

Subject:

**ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FUND FOR STUDENTS
WITH DISABILITIES 2006/07**

Circular Number:

FE 07/06

Date of Issue:

21 June 2006

Target Audience:

- Directors/Principals of Further Education Colleges
- Chairs of Governing Bodies
- FE College Finance Officers
- ANIC
- College Student Support Officers
- College Learning Support Co-ordinators
- Skill NI

Summary of Contents:

This Circular sets out the arrangements for the operation of the Additional Support Fund for Students with Disabilities from the 2006/2007 academic year. The key revision is:

- Financial Monitoring return is now due on 30 September 2006.

College budget allocations for the 2006-07 academic year are attached at Annex A.

Enquiries:

Any enquiries about the contents of this Circular should be addressed to:

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Status of Contents:

Information

Related Documents:

N/A

Superseded Documents:

Circular FE 10/05

Expiry Date:

N/A

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Introduction

1. Article 13(1) of The Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 requires governing bodies of further-education institutions to have regard to the needs of students over compulsory school age who have a disability. In this document that is taken to mean those who have a disability that impact on their learning. Colleges will also be aware that, in preparing their Development Plans, they are required to examine provision for students with special needs, identify strengths and weaknesses and make proposals for improvements.
2. Provision for students with a disability is a key element of the Government's drive to increase participation and widen access. To this end the Department has embarked on a number of strategies to promote such provision. These include -
 - the provision of a Good Practice Guide;
 - additional weightings under the Funding Formula; and
 - the creation of an Additional Support Fund.

Objective of the Additional Support Fund (ASF)

3. One of the key aims of the Government's lifelong learning strategy is to increase significantly adult participation in vocational education and training, including access to further and higher education from groups previously under-represented. Therefore, the key objective of ASF expenditure is to promote the inclusion of students with a disability in **mainstream** FE provision. However, in consultation with the sector, it was agreed that from 2003/2004, the ASF may also be used for individual students in discrete provision, should there be specific cases where such additional support is considered necessary.

Additional Support Fund (ASF): 2006/07 Arrangements

4. The ASF is targeted at individual students. It is intended to augment provision already made by colleges for students with a disability from their recurrent budget allocations. The Fund may not be used by colleges as a substitute for this, nor is it to be a determinant of a student's admission.
5. The ASF is not available –
 - for provision made by a third party or sponsored providers.
 - to students in receipt of Disabled Students' Allowances under either the Student Support/Award Regulations or the Discretionary Awards arrangements.
 - to students in receipt of assistance under the New Deal Access Fund, nor to students attending the college under the Access Strand of the Jobskills programme, nor to

those in the Programme's other strands (Traineeships and Modern Apprenticeships) for whom the weekly disability supplement is being/will be paid.

6. Expenditure should be based on objective assessments. In some cases a professional assessment may be necessary. Further advice on assessment is contained in the Department's "Good Practice Guide" on support for students who have a disability.
7. Support should be in the form of additional, technical and/or human support purchased by the college. The ASF may not be used to meet the costs of full-time or part-time salaried staff already employed by the college, although it may be used to release such staff by employing replacement staff. In such circumstances the college must be able to show a direct audit trail. Using the ASF to meet notional replacement costs is not acceptable.

Technical Support

8. The ASF may be used to purchase specialised enabling equipment such as brailers, Reading Edge equipment, IT adaptations, specialist software and related licences and IT hardware, hearing loops and conference folders. Technical Support does not include photocopying, books, printers, general software, capital expenditure such as lifts, or items which will become the personal property of students.

Colleges may give consideration to using supplementary funding to lease specialist equipment if it is required for a short period of time.

Note: Colleges are reminded that 'Technical Support' does not cover student travel costs e.g. taxi/bus hire.

Human Support

9. Experience in other parts of the United Kingdom indicates that human support may be categorised into 6 standardised categories for ongoing and one-off support. These are as follows:
 - Specialist Tutor/Adviser such as hearing or visual impairment tutor, IT consultancy, speech therapist or counsellor;
 - Lecturer or IT adviser (including technician);
 - Interpreter (for students with a hearing impairment);
 - Support Worker/Classroom Assistant such as examination support or reader;
 - Notetaker such as shorthand notetaker and/or typist for assistance with student notes; and

- Assessment: one-off assessments, e.g. by an Educational Psychologist, where the assessment is in addition to the college's own standard assessment and enrolment procedure, and is considered necessary by the college.

