

University of Strathclyde Childcare Fund Policy

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University of Strathclyde Childcare Fund: Staff Guidance

The University receives an allocation of Childcare Funds from the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS). SAAS issues [guidance](#) on administering the Funds but the University is expected to have a policy to best manage local demands. In order to ensure that the Childcare Funds can assist as many students as possible, a cap on the maximum support offered per child was introduced in 2017/18.

Overview

Full-time eligible students attending University will be able to apply for help with registered childcare costs from the Childcare Fund. Children must be under 15, or under 17 if they have special educational needs. Childcare fund awards are in the form of a grant, normally paid direct to the student, and are in addition to any other funding a student receives.

Childcare Eligibility at a glance

Domicile/residence	Students must be eligible under the residency rules set out in part 2 of schedule 3 the Education (Access Funds) (Scotland) (No.2) Determination 2016. (If you meet the residency eligibility to receive a student loan for living costs you should meet the criteria for the Childcare Fund)
Eligible Courses	Must be attending an eligible full-time course of study, as defined by SAAS. This includes Postgraduate courses that qualify for tuition fee loan funding from SAAS
Other Support	Must have used full entitlement of all other available support such as student loan and bursaries. Lone parents should also have claimed the Lone Parents Grant from SAAS. All students should have claimed any Child Tax Credits, free nursery places and other support to which they are entitled. Students must meet the eligibility criteria for tuition fee support to be eligible for assistance from the Childcare Fund. RUK students should apply to their funding body for the Childcare Grant. Lone parent students who aren't eligible for tuition fee support due to previous study are still eligible to the Lone Parent Childcare Grant.
Other Criteria	Must be paying registered childcare costs. Childcare providers must be registered with the Care Inspectorate. Individual child minders must also be registered but nannies do not have to. However, the Childcare Fund can be used by students who use nannies that are recruited through agencies that are registered with the Care Inspectorate.
Priority Groups	Priority will be given to applications from mature students, lone parents, care-experienced students and student carers

Receiving all other financial support

To be eligible for support from the Childcare Fund a student must have applied for all the financial support they are entitled to.

- **Tuition fee support** – Students must meet the eligibility criteria for tuition fee support to be eligible for assistance from the Childcare Fund. However, we can still award the Lone Parent Childcare Grant element to eligible students who are not receiving tuition fee support due to previous study rules. **Postgraduate Students** do not have to take out the tuition fee loan order to apply to the Childcare Fund. However, universities should consider why someone had not taken out the tuition fee loan, and whether that decision was impacting on their request for childcare support. For example, if someone elected to pay their own fees and not take out a tuition fee loan; was that impacting on their need to cover childcare costs from elsewhere.
- **Living cost loan** - Students who are eligible for a student loan are free to decide whether to take out a loan and, if so, how much to borrow. However, **a full-time student must have taken out a student loan, if eligible, and applied for the full amount to which they are entitled before receiving help from the Childcare Fund.** You can contact SAAS if you are unsure whether a student has applied for their maximum loan entitlement.
- **Lone Parent Grant** - Students who are widowed, divorced, separated or single with at least one dependent child are eligible for the Lone Parent Grant from SAAS. **Students must have claimed their full entitlement of Lone Parent Grant from SAAS before applying for the Childcare Fund/Lone Parent Childcare Grant. Students who are incomeed out of the Lone Parent Grant are still eligible for the Lone Parent Childcare Grant and Childcare Fund as long as their SAAS award notice shows they have applied for it.**
- **Working Tax Credits Childcare Element** - Students who are working or have a partner who is working may be eligible for Working Tax Credit. Where both members of a couple or the student is a lone parent work at least 16 hours per week, Working Tax Credit can include help with registered childcare costs. **A student must have applied for help with childcare costs if they are eligible and this help should be taken into account when assessing the application.** Further information on Tax Credits is available at <https://www.gov.uk/benefits-credits/tax-credits>.
- **Free early learning and childcare** - The Scottish Government provides funding to allow 3 and 4 year old children to receive 600 hours of free early learning and childcare every year. That works out at around 16 hours every week over school term times. However, local councils can provide other choices over the whole year. Some families with 2 year old children also qualify to receive the free early learning and childcare. **If a student's child(ren) are 3 or 4 they must have claimed their free childcare. If a student has a 2 year old and they look eligible you should tell the student to apply for the free place.** If a student has chosen to use a provider that does not participate in the scheme the award should be reduced by the cost of 1.5 days of childcare.

Limits on the support we can offer

We aim to help as much as possible with study related childcare costs, however, we do have a cap on the daily and weekly amount of childcare we will cover. In cases with extenuating circumstances an adviser can submit a case to the Funding and Financial Support Manager and the Student Support and Development Manager to go over one or both of the caps. Where a student disputes the level of award, they have the right to submit an appeal against this via the Student Financial Support Appeals Procedure.

Depending on the demand on the Fund, level of awards could change throughout the year.

