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**POLISI Y GRONFA ARIANNOL WRTH GEFN I FYFYRWYR FINANCIAL CONTINGENCY FUND FURTHER EDUCATION POLICY**

**2022/23**

**Policy** **Checklist:**

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| **Policy** **Inception** **Requirement** | **Yes** **/** **No** **/** **N/A** | **Supporting** **information** |
| Has an Equality Impact Assessment been completed? | **Yes** |  |
| Has a Welsh Language Impact Assessment been completed? Yes, please refer to Appendix One. | **Yes** |  |
| Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been considered with regards to this policy? If yes, please contact the Information Services Manager in order to complete a Data Protection Impact Assessment. | **N/A** |  |
| Has the review taken account of the latest Guidance/Legislation? | **Yes** |  |
| Is legal advice required? If yes, please ensure you have taken the necessary steps to secure the appropriate legal advice before proceeding further. | **No** |  |
| Is staff training required? If yes, please ensure that the necessary training is arranged through the Vice- Principal Academic. | **No** |  |
| Are there HR related issues that need to be considered? If yes, please contact the HR Manager to discuss further. | **No** |  |
| Are there financial issues? If yes, please contact the Finance Manager to discuss further. | **No** |  |
| *For* *College Executive use* *only:* | | |
| Is this a new policy?  If yes, College Executive to complete the  [Student FCF Policy - Approval Delegation checklist](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Q4YgsfeXoJAXQDLBxseJbh1z7jCZLm7IFanhPoHs064/edit) at the time of approval. | **Yes** |  |

1. **INTRODUCTION - Purpose and Objectives:**

This policy provides information on the purpose of the Financial Contingency Fund (FCF) that is provided by Welsh Government annually and how the college manages and distributes this fund.

The FCF is aimed at removing barriers to learning for learners in ﬁnancial hardship, providing financial help to those eligible learners whose access to further education might be inhibited by financial considerations, or who, for whatever reason, including physical or other disability, face financial difficulties. Learners eligible for support from the FCF may also be eligible to apply for the (EMA) Educational Maintenance Allowance (16 –18 year olds) and (WGLG) Welsh Government Learning Grant (19 years and above), depending on household income and individual circumstances.

1. **RESPONSIBILITY**

The Head of Finance is responsible for reviewing and developing this policy and for overall management of the FCF.

1. **RELATED POLICIES**

* College Merthyr Tydfil Financial Strategy
* Financial Regulations
* Equality Strategy
* Welsh Language Standards

1. **Policy details**

* The FCF is open to post-16 year old learners.
* The FCF can support eligible learners with:
* Help with childcare costs, especially lone parents;
* Cost of meals
* Transport costs
* Course related costs, including equipment, material, uniform, books and trips, examination or registration fees essential for the eligible learner to participate in course activities.
* The costs of the disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, where applicable
* Funding in the form of grants or short-term loans.
  1. **Eligible Learners and Programmes**

Learners must meet the age and residency criteria which follow to be eligible for Financial Contingency Fund support. Payments under the Financial Contingency Fund may only be made to eligible learners.

Usually either learners or parents / guardians need to show that they are in receipt of one of the following beneﬁts:

* income support
* income based jobseeker's allowance
* support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
* income-related employment and support allowance
* child tax credit (but not working tax credit) if your annual income as assessed by tax credits does not exceed £16,190
* guarantee element of pension credit, working tax credit 'run-on' (the payment someone may receive for a further four weeks after they stop qualifying for

working tax credit)

* universal credit (not in work)
* universal credit (in work) where your award is based on net annual earnings of under £7,400 from your employment or self-employment

**The FCF can also help:**

* learners who will reach the age of 20 before they complete their A levels or other FE programmes and who face particular financial difficulties because their families will cease to receive child benefit and dependency additions in Income Support (IS) or Universal Credit (UC) for these learners as of their 20th birthday;
* learners who are carers (providing unpaid support to someone who could not manage without this help); looked after children; children who have been in care, on probation or are otherwise considered at risk;
* learners on low incomes, including learners who do not qualify for IS or UC, or learners from low income families, including those families in receipt of IS or UC and those that have unwaged dependents;
* learners ordinarily resident in an area with an overall ranking of 190 or less according to the latest Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation[[1]](#footnote-1);
* learners who face particular financial difficulties because their families will cease to receive the children element of universal credit as of the 1st of September following their 19th birthday.

Costs arising from disabilities

The college may make payments for the purpose of helping disabled eligible learners and eligible learners with disabled dependents. This includes, but is not limited to, payments in respect of reasonable costs associated with the disability. Where the college has made a purchase of equipment for an eligible disabled learner, that equipment should remain the property of the college, unless that equipment is tailored to meet the individual needs of the learner.

Bulk purchase arrangements

The college may make bulk purchase arrangements with local transport companies and provide equipment or services at a lower cost for eligible learners who would otherwise need support from the Financial Contingency Fund.

The Financial Contingency Fund may not be used to replace or subsidise existing bulk purchase arrangements financed by the college’s own funds.

Where the college enters into a bulk purchase arrangement, a clear audit trail must be maintained which clearly identifies the learner beneficiaries and the amount of Financial Contingency Fund allocated. The records must also demonstrate that the majority of learners benefitting from the bulk purchasing arrangement are eligible learners facing financial hardship and who, without such support, would have difficulty accessing their studies.

