

All you need to know about the Care-Experienced Students Bursary and Higher Education in Scotland



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Frequently Asked Questions

We've put together some commonly asked questions about the Care Experienced Students Bursary (CESB) and Higher Education. For information relevant to the CESB and Further Education (FE) see our [separate information sheet](#).

This factsheet covers:

- who is eligible for the CESB
- how to apply
- practical information about how payments are made.

What is the Care-Experienced Students Bursary?

The CESB is:

- a non-income assessed, non-repayable bursary of £9,000 per year.
- the same amount as non care-experienced students can receive via the combination of a bursary and student loans
- available to full-time care-experienced students taking eligible courses such as an undergraduate degree, HNC or HND
- awarded by [Student Awards Agency Scotland \(SAAS\)](#) who supports students in higher education and assess applications for the CESB.

Who is eligible for the Care-Experienced Students Bursary for Higher Education?

You are entitled to the CESB if you are:

- care-experienced, within the UK
- a student taking a full-time Higher Education course at college or university in the UK (such as HNC, HND or undergraduate degree)
- AND a Scottish domiciled student (i.e. you normally live in Scotland).

The care-experienced bursary should be seen as part of a wider suite of support.....As such, this award is intended to enhance rather than replace any existing financial and practical support provided by Local Authorities and other relevant Corporate Parents.

(John Swinney, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, 2019).

The HUB for Success supports people with care-experience to get in, stay in and return to education at any age and any stage.

As a partnership in the Edinburgh and Lothians we are committed to upholding and promoting care-experienced learners' rights.

Am I care-experienced? What does this mean?

If you are care-experienced you are someone who has been in care or 'looked-after' at any stage of your life, no matter how short (e.g. only temporarily or prior to adoption). Your care-experience could have been provided by a local authority (council), a religious organisation or a charity.

This care could be in one of many different settings, such as:

- foster care
- living with close family or friends under formal kinship care arrangements or informal care arrangements
- living at home with a compulsory supervision order
- living away from home with a compulsory supervision order
- living in residential care, secure care or a List D school, a borstal, a close support unit or a children's home
- formal care leaver (looked after on or after your 16th birthday under a formal order).

Students who were in informal care arrangements (for example, staying with grandparents, aunts, uncles, family friends) where there has been some local authority involvement will be eligible for the bursary.

Different types of care-experience can be described in different ways, and often this has changed over time. If you're unsure whether you meet the criteria take a look at the definitions of care-experience on the [SAAS website](#).

Still unsure? Then you can contact SAAS, the care-experienced named person at your college or university or the [HUB for Success](#).

What evidence do I need to show I am care-experienced?

Once you have applied for the CESB you will need a signed letter from a professional person who can confirm you are care-experienced.

A professional person can be someone from a local authority, such as a support/social worker, doctor, nurse, lawyer, solicitor, college/university student adviser, teacher, nursery teacher, notary public, counsellor, police officer, minister of religion or family mediation worker.

Don't worry if you are not currently in contact with any relevant individuals, it's okay to reach out to them. We also know that it can be hard to gather evidence, particularly for mature learners, and suggest you contact the care-experienced contact at your place of study or the [HUB for Success](#) for advice.

You'll only be asked to provide this evidence in the first year that you apply for the CESB.

Is there an age limit?

No, there is no upper age limit for the CESB.

Should I disclose my care-experience?

If you want to access the CESB you need to tick the relevant box on the SAAS application for the CESB. This does not mean you have to share your personal care-experience; this is your private information and your own story to tell if and should you choose to.

Remember too, there is a box on the college or UCAS form that allows you to let the college or universities you are applying to know that you are care-experienced. This is important if you want to open up further support on offer at your place of study. It is not compulsory, but if you don't tick the box you may miss out on learning and financial support that you are entitled to.

How much is the CESB and why do I get this amount?

The CESB is £9,000 per academic year. It is a non-income assessed bursary and is based on the current living wage. It is designed to help support you with living costs whilst you study.

The CESB is the same amount other students receive from SAAS, in bursary and loans, but care-experienced students don't need to pay it back.

Will I be better off staying on benefits?

In most cases students on full-time higher education courses will no longer be eligible to claim benefits such as Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. Some students, such as those who have children or get Personal Independence Payment, may be eligible for benefits. However, you should contact the DWP or Citizens Advice Scotland for further advice on what benefits you might be entitled to whilst you are studying.