The Childcare Fund will help students over their academic year:

- **Undergraduates** - Monday 16th September 2019 – Friday 20th December 2019, Monday 13th January 2020 – Friday 22nd May
- **PGDE** – 21st August 2019– Friday 20th December 2019, Monday 13th January 2020 – Friday 22nd May 2020
- **Postgraduates** - Monday 16th September 2019 – Friday 20th December 2019, Monday 13th January 2020 – Friday 31st July 2020

The amount a student will receive depends on:

- The cost of their childcare
- The number of children who require childcare
- Number of days they are timetabled to attend University or placement
- Household income

Income taken into consideration

Students with a household income, excluding income from student loan or bursaries, of over £50,000 pa¹ (gross) will have any award from the fund automatically reduced by 15%. Students with a household income, excluding income from student loan or bursaries, of over £60,000 pa² (gross) will not be eligible for a non-income assessed award from the Childcare fund. Students with a household income over £60,000 per annum (gross) who feel they can't cover their essential outgoings as well as the childcare costs are able to submit an income assessed application. These applications will be assessed in line with the Discretionary Fund income assessment.

The Lone Parent Childcare Grant isn't income assessed.

The Childcare Fund is not intended to provide wraparound, full time childcare unless that is required by the demands of a student's course and their personal circumstances. When assessing an application to the fund, check the following:

1. We will expect the student to use any [free childcare places](#) to which they are entitled
2. We will deduct any Working Tax Credits Childcare element to which they are entitled
3. If someone else (for example a partner or ex-partner) shares caring responsibilities, we will consider whether they can provide some of the childcare needed. For example, if a partner does not have a work or study commitment we would normally expect them to look after children unless there is a specific reason why this is not possible, for example because of a disability or health problem.

¹ This figure is in line with the UK Government's threshold for the High Income Child Benefit tax charge

² This figure is in line with the UK Government's threshold for the High Income Child Benefit tax charge

We will consider how the childcare applied for matches study commitments. Consider childcare for any timetabled classes and associated travel as essential subject to point 3 above. We will also consider additional childcare to allow for self-directed study, depending on the level and pattern of their study, childcare provider requirements, and the overall application to the fund.

Taking into account the points above, we will pay childcare costs to a maximum of:

- **up to £169.31 a week for 1 child³**
- **up to £290.27 a week for 2 or more children**

For students who are not timetabled to attend University 5 days a week we would not expect daily childcare costs to exceed the following:

- A maximum daily amount £43.52⁴

Support above these levels will only be considered where the student demonstrates in their supporting statement why they are unable to access cheaper childcare.

Application and proof of childcare

Students will submit an application showing their anticipated childcare needs and costs for semester 1 and 2 along with supporting documents. This will allow us to identify students early who will be affected by the caps and tell them how much we will be able to support them. At the end of semester 1 the students will be invited to apply for semester 2. At this point students must submit a letter or email from their childcare provider confirming the amount of childcare they have paid for semester 1. If there was an overpayment in semester 1, this will be reflected in the semester 2 award. If a student cannot provide evidence in writing from their provider that they have made regular payments in semester 1 they will not be eligible to apply for childcare support in semester 2.

Students with a household income over £50,000 per annum who feel they need financial support with their childcare costs must complete the income assessed childcare application. This application looks at the household income, essential outgoings and childcare costs to see if a student needs support.

Students who aren't eligible to apply to the Childcare Fund may be eligible to apply to the Discretionary Fund for help with registered childcare. These applications will be income assessed and capped at the £4,000 maximum award from the Discretionary Fund.

Information for Students

The University receives an allocation of Childcare Funds from the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS). SAAS issues [guidance](#) on administering the Funds but the University is expected to have a policy to best manage local demands.

The Childcare Fund is intended to provide a significant contribution to childcare costs, but is not intended to cover the full cost of wraparound, full time childcare.

The Childcare Fund will help students over their academic year:

- **Undergraduates** - Monday 16th September 2019 – Friday 20th December 2019, Monday 13th January 2020 – Friday 22nd May
- **PGDE** – 21st August 2019– Friday 20th December 2019, Monday 13th January 2020 – Friday 22nd May 2020
- **Postgraduates** - Monday 16th September 2019 – Friday 20th December 2019, Monday 13th

³ Figures match Student Finance England Childcare grant. www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/products/full-time-undergraduate-education/full-time-childcare-grant/whats-available/

⁴ Average hourly rate in Glasgow is £5.44, 8 hours per day = £43.52 www.childcare.co.uk/costs

January 2020 – Friday 31st July 2020

When assessing your application, we will take into account the following:

- We will expect you to use any free childcare places or equivalent discount to which you are entitled under [the Scottish Government's scheme for 3 and 4 year olds](#). If you choose to use a provider that does not participate in the scheme, this may be reflected in a reduced award from the Fund.
- If you are eligible we expect you to apply for the Childcare element of Working Tax Credit to help with the cost of childcare.
- For lone parents, we will also take into account the Lone Parent Childcare Grant which we will assess at the same time as your Childcare Fund application.
- We will also take into account the overall cost of your childcare and the cost per hour or session.
- We will consider how the childcare applied for relates to your study commitments and personal circumstances.
- We will also consider whether anyone who shares caring responsibilities for your child(ren) can provide some of the childcare you need.

Depending on the demand on the Fund, level of awards could change throughout the year.

Your Childcare needs and how we will make payments

We will make an assessment based on your projected Childcare needs and costs for the Semester and will make an award accordingly. We will only reassess your award in the event of a significant change in your circumstances (for example if there was a major change to your timetable that resulted in increased Childcare need).

We will pay the award into your bank account on a monthly basis to allow you to pay the childcare provider(s). Before each payment is made your registration status will be checked to make you are still a registered student. If you go into Voluntary Suspension, Academic Suspension or Registration with Attendance your award will stop.