Higher Education
Hardship Fund Policy
and Procedure

Achieving sustainable economic and social impact through high quality responsive education and training, we are;

- Partnered by employers;
- Defined by our communities;
- Enriched by our staff;
- Inspired by individual success.
1. Introduction

1.1 This Hardship Policy is written to allow Higher Education Students suffering financial difficulty to determine their eligibility for support from Hertford Regional College to assist them with their study costs.

1.2 The College will seek to provide a limited proportion of the Student Opportunity Funding to financially assist eligible students with genuine financial need.

1.3 Students falling into one of the categories below are specifically excluded from applying for support under the hardship scheme:

- asylum seekers aged 19 and over;
- prisoners on day release and;
- Non EU nationals.

1.4 The support detailed in this policy is subject to the College receiving funding from the external funding bodies; the College reserves the right to amend/cease the support detailed in this policy in light of changes to the funding received or changes in the requirements from the funding bodies.

1.5 The College reviews the Access Fund Policy on an annual basis. This annual review may change eligibility for any support detailed in the Policy, and in some cases remove elements of support entirely.

1.6 The budget for support to students is finite. Students who may be eligible for support may not automatically receive it once the limited funds have been exhausted. Early application for support is therefore advised.
2. **Aims of the Policy**

This policy aims to:

- Ensure that the limited funds available to the College are distributed effectively and efficiently to those students with the greatest financial need.
- Clarify the different eligibility criteria for students studying a higher education course at Hertford Regional College.
- Outline the range of support available to eligible students.

3. **Hardship Fund for Higher Education Students**

The Hardship Fund arrangements for Higher Education students are specified in this policy.

3.1 **Eligibility Criteria for Higher Education Students**

3.1.1 In order to qualify the student must satisfy **all** the following criteria:

- have a gross household income of **less than £26,000** in the previous tax year 2018/19*

  *In exceptional situations where a student’s financial circumstances have significantly changed then more current evidence of household income may be accepted*

- have an attendance** record of at least 90%, be up-to-date with all course work/assignments and receive a satisfactory tutor report.
**NB the attendance threshold is set at 90% acknowledging that students may not be able to achieve 100% attendance. The scheme does however seek to support students attending College. Therefore the attendance records for the Hardship Scheme do not differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence.**

- Applied for their full entitlement of student loan/bursary.

3.1.2 Satisfy the three following residential requirements relating to their residence and immigration status on the first day of the first academic year of the course:

- Have been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom and Islands throughout the three-year period preceding that date other than wholly or mainly for the purpose of receiving full-time education.

- Be ordinarily resident in England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland (Students from the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man are ineligible for support);

- Be settled in the United Kingdom under the terms of the Immigration Act 1971, in other words ordinarily resident here without being subject to any restriction on the period for which they may stay;
3.1.3 Once the criteria in 3.1.1 & 3.1.2 have been met, eligibility for support is dependent on:

**Full-Time Undergraduates**

Applications for support from the Access to Learning Fund can be made by ‘home students’ undertaking the following full-time courses at undergraduate level:

- Higher National Diploma (HND);
- Higher National Certificate (HNC);
- Certificate of Higher Education;
- Foundation Degree;
- Course for the initial training of teachers;

**Part-Time Undergraduates**

Applications for support can be made by ‘home students’ on part-time HE courses who are studying at least 50 per cent (60 credits) of a full-time equivalent course. Any students whose disability (including physical and mental health) prevents them from studying at least 50 per cent of a full-time course may be eligible for a payment from the Fund provided they are studying for at least 25 per cent (30 credits) of a full-time equivalent course at undergraduate level.

3.1.4 Students on foundation years/extended degree, which are an integral part of one of the above courses and where progression to the HE part of the course depends on the completion of the foundation year, are also eligible to apply for help from the Fund.
3.1.5 Students on foundation or access courses that are FE equivalent (eg. Art and Design) should apply to the FE Learner Support Fund.

3.2. Childcare Support for Higher Education Students

3.2.1. In order to qualify for the additional childcare payment the student must meet the above criteria and ensure that their childcare provider is registered with Ofsted. The scheme allows for a maximum of two children.
4. **Applications**

4.1 Applications will only be considered for the period in which the application is received. Invitation for applications for the first instalment must be submitted by 13th December 2019. Invitation for applications for the second instalment must be submitted by 24th April 2020. Applications will not be accepted after these dates.

4.2 Where a student is subject to disciplinary sanctions, consideration will be made regarding continued eligibility to receive the support from this fund.

5. **Payments**

5.1 All payments will be made directly to the student via BACS transfer.

5.2 The College is unable to make retrospective payments under this policy.

5.3 Subject to the above eligibility criteria and available funds, the hardship and childcare payments will be paid in two instalments. The first payment will be made at the end of January 2020, followed by a second payment at the end of May 2020.

5.4 The Hardship Fund is finite and the available funds will be distributed according to the number of applicants who meet the above criteria. Payments are made on a pro rata basis based upon the study hours.

5.5 Students who meet the above criteria and can demonstrate that they have childcare arrangements to allow them to undertake a course of study will receive an additional payment per child from the Hardship Fund.

5.6 Students must be up to date with their Tuition Fee Loan.
6. **Case Review**

6.1 Applicants who have been refused support have the right to have a case review.

6.2 Case reviews must be made in writing (letter or e-mail) within 10 working days of receipt of the College’s decision to decline support.

The following should be clearly stated in the written communication:

- The grounds for requesting the Case Review, (these grounds will normally be an error in procedure or error in fact);
- Supply sufficient detail to support the Case Review request;
- The outcome that they are seeking from the Case Review.

Case Reviews will be undertaken and the decision communicated within 10 working days of receipt.

6.3 Please address all case review requests to HEAdmissions@hrc.ac.uk

7. **Appeals**

7.1 Applicants who have been refused support following a case review have the right to make a final appeal.

7.2 Appeals must be made in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the Case Review decision to decline support.
The Appellant should state, in their written communication:

- The grounds for the appeal, (these grounds will normally be an error in procedure or error in fact);
- Supply sufficient detail to sustain the grounds of appeal;
- The outcome that they are seeking from the Appeals process;
- How they would wish to have their appeal considered either via correspondence or personally attending an appeal hearing;
- How they would wish to receive any correspondence, including the appeal outcome decision (e.g. email, letter etc.). In the absence of any preference, the College’s default method of communication will be via letter.

7.3 Please address all appeals to HEAdmissions@hrc.ac.uk

7.4 The appeals panel will arrange to meet within 10 working days. The outcome as determined by the panel will be communicated within 5 working days of the hearing.

**The decision of the panel will be final**

7.5 The panel will consist of:

- Vice Principal
- Director of Curriculum
- Higher Education Development Manager.
8. Policy Review

8.1 The College reserves the right to amend this policy, without prior notice in light of experience, responding to changes to Government/funding body requirements and financial constraints.