How and when will my bursary be paid - when is my first payment?

The bursary will be paid directly to your bank account. If SAAS have confirmed your application has been completed, and you are fully registered at your college or university, then your first bursary payment will be made on the first day of term. This will be the date your college or university has told SAAS your course starts.

You will receive a double payment on the first day of term. After your first payment it will be paid monthly, normally on the 7th of each month, until the end of term.

A 12 monthly payment option is available. This means you choose to receive the bursary over 12 months rather than just over term time. The total bursary amount remains the same but the monthly payments you receive will be lower as spread over 12 months. This option means you have a regular monthly income over the year, which may be helpful for budgeting or if you're also receiving Universal Credit. The 12 monthly payment option is not available if you're on a one year course, such as an HNC, or in the final year.

Can I receive the bursary if I'm on a paid placement?

If you're on a paid placement as a requirement of your course you will still be able to receive the CESB. The placement should not increase the overall length of the course.

Can my bursary payments be stopped at any point?

SAAS will only stop paying your bursary if your college or university has told SAAS that you are suspended or have withdrawn from studies, or you have told SAAS you have left your course. It is important to keep in touch with your care experienced named person if you are struggling to attend or struggling to keep up with course work.

What happens if I need to repeat a year?

If you need to repeat a year or change course you are generally eligible for two years of additional funding. If you are not sure about your eligibility to repeat funding please contact SAAS.

Am I eligible for the CESB if I already have a degree?

Normally you are not eligible for the CESB for a second degree, although there are some exceptions, and you should contact SAAS for further information.

Do I have to pay my bursary back?

Normally you don't need to pay it back. However, if you leave a course part-way through the year, **it's important to tell SAAS as soon as possible** to avoid receiving payments you then need to pay back. If you are worried about this, or if you are in receipt of the bursary and thinking about withdrawing, you should contact the care-experienced named person at your college or university, [SAAS](#) or the [HUB for Success](#) for advice.

Can I get any help during the summer break?

Yes, you can apply to SAAS for the Care Experienced Accommodation Grant which is up to £105 per week. This grant is to help you cover accommodation costs during the summer break. It might also be possible to get a one-off payment from your college or university Discretionary Fund towards the end of June to help through the summer. Please note this is not a guarantee and depends on individual circumstances and funds available. If you think you will need financial help over the summer contact your care-experienced named contact in plenty of time before the end of your course to reduce the chance of delays to any payments.

Is there any support available for childcare costs?

Yes, colleges and universities will have Childcare Funds available. These provide non-repayable assistance for students with children in order for them to access or continue in education and are paid in addition to any other forms of student support, including the CESB. Students can apply for assistance towards registered childcare costs for scheduled classes and periods of mandatory placement. Ask your care-experienced named contact for more information.

Am I eligible for the CESB if I am a paramedic, nursing or midwifery student?

You will not be eligible for the CESB or Accommodation Grant, but you will usually be eligible for the [Paramedic, Nursing and Midwifery Student Bursary \(PNMSB\)](#). This is £10,000 for each year of your course and reduces to £7,500 in Year 4. The bursary is non-income assessed and non-repayable. Non care-experienced students are also eligible for this bursary.

You will still be eligible for any financial support each college and university offer its care-experienced students. There is also additional funding from [SAAS](#) available for paramedic, nursing and midwifery students with dependents, lone parents, and to help with childcare costs or costs related to a disability or a learning difficulty.

Is there other funding available while I'm studying?

In addition to the CESB each college and university will offer its own financial support for care-experienced students. This can be applied to in addition to the CESB (so you could receive both in the same year).

We know that financial worries can at times get in the way of your studies. If you get in touch with the care-experienced named person at your college or university they can advise you on other funding available, such as scholarships or discretionary funds.

If you are a care leaver (looked after on or after your 16th birthday), and under 26, you may be eligible for some financial support from your local authority. Contact your social worker or Throughcare & Aftercare worker for more information.

Still got questions?

Contact the care-experienced named person at your college or university. Use [Propel](#) to find out who to contact at your college or university.

If you are at college or university in Edinburgh or the Lothians or living in/ from this area then contact the [HUB for Success](#) for a friendly chat. We can provide further advice and information to help you get in, stay in, or return to education.
