary?

It may impact on your bursary; you **must read and follow your college absence procedures**. College should look at each student's attendance and engagement on an individual basis before deciding whether a student will have their bursary deducted.

Will college inform me if my bursary is to be deducted?

Yes, you should receive written information and the opportunity to rectify this. Contact may be by SMS or email, so make sure the college has a valid phone number and email address.

What if my attendance is not great, but I am submitting all my work on time, will I get my bursary?

Guidance to colleges from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) says, '*flexibility and discretion should be applied, and that care-experience should be treated as a protected characteristic*'. You should make sure that you have followed your college guidelines and if college staff authorise your absence, you will continue to receive your payments. You must stay in touch with your college so that flexible arrangements can be put in place.

Do I have to pay my bursary back?

No, you do not have to pay the bursary back.

What happens if I need to repeat a year?

If you need to repeat a year or change course it's important to seek advice on your specific situation from student support services or the care-experienced named contact to find out if you are eligible for funding. You are generally eligible for three years funding at FE level, but it largely depends on your situation and individual circumstances. If you claimed the CESB when you were under 18 then these years will not be counted as part of your eligible years of funding.

Can I get any help during the summer break?

It might be possible to get a one-off payment from your college discretionary fund towards the end of June to help through the summer. If you think you will need financial help over the summer contact your care-experienced named contact in plenty of time before the end of your course to reduce the chance of delays to any payments. Please note this is not a guarantee and depends on individual circumstances and funds available.

How long will it take for my bursary award to come through?

Applications for care-experienced students (once all the evidence has been submitted) are a priority for the funding team.

Is there any support available for childcare costs?

Yes, colleges will have Childcare Funds available. These provide non-repayable assistance for students with children so they can access or continue in education and are paid in addition to any other forms of student support, including the CESB. Students can apply for assistance towards registered childcare costs for scheduled classes and periods of mandatory placement. Ask your care-experienced named contact at college for more information.

Are there other funds available while I'm studying?

In addition to the CESB each college/place of study may offer its own discretionary funds to help students. Try not to let financial worries get in the way of your studies. Your college should give you practical, confidential advice on your situation and help you access funds available.

Still got questions?

Contact the care-experienced named person at your college. Use [Propel](#) to find out who to contact at your college.

Contact the [HUB for Success](#) for a friendly chat. We can provide further advice and information to help you get in, stay in, or return to education.
