

Subject:

Circular Number:

**ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE PROVISION OF
FREE MEALS IN FURTHER EDUCATION
COLLEGES**

Date of Issue:
26 July 2006

Target Audience:

- Directors/Principals of Further Education Colleges
- Chairs of Governing Bodies
- FE College Finance Officers
- ANIC
- ELB Chief Executives
- ELB Finance Officers

Summary of Contents:

This Circular updates the eligibility criteria which will be used to determine eligibility for free meals and refreshments in Further Education Colleges. It replaces the previous Circular FE 15/04 and should be used as the basis for determining eligibility for free meals with effect from 1 September 2006.

The maximum annual taxable income referred to in para 3 (a) (ii) is currently set at £14,155 in line with that used by the Department of Education for school pupils. The Department will advise separately of any changes to this amount in the future.

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Superseded Documents: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 3/98
Circular FE 15/04

Expiry Date:
N/A

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ENTITLEMENT TO FREE MEALS IN FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGES

1. Article 15 of the Further Education (NI) Order 1997 provides that the powers of a governing body under Article 14(1) (f) of the Order (provision of meals and refreshments) shall be so exercised as to give effect to arrangements approved or determined by the Department for the remission in whole or in part of charges which should otherwise be made in respect of meals or refreshments provided to students of the institution.
2. The Department of Education provided original guidance in Circular FE 3/98 on the arrangements for Further Education students which would apply from 1 April 1998. A number of Education and Library Boards had contacted the Department to raise the fact that the publication of separate guidance from the Department of Education on the provision of meals in schools has specifically excluded students at Further Education Colleges. Accordingly, we updated the previous guidance to bring the eligibility criteria for free meals into line with that for school pupils as found in Circular FE 15/04. The guidance has now been updated to include eligibility criteria and can be taken to apply with effect from 1 September 2006.
3. The following arrangements should be followed in relation to students in attendance at a Further Education college.

Eligibility

- a. The charge in respect of meals or refreshments shall be remitted in full in the case of a student who has not attained the age of 18 years, is attending a full-time day course, and who falls into one or more of the following categories:
 - i. they, or their parents, are in receipt of Income Support or Income-Based Job Seekers Allowance.
 - ii. their parents are in receipt of Child Tax Credit on their behalf; and are ineligible for working tax credit because they work less than 16 hours per week; and have a taxable income not exceeding an amount as determined by the Department.
 - iii. the parents receives the Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit
 - iv. they are the child of an asylum seeker supported by the Home Office National Asylum Support Service (NASS), from initial application for asylum until such time as the application for support from NASS has been processed.

- b. A student shall be deemed not to have attained the age of 18 years until 31 July next following the date upon which he/she attained that age;

Procedures

Applications for free meals or refreshments shall be made by a student to the Education and Library Board for the area in which he/she is ordinarily resident. It will be the responsibility of the Board to confirm the eligibility of a student to free meals, and to notify the institution accordingly. It shall be the duty of the Board to pay the governing body of the institution a sum equal to the total of the amounts agreed by the governing body and the Board to be so remitted.

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Further Education and Funding

Department for Employment and Learning