

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



July 2023

Frequently Asked Questions

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. For information relevant to Higher Education (HE), see our [separate information sheet](#).

This factsheet covers:

- who is eligible for the CESB
- how to apply
- practical information about how payments are made.

What is the Care-Experienced Students Bursary?

The CESB is:

- a non-income assessed, non-repayable bursary of £9,000 per year or £225 per week
- only payable during the academic year so the amount may vary depending on the length of your course
- available to care-experienced students taking a full-time course below HNC level study, such as an NC.

Who is eligible for the CESB 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).

The HUB for Success supports people with care-experience to get in, stay in and return to education at any age and any stage.

As a partnership in the Edinburgh and Lothians we are committed to upholding and promoting care-experienced learners' rights.

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 (either formal or informal)
- 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, staying with grandparents, aunts, uncles, family friends) where there has been some local authority involvement will be eligible for the bursary.

Different types of care-experience can be described in different ways, and often this has changed over time. The Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) [Additional information on Care-Experience Bursary eligibility](#) has an up to date definition.

A College may also take a decision on an individual basis that you are eligible for the bursary. Or you may be eligible for other funding as an estranged or self-supporting student.

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 all you will need is a signed statement from a professional person confirming you are care-experienced.

A professional person can be someone from a local authority, such as a support/social worker, doctor, nurse, lawyer, solicitor, college/university student adviser, teacher, nursery teacher, notary public, counsellor, police officer, minister of religion or family mediation worker.

Don't worry if you are not currently in contact with any relevant individuals, it's okay to reach out to them. We also know that it can be hard to gather evidence, particularly for mature learners, and suggest you contact the care-experienced contact at your place of study or the HUB for Success for advice.

If you are struggling to get evidence of your care-experience then you can use this [Care Experience Form](#) as an alternative form of evidence. College will assess each application on an individual basis.

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.

Do I have to disclose details of 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 share your personal care-experience; this is your private information and your own story to tell if and should you choose to.

Ticking the box is important if you want to reach out for support. It is not compulsory, but if you don't tick the box you may miss out on learning and financial support that you are entitled to.

When the college know you are care-experienced they can allocate you a named person that you can choose to contact during your time at college who understands your individual situation and needs and can provide ongoing guidance throughout your time at college.

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

The CESB is £9,000 per academic year or £225 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 in full-time further education will no longer be eligible to claim benefits such as Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. Some students, such as those who have children or get Personal Independence Payment, may be eligible for benefits. 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.

Can college stop my bursary payments at any point?

Your bursary should not be deducted for missing a class. Colleges are not expected to operate a 100% attendance requirement.

Bursary awards should be made based on students engaging appropriately in their studies. The expectation is that, normally, students should attend classes (whether these are in person or online) and colleges should monitor student attendance on a regular basis. However, it is recognised that students may need to have periods of absence for a range of reasons.

College should exercise flexibility with regards to attendance and engagement for care-experienced students. If you have tried your best to continue to participate in your learning and you are still meeting the learning objectives then the college should continue to award the bursary. Students who are having difficulties should be offered pastoral care and support before any decision to reduce a student's bursary. For further information and guidance go to SFC's [Fund management and audit information](#) (paragraphs 42 to 55).

Good practice advises that where attendance is a concern college staff will work pro actively with a student, and any external partners, to explore reasons for absences or lack of engagement and ensure support is in place to encourage the student to engage in their learning.

It is important if you are struggling to attend or engage with your course that you reach out to your tutor, named contact at the college or student support services so that college can support you in the best way. Make sure you have followed your college guidelines.

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

Yes, you should receive written information and the opportunity to rectify this. Good practice would be for the college to have made significant efforts to engage with you before this happens.

Contact may be by text or email, so make sure the college has a valid phone number and email address.

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 eligible for funding.

You will be eligible for the CESB if you are progressing between levels. You are also eligible for an additional year of funding. If you need to change course or repeat a year of your studies, you can use this 'plus one' year. If you are a mature student who already holds a higher level qualification then you can be supported to re-train in a different subject from a lower level.

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/university will offer its own discretionary funds to help students. We know that financial worries can get in the way of your studies. Your college should give you practical, confidential advice on your situation and help you access funds available.

If you are a care leaver (looked after on or after your 16th birthday), and under 26, you should be eligible for some financial support from your local authority. 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.

If you are at college or university in Edinburgh or the Lothians or living in/ from the area then 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.