

Higher Education Student Support & Wellbeing Policy

2024-2027

Date of Issue	1 st June 2024 (v2 released July 2025)
Approved by	DRFC/HESB/SLT
Contact	Heads of ALS & Welfare and Well-Being
Review Date	December 2027

1. Overarching Principles

Waltham Forest College is an inclusive learning environment where learning, achievement and progression are accessible to everyone.

All students have the right to work, study and progress in a College environment where they:

- Are fully respected;
- Feel welcomed;
- Are treated fairly;
- Are encouraged to disclose additional learning needs;
- Have equality of opportunity for learning and training;
- Have full access, wherever possible, to the range of College facilities and services
- Feel confident that action will be taken to address any reported harassment or discrimination.

The purpose of the Higher Education Student Support Policy, incorporating the HE Bursary Policy, is to take reasonable steps to remove or avoid disadvantage so that disabled students can effectively participate in the education and other benefits, facilities, and services provided for students.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Inform students about how to access support
Support the college in complying with the requirements of relevant legislation
- Clarify where responsibility lies for the identification and implementation of reasonable adjustments,
- Inform students how to appeal a decision made in relation to a reasonable adjustment.

Student Support

The Additional Learning Support (ALS) team will promote inclusion and access based on a review of individual needs of student requiring support.

Intent

The Student Support and Wellbeing Policy aims to ensure that the College:

- Enables students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties to have the same opportunities at college as students without those needs.
- Provides Learning Support in a manner that maintains academic, professional and technical standards whilst seeking ways to support students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties that promote their independence and prepare them for the world of work and/or further study;
- Complies with the Equality & Disability Discrimination Act 2010, the Children and Families Act 2014, the SEND Code of Practice 2015, the Data Protection Act 2018 and all Safeguarding legislation;
- Applies the requirements of the relevant funding guidance/audit requirements in application of ALS for HE level students from DSA applications

Support for students can be of two types, support for those eligible and awarded Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) and college provided Additional Learning Support.

Implementation of ALS alongside DSA

This will be achieved through:

- The flexible use of resource to promote independence, whilst ensuring all students have access to levels of support from drop ins from the ALS team;
- The use of assistive technology wherever possible to reduce reliance on human support, adjustments by subject tutors or out of class support, where appropriate;
- Providing information to all staff in College regarding their responsibilities under the Equality Act;
- Alerting all staff to sources of advice on disability issues;
- Continuing to develop, implement and review systems that encourage prospective students to declare disabilities and/or learning needs prior to course interview; enabling lecturers to have the awareness and subsequent knowledge to best support their students;
- Early identification of support needs and the promotion of relevant college/external services;

The ALS Team will ensure that students have access to and benefit from:

- Advice, guidance and information about ALS support
- Appropriate initial and screening assessment procedures
- Involvement in the planning and reviewing of ALS provision
- Effective liaison between lecturing staff, support services and outside agencies

Student responsibilities:

As a student, you are responsible for:

- Disclosing a disability at the earliest opportunity
- Providing evidence to support the disability (such as a diagnostic reports for learning impairments, medical or GP's letters/reports for physical or mental health conditions, or existing DSA needs assessment)
- Attending meetings as requested to discuss your needs
- Disclosing any changes such as increased impairment (e.g. because of a deteriorating condition) requiring new adjustments or a modification of existing adjustments;
- Providing documentation to support the recommended adjustments.

Disabled Students Allowance (DSA)

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) is a support grant to help cover costs students may incur to ensure they have the right support for their disability or long-term health condition during their studies. The grant is available to HE students who are UK residents and is awarded differently depending on your course and other funding you may receive.

DSA can pay for disability-related support, including:

- Assistive technology and specialist equipment, such as a laptop, note-taking software or specialist furniture.
- Human support (non-medical support), such as sign language interpreters, study skills tutors, mentoring, and Assistive Technology training.
- Taxis to get to and from campus if you experience difficulty travelling on public transport.
- Other disability related support such as enhanced printing allowance.

See the support list here: [Applying for Disabled Students' Allowance \(DSA\) | Disability Rights UK](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/apply-for-disabled-students-allowance-dsa)

If you are able to access external funding for a reasonable adjustment, for example through the DSA, the college expects you to access such funding.

