

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

April 2022

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 Higher Education. It covers details about who is eligible for the CESB, how to apply, and practical information about how payments are made. For information relevant to the CESB and Further Education see our separate information sheet.

The CESB is a non-income assessed, non-repayable grant of £8,100 per year. It is only payable during the academic year. It is available to full-time care-experienced students taking eligible undergraduate courses of Higher Education.

The Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) supports students in higher education and assess applications for the CESB.

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

You are entitled to the CESB if you are:

- care-experienced, within the UK
- a student taking a full-time Higher Education course at college or university in the UK (such as HNC, HND or undergraduate degree)
- AND a Scottish domiciled student (i.e. you normally live in Scotland).

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.

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).

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

- foster care
- living with close family or friends under formal kinship care arrangements or informal 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).

Different types of care-experience can be described in different ways, and often this has changed over time. If you're unsure whether you meet the criteria take a look at the definitions of care-experience on the [SAAS website](#).

Still unsure? Then you can contact SAAS, the care-experienced named person at your college or university or the [HUB for Success](#)

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.

A professional person can be a:

- social worker
- doctor
- nurse
- lawyer
- solicitor
- college/university student adviser
- teacher
- nursery teacher
- notary public
- counsellor
- police officer
- minister of religion
- family mediation worker.

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

You'll only be asked you to provide this evidence in the first year that you apply for the CESB.

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.

Is there an age limit?

No, there is no upper age limit for the CESB.

Should I disclose my care-experience?

If you want to access the CESB you need to tick the relevant box on the SAAS application for the CESB. It does not mean you have to share your personal care-experience; this is your private information.

Remember too, there is a box on the college or UCAS form that allows you to let the college or universities you are applying to know that you are care-experienced. This is important if you want to open up further support on offer at your place of study. It is not compulsory, but you may miss out on vital support if you do not tick it.

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

The CESB is £8,100 per academic year. 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 whilst you study.

Will I be better off staying on benefits?

In most cases students on full-time higher 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 to your bank account. If SAAS have confirmed your application has been completed, and you are fully registered at your college or university, then your first bursary payment will be made on the first day of term. This will be the date your college or university has told SAAS your course starts.

You will receive a double payment on the first day of term. After your first payment it will be paid monthly, normally on the 7th of each month, until the end of term. From August 2022 there will be a new 12 month payment option. You will receive the **same** amount of bursary over the full year, rather than payments stopping at the end of term. The monthly payments you receive will be lower as spread over 12 months.

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

SAAS will only stop paying your bursary if your college or university has told SAAS that you have not attended (i.e., suspended or withdrawn from studies), or you have told them you have left your course. It is important to keep in touch with your care experienced named person if you are struggling to attend or struggling to keep up with course work.

What happens if I need to repeat a year?

If you need to repeat a year or change course you are generally eligible for two years of additional funding. If you are not sure about your eligibility to repeat funding please contact SAAS.

Am I eligible for the CESB if I already have a degree?

Normally you are not eligible for the CESB for a second degree, although there are some exceptions and you should contact SAAS for further information.

Do I have to pay my bursary back?

In some circumstances, if you leave a course part-way through the year, then you may be asked to pay some of the bursary back. **It's important to tell SAAS as soon as possible if you have left your course** to avoid receiving payments you then need to pay back. If you are worried about this, or if you are in receipt of the bursary and thinking about withdrawing, you should contact the care-experienced named person at your college or university, SAAS or the [HUB for Success](#) for advice.

Can I get any help during the summer break?

Yes, you can apply for the Care Experienced Accommodation Grant which is up to £105 per week. This grant is to help you cover accommodation costs during the summer break. It might also be possible to get a one-off payment from the Discretionary Fund towards the end of June to help through the summer. Please note this is not a guarantee and depends on individual circumstances and funds available. 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

Is there any support available for childcare costs?

Yes, college and university will have Childcare Funds available. These provide non-repayable assistance for students with children in order for them to 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 for more information.

Is there other funding available while I'm studying?

In addition to the CESB each college and university will offer its own financial support for care-experienced students. This can be applied to in addition to the CESB (so you could receive both in the same year). Don't let financial worries get in the way of your studies. If you get in touch with the care-experienced named person at your college or university they can advise you on other funding available, such as scholarships or hardship funds.

If you are a care leaver (looked after on or after your 16th birthday), and under 26, you will be eligible for some financial support from your local authority. You should contact your social worker or Throughcare & Aftercare worker for more information.

Still got questions?

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

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.