**4.2 WHAT THE FINANCIAL CONTINGENCY FUND CANnot BE USED FOR**

* The Financial Contingency Fund must not be used to meet the cost of tuition fees
* The college should not use Financial Contingency Funds to support means-tested entitlement schemes (i.e. entitlement grant/bursary schemes).
* Financial Contingency Funds should not be used to provide group or communal facilities, or to make adaptations to buildings, and large items of equipment bought for the use of individual learners should remain the property of the college. The college may use the funding to provide transport services; however, such services should not involve capital costs, such as the purchase of a vehicle.
* Fines and deposits fall outside of the scope of the funding. Examples include fines for the late return of library books or other disciplinary fines; deposits on lockers, ID cards, keys, library cards and equipment which are fully refundable except in cases of damage or theft.

1. **ASSESSING AND DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY**
2. When considering applications, the college will take account of the learner’s financial circumstances and the availability of support from other sources such as the Education Maintenance Allowance, Welsh Government Learning Grant Scheme or other equivalent government funded scheme, the Welsh Government’s Childcare Offer, IS and UC, and support provided from the learner’s local authority.
3. In determining and making payments to learners, the college has regard to any Code of Practice issued from time to time by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in respect of requirements imposed by [Chapter 2 of Part 6 of the Equality Act 2010](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/part/6/chapter/2).

**Asylum Seekers**

1. Generally, asylum seekers are not entitled to public funds. Accompanied asylum-seeking children (those under 18 with an adult relative or partner) and those aged 18 and above are entitled to education but have no recourse to public funds. Asylum seekers who are destitute can apply to the Home Office (HO) for suitable housing and cash for essentials, but they are not eligible for statutory student support or support from other sources such as the Education Maintenance Allowance or Welsh Government Learning Grant Schemes.
2. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children do not receive cash support from the HO and are the responsibility of the local authority. They are treated as looked-after children.
3. When these young people reach legal adulthood at age 18, the college will consider their immigration status. Where the asylum claim is decided in their favour, the local authority must provide them with the same support and services as they do care leavers. As such, they continue to be eligible for support.
4. Asylum seekers refused asylum but eligible and granted support under Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 remain eligible for Financial Contingency Fund support.

**Ukrainian Nationals**

1. Ukrainian nationals supported through the one of the UK Government Ukraine Visa Schemes will be immediately eligible for post-16 college funding and will be exempt from our normal three-year residency requirements.  This eligibility extends to FCF support.
2. **THE FINANCIAL CONTINGENCY FUND AND THE WELSH LANGUAGE STANDARDS**

**The Welsh Language Standards**

The College Merthyr Tydfil actively encourages all staff to use the Welsh language to provide learners, staff, and visitors with a Welsh language service across all aspects of college provision and services.

The college is committed towards the development of the Welsh language and the delivery of the statutory Welsh Language Standards established by the Welsh Government under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011.

This policy takes into consideration and underpins the College’s compliance with the Welsh Language Standards - policy making standard 94 as follows:

**Welsh language Impact Assessment**

A detailed Welsh Language Impact Assessment has been undertaken and action plan included within *Appendix One* of this policy document.

**Applying for the FCF**

Details of the fund are available on the College website and also available in hard copy handouts in both English and Welsh, ensuring that the Welsh language is treated no less favourably. This information also includes eligibility criteria and what the FCF can be used for.

The application form is available through the medium of Welsh which states applications submitted in Welsh will be treated no less favourably than those submitted in English.

**Processing applications for the FCF**

Applications submitted in Welsh are treated no less favourably than those submitted in English. Applications submitted in Welsh are processed by the college’s Finance Officer, working alongside a Welsh speaker from the college’s Welsh language team.

If the application is submitted in Welsh, the applicant will be contacted in Welsh to be informed in relation to the status and decision regarding the application.

**Effects on the Welsh language**

The FCF is aimed at removing barriers to learning for learners in ﬁnancial hardship. Encouraging Welsh speaking learners to apply for FCF in Welsh, maintains and develops their Welsh language skills. Information related to the FCF grant and the application form itself notes that applications in Welsh are treated no less favourably and efforts are made to have Welsh speakers process applications made in Welsh.

**Monitoring**

When the FCF policy is reviewed a Welsh language impact assessment form is completed by the author of the policy and reviewed by the Welsh Language Manager. Steps can be taken to have an increased positive effect on opportunities to use the Welsh language if identified, ensuring that the college is treating the Welsh language no less favourably.

**APPENDIX ONE: Action** **Plan**

Actions should demonstrate steps to be taken to reduce or where possible, eliminate any negative impact on the Welsh Language.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Action** | **Who** | **By When** | **Success Measure (how will we know we have achieved the action)** |
| **Actively promote and encourage learners that are Welsh speaking to apply through the medium of Welsh.** | Finance, Learner Support and Wellbeing Team and College’s Welsh team | July 2022 onwards | Number of FCF applications submitted through the medium of Welsh |
| **Supporting students to apply through the medium of Welsh.** | Finance, Learner Support and Wellbeing Team and College’s Welsh team | July 2022 onwards | Number of requests for support to complete the application form through the medium of Welsh  Number of applications made through the medium of Welsh |
| **Working with Welsh Engagement Officer (Welsh) and Welsh Support Officers to raise awareness of opportunities to apply for FCF through the medium of Welsh.** | Finance, Learner Support and Wellbeing Team and College’s Welsh team | July 2022 onwards | Number of applications made through the medium of Welsh |

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)