The ALS Team will support you with this process. Applying for DSA will involve students:

- (1) Making an application and providing medical evidence,
- (2) Attending a DSA needs assessment appointment,
- (3) Accepting the needs assessment recommendations

When applying for DSA, the ALS team will request you receive confirmation from college Admissions regarding your studies. You must retain and provide your DSA customer reference number (CRN) to the ALS team on request.

How much could I receive and how is it paid?

- Student Finance England adjust the amount of DSA funding every academic year.
- Money is usually paid directly to the organisation providing the service or equipment.

- You will find out how your support will be paid after your needs assessment.

You will receive confirmation from the funding body of whether your application is successful within 6 weeks. It can take up to 14 weeks to get your DSA support in place as this is done separately. Students applying for Student Finance England must provide evidence that shows you meet the Equality Act (2010) definition of a disabled person.

See the dedicated web page:

[Help if you're a student with a learning difficulty, health problem or disability: Eligibility - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/help-if-you-re-a-student-with-a-learning-difficulty-health-problem-or-disability-eligibility)

What is College's ALS Team?

The ALS team is any activity that provides direct or indirect learning support for individual students.

Additional support provided for HE students **may** include the following:

- Additional out-of-class support for developing study skills (1:1 or in small groups)
- 1:1 sessions with a Learning Mentor or Support Tutor
- Counselling (where such support is necessary to enable a student to achieve their learning goal)
- Access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special considerations for assessment
- Access to equipment e.g. assistive technology
- LRC services: extended library loans, book fetching/collection services
- Inclusive design of curriculum including providing access to electronic copies of lectures and seminars, providing directed reading lists that differentiate between essential, core and desirable texts

Eligibility & Reasonable Adjustments

Learning Support will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis for all HE students that declare a disability or learning difficulty to assess if they meet the entry requirements of their chosen course and can access their chosen course through the support of "reasonable adjustments" by the College. The duty under the Equality Act requires that only adjustments that are reasonable are made. What is reasonable will depend on the individual circumstances of the case.

Reasonable adjustments should not compromise the academic standards of programmes or modules, as the Equality Act places no duty to make a reasonable adjustment to a competence standard.

A competence standard is 'an academic, medical, or other standard, applied for the purpose of determining whether a person has a particular level of competence or ability'. A competence standard must apply equally to all students, be genuinely relevant to the programme, and be a proportionate means to achieving a legitimate aim.

Reasonable adjustments must not affect the validity or reliability of the assessment outcomes. However, they may involve, for example, changing the usual assessment arrangements or method, adapting assessment materials, providing a scribe or reader in the assessment, and re-organising the assessment environment.

All students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties who either disclose their needs to the College or who are referred for support by curriculum teams, will be offered an ALS assessment.

Support for HE students is available to provide a set of reasonable adjustments, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, for students who have an identified learning difficulty or disability so they are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to students who are not disabled. This support may be funded for some students through the DSA. The duty arises in relation to all aspects of the student experience including:

- Provisions, criteria, or practices (for example, procedures, policies, course materials, and teaching and assessment methods);
- Physical features (for example, access to buildings, fixtures and fittings);
- Providing auxiliary aids or services (for example, equipment)

In exceptional cases, you can request permission to park on campus.

Inclusive design of curriculum content should ensure that accessibility is embedded in activities for all students' learning, teaching, and assessment.

A number of reasonable adjustments to examinations are already permitted as standard on the basis of a needs assessment being carried out by the ALS Team and supporting evidence being provided.

These are:

- Extra time (up to 20% extra of prescribed examination time)
- Rest breaks (up to 10 minutes per hour)
- Use of a scribe and/or reader
- Use of a computer
- Alternative format for exam papers
- Use of own equipment
- Provision of an adjustable chair and/or desk/footrest/writing slope.

The college recognises that a student's ability to access learning and teaching may be hampered without your support adjustments in place, and will work with all parties to ensure adjustments can be made in a timely way.

It may not always be possible to provide an alternative mode of assessment, for example, where the mode of examination and the competence standard are inextricably linked. However, where a request is declined, the reasons for this decision will be stated with reference to the key competencies of the HE programme.

If a student believes the decision on reasonable adjustments is incorrect, unfair, or unreasonable, and that it has not been resolved by the review panel, you have the right to challenge the decision under the college HE complaints process.

Students must be fully enrolled with no debt to the college to access ALS services and support.

