Research Briefing

Student support in Further Education 2017/18: a guide for constituents

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The National Assembly for Wales is the democratically elected body that represents the interests of Wales and its people, makes laws for Wales, agrees Welsh taxes and holds the Welsh Government to account.

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Student support in Further Education 2017/18: a guide for constituents

This briefing provides information on the financial support available to students in full or part-time Further Education.
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01. Introduction

This briefing provides information on the different types of support available to students who are planning to study a full or part-time Further Education course in Wales in 2017/2018. Further Education normally refers to post-16 study and is usually provided by local colleges or schools.

Students aged between 16 and 18 will not normally have to pay tuition fees. Students aged 19 and over studying full-time may be charged tuition fees. Many individual institutions offer free or discounted tuition to learners aged 19 and over studying part-time from low-income families, disabled learners or learners on benefits. Advice on support available to part-time students can normally be obtained from individual colleges.

Students who are out of work and also studying part-time may still qualify for Jobseeker’s Allowance if the course totals less than 16 hours a week and the individuals are still available for work. Students should contact their local Jobcentre Plus office to check eligibility.

Contacts including college details can be found at the end of this document.

02. Students aged 16-18

Education Maintenance Allowance

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is available to 16 to 18 year olds living in Wales continuing their education after school leaving age. Eligible new students in 2017/18 can receive £30 a week, paid every two weeks depending on household income. For the academic year 2017/18, claimants must be between 16 and 18 years old on 31 August 2017.

UK citizens living in Wales will normally be eligible for EMA, although non-UK citizens may also be eligible. Students do not necessarily have to study in Wales, but they must live in Wales and be studying at a participating school or college on an eligible course that is:

– **Academic or vocational** up to and including Level 3;
– **Full time at school**, or a minimum of **12 guided hours at college**; and
– **At least 10 weeks in length**.

These courses include qualifications such as GCSEs, A/AS levels, BTEC, NVQ/GNVQ and Basic Skills courses.

Household income must be below a certain level for a young person to be eligible to receive EMA. There are two different levels, depending on family circumstances. In order to be eligible, a young person’s household income must be less than £20,817 if they are the only young person in the household and less than £23,077 if there are any additional young people eligible for child benefits in the household. Students will not be eligible for EMA if their household income is £23,078 or more.

Youth Concessionary Fare Scheme

The Welsh Government operates a youth discount bus travel scheme. This provides discounted travel on buses for those aged between 16 and 18 who live in Wales and may be used for school or college transport. The Fare Scheme provides a discount of a third of the cost of fares. Applications and further information can be found on the Mytravelpass website. The Welsh Government will launch a new Youth Travel Pass from 2018.
03. Students aged 18 or over

Professional and Career Development Loans

Professional and Career Development Loans (PCDLs) are available to those wishing to undertake a course or training which will equip them with the skills needed for an occupation, trade or profession. Applicants must be British citizens aged 18 or over who have been living in the UK for at least 3 years before the course starts and plan to work in the UK, European Union (EU) or European Economic Area (EEA) after completing the course. PCDLs are available for full-time or part-time learning and loans of between £300 and £10,000 can be borrowed. Courses must:

- only last up to 2 years, or 3 years if they include 1 year of work experience;
- be provided by an organisation on the Professional Career and Development Loan Register;
- help with the student’s career - they don’t have to lead to a qualification.

More detailed information can be obtained from the PCDL Information Line on 0800 100 900 as well as the GOV.UK website.

04. Students aged 19 or over

Welsh Government Learning Grant for Further Education

The Welsh Government Learning Grant for Further Education (WGLG FE) aims to help students who come from families on a low income to continue in Further Education. It is available to students 19 years old and over, depending on eligibility criteria. Eligible claimants can receive a grant of up to £1,500 for a full-time course and £750 for a part-time course depending on the combined total household income.

For the academic year 2017/18, applicants must be 19 years old or over on 1 September 2017. UK citizens living in Wales will normally be eligible for WGLG FE, although non-UK citizens may also be eligible. In order to qualify for WGLG FE, a student must be studying at a participating college on an eligible course that:

- is at least 275 hours; and
- leads to a nationally recognised qualification such as GCSEs, A and AS levels, BTEC, GNVQs, NVQs and Basic Skills.

Individual colleges can advise on whether a course is eligible for WGLG FE funding.

The amount of WLGL FE a student may receive varies according to their personal circumstances. To receive the full £1,500 grant, a student would need to be studying a full time eligible course and have an annual household income of £6,120 or less. Students with a household income of £18,371 or more would not be eligible for the WGLG FE. Household income is calculated depending on whether a student is classed as a dependent or independent student.
### 05. Financial Contingency Funds (FCFs)

The Welsh Government provides funding to Further Education colleges in Wales to operate hardship funds for their students, known as **Financial Contingency Funds (FCF)**. Some institutions also refer to these as Student Support Funds or Student Hardship Funds. They may be in the form of grants or loans. FCFs are available for both full-time and part-time students.