Colleges may use their allocations to purchase human support in these categories.

SLDD Learning Agreements

10. As set out in Circular FE 20/01 and confirmed in detail by the Department's letter of 4 July 2002, colleges should ensure that SLDD Learning Agreements are completed for all students being assisted through the ASF.

Audit

11. Colleges must retain auditable evidence of the use of ASF funds, categorised into Technical and Human Support as described in paragraphs 8 and 9 above, including a direct cross reference between each expenditure item and the relevant student's name.

College Allocations

12. A total of £1,125,000 will be allocated to colleges through the Additional Support Fund in the 2006/07 academic year. Annex A sets out the breakdown on a college-by-college basis, which is based on the total number of each colleges category 02 and 03 SLDD students.
13. These allocations are provisional and may be adjusted in due course to take account of any funds remaining unspent at 31 July 2006 from previous allocations. Colleges should not carry any surplus of ASF unless this is for specific purposes and that Departmental approval has been granted.

Accountability

14. The Principal/Director of each college shall:
 - ensure that for the purposes of administering the funds, the college maintains and operates an adequate system of record keeping, financial management and internal controls, including safeguards against fraud, and shall require the college's external auditors, as part of their audit, to report on the adequacy or otherwise of that system;
 - ensure that the college uses the funding provided for ASF in a manner consistent with the purposes for which the grant was given by the Department, and that any terms and conditions attaching to it are complied with; and
 - provide such returns as may be required by the Department and comply with any audit/inspections of the funds issued to students.

15. In addition to the usual annual returns, the Department shall require each college to include an appropriate note within the college's audited accounts indicating the funding drawn down from the ASF. Auditors shall be required to certify that funds provided by the Department have been applied in accordance with the Financial Memorandum and any other terms and conditions applied to them, including those set out in this Circular.
16. If, at any time, colleges consider that they will be unable to spend any or all of the funds allocated, they should declare the amount to the Department **at the earliest possible date**. The Department will then be able to redistribute these funds to other colleges where additional funds can be used. Taking this course of action will not compromise a college's future allocations or eligibility.
17. Each college shall, **by 30 September 2006** provide the Department with a report on the use of grant for the purpose specified as it relates to the period ending on the preceding 31 July 2006. The format of the report has been set out at Annex B. The Department shall require each college to declare any grant for the purpose specified in this Circular remaining unpaid at 31 July 2007.

ANNEX A

DISTRIBUTION OF 2006/07 ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FUNDS BUDGET
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College	1 Aug 06 - July 07 Allocation	Sector %
Armagh	£80,904	7.19%
BIFHE	£118,765	10.56%
Castlereagh	£68,284	6.07%
Causeway	£28,846	2.56%
East Antrim	£135,892	12.08%
East Down	£51,382	4.57%
East Tyrone	£37,184	3.31%
Fermanagh	£23,663	2.10%
Limavady	£44,396	3.95%
Lisburn	£12,395	1.10%
Newry & Kilkeel	£66,481	5.91%
North Down & Ards	£48,903	4.35%
North East	£27,269	2.42%
North West	£179,387	15.95%
Omagh	£61,749	5.49%
Upper Bann	£139,498	12.40%
TOTAL	£1,124,998	100%

**ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FUNDS
FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
MONITORING FORM FOR THE PERIOD 1ST AUGUST 2005
TO 31ST JULY 2006**

College Name: _____

Contact Name: _____

Summary of Expenditure

(The figures in this section should match those that are in your final accounts)

	TOTAL
ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FUNDS ALLOCATION	
INTEREST EARNED	
TOTAL SUPPORT FUNDS AVAILABLE	
TOTAL SUPPORT FUNDS EXPENDITURE	
AMOUNT SPENT ON AUDIT	
SURPLUS/DEFICIT	
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS DRAWING DOWN ASF	

Signature: _____
(Principal)

Date: _____

Please return completed form **by 30th September 2006** to: FE Finance and Funding Branch,
Department for Employment and Learning, Room 206, Adelaide House, Adelaide Street,
BELFAST BT2 8FD.