Roles and Responsibilities

All college staff will work collaboratively to identify and monitor students who need additional learning support. This will include:

- Ensuring the application and enrolment process offers students an opportunity to declare support needs
- Ensuring receipt of consultation and outcome are recorded on Pro Solution and communicated with curriculum teams / Learner Services
- Carrying out robust initial and on-going assessment
- Making referrals to the ALS team if a support need is identified
- Supporting students in accordance with their assessed needs as outlined in their individual support plan
- Regularly monitoring student progress and the impact of support on that progress
- Accessing external specialist services and expertise as required
- Maintaining records of students' progress and support

Inclusive design of curriculum content will ensure that accessibility is embedded in activities for all students' learning, teaching, and assessment.

Support Statement

The HE ALS Policy is part of the overall Support and Well-being Framework for HE students which includes college counselling, well-being and welfare services.

Wellbeing Support

Waltham Forest College is committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of all students. We know that students may experience difficulties and challenges in their day-to-day life that may impact their general health and wellbeing. Through a range of advice, guidance and support services the college can support students to looking after their physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing as they are all connected and equally important.

In addition to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing, the College aims to recognise and respond to mental health by developing and implementing practical, relevant and effective mental health policies and procedures that helps promote a safe and stable environment for all students.

Student Welfare and Wellbeing services

Our Welfare and Wellbeing Advisers will be able to offer individual support and strategies to implement on issues impacting College life such as stress, anxiety, time management, relaxation, organisation, low mood, meeting new people and transitioning to College.

- Support includes online or face-to-face appointments with a Welfare and Wellbeing Adviser
- Welfare and Wellbeing Adviser's will also be working on College wide projects to promote student wellbeing
- Provide information on internal and external services offering support that may be best suited to the student's particular needs (signposting) for advice on mental health support, personal safety, including harassment and assault, or advice on accessing other support services
- As well as 1:1 appointments, the Wellbeing Officers have bookable daily drop-in slots to meet with students on the same day.

Mental Health

We recognise that mental health and wellbeing is a continuum and needs to be considered for everyone. Students can seek help in a number of different ways, depending on the route they are most comfortable with. For many students, their Personal Tutor will be the first point of contact.

Our Mental Health Adviser will:

- Provides advice information and guidance to prospective and current students on the provision of mental health support available.
- Supports students to develop strategies and techniques to self-manage their mental health condition(s) where possible.
- Provides an effective and skilled response to students who may be at risk to themselves or others, or who may be agitated, distressed or anxious.

Wellbeing Hub

The Wellbeing Hub provides a focal point in college, where students can seek help, either on a one-off basis, or for more regular support. The Mental Health Adviser will provide guidance on the most appropriate sources of support, either within college or from external agencies.

Mental Health First Aiders

Many members of staff across College have undergone specialist training to become Mental Health First Aiders with the skills and knowledge to identify some mental health issues and be able to react quickly and safely in the event of a crisis.

Student Mental Health Ambassadors

The Student Mental Health Ambassadors at Waltham Forest College play a vital role in supporting the wellbeing of their peers. Trained in mental health awareness, active listening, safeguarding, and signposting, they offer informal peer support through drop-in sessions, wellbeing activities, and awareness campaigns. Ambassadors help create a safe, approachable environment where students feel heard and understood, reducing stigma and promoting open conversations around mental health. They are a visible, relatable presence across campus and work closely with staff to ensure learners know where and how to access help when they need it.

Enrichment & Engagement Activities

We offer a wide range of enrichment opportunities to help students make positive lifestyle choices, develop a healthy work-life balance and to increase their social circle where they can access peer support.

College Counsellors

The counselling service complements the welfare and wellbeing service functions and plays an important role in supporting the personal development of students by incorporating a counselling methodology into the educational philosophy of the College.

We provide an on-site counselling service through a caring and approachable, fully-trained counsellor. This is an ideal opportunity to express your thoughts and emotions in a safe space and receive support in finding the tools to help you cope. The counselling service is committed to deliver:

- Support to students with emotional or personal difficulties that may impact on their ability to complete their course
- Accessible counselling service in a safe and confidential environment
- A counselling service delivered by trained and experienced counsellors
- A counselling framework delivered within the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical Framework
- A service in compliance with key acts and legislations such as the Children's Act of 1992

Free Healthy Breakfast

We understand that a healthy breakfast can set you up for a successful day of study and so we offer all students free breakfast served from 8am.