FCFs are usually allocated to students to help with meeting costs which are not already being met from other sources of funding, to provide emergency payments in the case of unexpected crises, and to assist in instances where a student may be considering leaving their course of study because of financial problems, such as:

- **childcare costs** – assistance with paying for childcare costs whilst attending college;
- **transport costs** – bus or rail passes or petrol allowances;
- **essential course equipment** – books or other specialist equipment required to study a particular course.

The high-level eligibility criteria are published by the Welsh Government annually in the FCF Scheme. It is for each institution to consider applications and make payments to eligible students subject to these terms and conditions. However, the Welsh Government has indicated that institutions should prioritise help to students who fall into certain priority groups. In previous years, these have included students with children, especially lone parents; students living in areas of multiple deprivation; care leavers and students on low income.

### 06. The Thomas Wall Trust

The **Thomas Wall Trust** provides grants to support individuals who are facing a barrier to employment or education and cannot fund their training through any other means, such as statutory grants or loans. Grants are available to those who are studying a technical or skills-based course that is **below degree level** who can demonstrate compelling need. The Trust does **not provide support to undergraduate or postgraduate students**. Applicants must be aged 16 or over, must have been ordinarily resident in the UK for at least three years prior to the start of their course and have permission to work in the UK. More detailed information can be found on the Thomas Wall Trust website or by emailing information@thomaswalltrust.org.uk.
07. Contacts and resources

- Student Finance Wales can be contacted for information on EMAs or WGLG FE Monday to Friday: 8:00am - 6:00pm on 0300 200 4050, or by email emawales@slc.co.uk (for EMAs) or WGLGF@slc.co.uk (for WGLG FE).

- The Careers Wales website provides further information on funding for students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

- National Union of Students provides information on funding.

The Research Service has produced a factsheet entitled Funding for adult and post-graduate learners 2017/18: a guide for constituents. This guide aims to signpost sources of information relating to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Study but it also contains information on databases, charities, trusts and foundations that provide individuals with financial assistance, which may also be useful to those studying in Further Education.

College contacts

The contact details below are taken from the individual college websites as of June 2017. Where possible, the direct contact numbers and email addresses to student support services within organisations are provided. The hyperlinks also lead to student finance or student support sections on individual college websites.

These contact details may be useful to students seeking advice on the Financial Contingency Funds and further support for part-time FE study.

- Coleg Gwent tel: 01495 333777 email through a contact form

- St. David’s Catholic Sixth Form College tel: 02920 498555 email: enquiries@stdavidscollege.ac.uk or through a contact form.

- Cardiff and Vale College tel: 02920 250 250 email: info@cavc.ac.uk

- Coleg y Cymoedd tel: 01658 887500 (Aberdare); tel: 01443 662800 (Nantgarw); tel: 01443 663202 (Rhondda); tel: 01443 816888 (Ystrad Mynach) email: enquiries@cymoedd.ac.uk

- Coleg Merthyr Tydfil tel: 01685 726000 email through a contact form

- Bridgend College tel: 01656 302302 email: enquiries@bridgend.ac.uk or through a contact form

- NPTC Group (Neath Port Talbot College) tel: 01639 648000 email: admissions@nptcgroup.ac.uk

- Gower College tel: 01792 284000 (Ty Coch); tel: 01792 890700 (Gorseinon); 01792 284021 (Llwyn y Bryn); 01792 284400 (Jubilee Court) email: info@gowercollegeswansea.ac.uk

- Coleg Sir Gâr tel: 01554 748036 / 748102 email: financialsupport@colegsirgar.ac.uk or through a contact form

- Pembrokeshire College tel: 01437 753000 email: admissions@pembrokeshire.ac.uk or through a contact form

- Coleg Ceredigion tel: 01970 639700 (Aberystwyth); tel: 01239 612032 (Cardigan) email: enquiries@ceredigion.ac.uk or through a contact form
- Llandrillo Menai Group - Coleg Llandrillo tel: 01492 542330 email: studentfinance.llandrillo@gllm.ac.uk, Coleg Meirion Dwyfor tel: 01341 422827 ext. 8635 email: studentfinance.meiriondwyfor@gllm.ac.uk, Coleg Menai tel: 01248 383255 email: learnerservices.menai@gllm.ac.uk

- Coleg Cambria tel: 0300 3030007 email: enquiries@cambria.ac.uk or through a contact form

- WEA Cymru tel. 02920 235277 email: info@weacymru.org.uk

- YMCA Wales Community College tel: 02920 755 444 email info@ymca-wales.ac.uk