Waltham Forest College HE bursary policy

Scope and Purpose

This Bursary Guidance is for applicants, students at Waltham Forest College (also referred to here as WFC) studying HNC and HND qualifications.

These policies and procedures must be followed when making Waltham Forest College Bursary applications/awards and are also for use when considering potential student appeals.

Key Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of the Waltham Forest College Bursaries lies with the Head of Welfare and Wellbeing.

2.2. The key responsibility of the Head of Welfare and Wellbeing, with the support of Director of Student Services and the Student Finance Team, is to ensure that the process as outlined below is followed and to confirm awards in line with agreed criteria. Students will be advised, and payment will be authorised and paid through the Student Finance team via BACS.

2.3. Waltham Forest College is committed to a fair and transparent policy in respect of the award and administration of its bursaries.

2.4. Waltham Forest College reviews its Bursary Scheme annually.

2.5 The college provides bursaries to those students who have been assessed by Student Finance England (SFE) as being eligible for means tested support towards their maintenance costs.

The bursary is only provided to students on full time courses. The Student Loans Company will assess all students' financial eligibility. Students do need to:

- Apply to SFE for means testing and student support each academic year.
- Give consent for the SLC to share their household income information each academic year.

Without this assessment, Bursary will not be awarded.

Students receive the following notifications regarding the bursary:

Students are initially notified by letter (from the Student Loans Company) if they are eligible to receive the bursary. Please note this only confirms their eligibility, not whether they have been awarded the bursary.

Available Bursaries for Higher Education 2025-2027

There are discretionary bursaries available for full-time HE Students. Awards to students will be towards tuition costs, travel costs, food, books and equipment or other similar institutional services such as trips. Bursary is set aside for those in greatest financial hardship; to support them with the ongoing costs of being at College. Funds are limited and allocated on a first come, first served basis

General Regional Bursary

Successful applicants will be awarded a bursary, bursaries will vary and will be tailored to those in greatest need, the maximum award will be £1,000 (pro-rata amount for part time students studying a minimum of 25% intensity of the full time equivalent).

Care Leavers Bursary

A bursary of £1000 per year is available to students who are assessed as a care leaver, using the criteria provided by Student Finance England. The bursary will be paid in two instalments within the first 6 weeks of the start of each term. Students should contact Student Welfare to discuss eligibility.

Internal Progression Bursary

For students progressing internally from a Level 3 course in the college to a full-time HNC/D there is a one-off bursary payment of £250 paid in the first year of study and within the first term of study after the first six weeks.

These bursaries are available to HE students commencing study in 2025/26. There are different arrangements according to which year you commenced your studies. Details of relevant bursaries for all students are available on the college's learner portal. Assistance is available from the Student Welfare or the Finance department on how to access the information.

These will be awarded based on key criteria for all applicants and specific criteria to identify those most in need of support. The total allocation will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis based on the date an application has been submitted.

Awards will be made in two instalments: once when the bursary has been approved and the second in April 2025. Payments will be dependent on the production of the required evidence and at least 90% attendance or being on track to achieve your qualification.

Hardship Fund

At WFC, we are committed to supporting students facing financial difficulties through our hardship fund. We believe that every student deserves the opportunity to pursue their education without being hindered by financial burdens. Our hardship fund aims to provide assistance to those in need, ensuring that all students have access to resources and support to help them succeed academically and personally. This fund also supports IT course related costs. The hardship fund details are available from Student Welfare or Finance. Meeting essential eligibility criterion does not equate to an entitlement to a bursary. This is a one-year benefit, not a recurrent annual entitlement, annual applications must be submitted.

The fund may be able to assist with costs where equipment is required to enhance a student's access to learning or to increase levels of achievement. All items purchased by the support funds remains the property of the College and must be returned if students when they complete their programme of study.

Eligibility and Criteria

The criteria set out in the guidance below have been written in line with our annual Access and Participation Statement the intent of ensuring the limited funds are allocated to identified target groups.

Students must meet the following criteria:

- Be enrolled/holding an offer (as confirmed by Admissions) on a Waltham Forest College HE (HNC/D or HTQ programmes on a full basis, but not modular programmes)
- Be paying the expected tuition fee in full.
- Be a UK 'home' student.

Have applied for and be in receipt of the full student maintenance loan prior to the bursary application and have a household income of less than £25,000 per annum, as assessed by Student Finance England, or be paying the course fee in full.

Students who fall into one or more of the following categories (and have not been in receipt of bursary previously) will be prioritised for funding support:

1. Care Leavers' Bursary
2. Band 1 as defined in the table below of SFE assessed household income
3. Extreme Hardship Fund

- a. Bursaries are limited and will be prioritised for the following groups: Students who have not been in receipt of a bursary previously (Evidence source: ProSolution/previous college records).
- b. Those from under-represented groups as identified:
 - I. Care leaver (as defined by any adult who has spent time in care) (Self-declared on admission with supporting evidence).
 - II. Those residents in Walthamstow or areas of low participation based on postcode: In the instance of postcode, those in areas of low participation rates in surrounding boroughs will be prioritized. These will be those where the postcode states 'yes' in a Uni Connect target area.

Assessments:

All income and benefits (including housing benefit, council tax benefit, working tax credits, child tax credits, etc.) are taken into account. For students who are self-employed, the College will assess income based on Gross profit, but taking into account any business expenditure.

SFE Assessed Household Income	WFC Bursary
£0-£25,000	Band 1
£25,001-£41,999	Band 2
More than £42,000	None

The total annual bursary allocation will be awarded on a first come first served basis based on the date an application has been submitted.

Bursaries are awarded at the discretion of Waltham Forest College and are not a student entitlement.

Administration Process for 2024-2026 for HE Bursaries Administered by Waltham Forest College

Application

Applications should only be submitted on line using the following link : HE (HNC & HND) Support - Waltham Forest College.

If the student has applied to Student Finance England and have given 'consent to share,' the College will be able to use this information to household income. If a student does not 'consent to share' with Student Finance England, Waltham Forest College will be unable to assess the student's financial situation and therefore it will not be possible to award a bursary.

If the student is currently self-funding, the student will need to supply evidence of household income. Evidence includes P60, payslips, and bank statements.

Students will be able to apply via the Waltham Forest College website from the autumn term 2025.

The number of bursaries is limited, and therefore meeting the eligibility criteria cannot guarantee an award. Bursaries will be awarded by priority area. In the event of more applications than funds available, the College will use the date of application to make the final decision on the award. *If additional funds are provided throughout the academic year, bursary awards may be increased at the discretion of the college.

Bursaries are awarded by discretion and by application. Applications are assessed on a case-by-case basis according to need.

A panel will review successful applications prior to awarding funds. We will inform all those who have been successful within 28 days of the application. The bursary panel shall report to the Director of Finance and the Director of Student Services on a quarterly basis and to the HESB from time to time

Students who do not qualify for a bursary can apply for support through the HE Hardship Fund, which is managed separately from the HE Bursary. The panel will meet monthly during July, August and September and at least once per half term thereafter to review progress and budgets.

Students can appeal the decision made by the bursary panel if they can provide evidence of mitigating circumstances. Students should be aware that appeals are usually only successful if they have new evidence attached. Appeals need to be made within 10 working days of students receiving notification that their bursary payment has been withheld. Please see below for appeals process.

Students may apply for more than one bursary award (see below) but will only be awarded one bursary (usually the highest value for which the student is eligible).

Payment

Bursaries will be paid in 2 equal instalments throughout the year on the condition that the recipient has achieved at least 90% attendance at college or is on track to achieve.

Where bursary eligibility changes (for example, due to non-attendance at college) Waltham Forest College will recover any payment by either:

- Reducing any subsequent bursary payments to recover the overpaid amount (this may occur where a student is continuing with their studies).
- Requesting the overpayment be repaid in full. Failure to repay the amount due may result in the commencement of litigation.

Outstanding Fees and Other Monies Owing to Waltham Forest College

Where a student has fees or other monies owing to Waltham Forest College relating to their studies, Waltham Forest College may withhold the bursary payment until such time as the outstanding amount has been paid. Please see Waltham Forest College's Fees Policy for further information about the non-payment of fees.

Withdrawals

Students must be fully enrolled at the time that the bursary payment is due. No payment will be made to students who have agreed breaks in their studies. Students who withdraw prior to the payment date will not be entitled to a pro-rata payment.

Appeals

Unsuccessful applicants wishing to appeal should write to the Director of HE & Academic Standards within 10 working days of the date of notification of the outcome of their application, stating clearly the grounds for appeal.

Appeals will only be considered where there is evidence that a procedural irregularity has occurred in processing the application. Appeals against the content of the published Waltham Forest College Bursary guidance itself cannot be accepted.