

Student Services

Social Work Bursary Capping Guidance for Universities

Overview

Following feedback from a number of our university colleagues, we have put together this factsheet to clarify and reinforce the action to take with various scenarios relating to the allocation of capped places to social work bursary students.

The aim of this guidance is to maximise the use of available capped places allocated to each University. It is important to note that when capped places are allocated the funding is set aside by the Department of Health from the two financial years commencing prior to the start of each of the two academic years. This in turn means that whilst you nominate students for capped places the place will normally only 'follow' the student if they complete the course without any interruption, deferment, suspension or withdrawal from the course (i.e. Undergraduate students complete the course within the 'normal period' (3 years) and postgraduates within 2 years (or the appropriate period for part time courses). As detailed below if a student does not complete the course within the 'normal period' they will in most cases lose their entitlement to the capped place if they return to training.

To effectively meet the objective of maximising the use of available capped places under the current arrangements we need support from all Universities. This includes a requirement to provide us with timely information about every change in a student's attendance. This means we will require you to download and complete and forward to us the relevant SWB02, SWB03 or SWB04 form from our website as soon as you become aware of such a change. This is especially important at the end and start of each academic year as once a payment has been made to a student with a capped place, who subsequently withdraws within a few days or weeks then the capped place cannot be re-allocated to another student for that academic year.

Withdrawals

If a student withdraws from training their capped place may be reallocated to another student, as long as the withdrawn student has not received a payment and the place is reallocated prior to the end of the financial year in which the academic year commences.

Once a payment has been made the capped place cannot then be reallocated to another student and any further funding, for that capped place, will be lost in that academic year.

Postgraduate student Deferrals

If a postgraduate student has been allocated a capped place but informs you that they wish to defer starting their course until a later academic year, their place can be reallocated to another student. Again they must not have received a bursary payment, or

the place is lost. If the place is not reallocated to another student, the place will also be lost.

A new capped place will then need to be allocated to the deferred student, when they commence training, from the allocation of capped places for the academic year they are joining. They cannot retain a previous academic year's capped place even if the place was not reallocated to another student.

Resuming postgraduate students

Students who attended in their first academic year and were nominated for a capped place, but had a period of non-attendance for a full academic year and are now resuming training, will have lost the capped place initially allocated to them. These capped places cannot be retained if a student withdraws from training for any reason, even if the place is not reallocated to another student.

If you wish to allocate a capped place to a postgraduate returning student, this can only be done if there are exceptional circumstances that instigated the deferral and the student's capped place must either:

- be allocated from the postgraduate year cohort the student is returning to (this could only happen if someone else had withdrawn from the course without receiving any payments for the academic year)
- be taken from your total allocation of students for the new academic year. In this case the next year of funding for the capped place would also be lost and could not separately be allocated to another student the following year.

Undergraduate student Deferrals

If an undergraduate student has been allocated a capped place but informs you that they wish to defer starting the second or third year until a later academic year, their place can be reallocated to another student. They must not have received a bursary payment, or the capped place is lost. If the place is not reallocated to another student, the place will also be lost.

Resuming undergraduate students

Students who attended in their first academic year and were nominated for a capped place, but had a period of non-attendance and are now resuming training, will have lost the capped place initially allocated to them for the rest of the duration of the course.

Undergraduate students who withdraw or defer and resume training at any point during the course including the first year may not occupy a capped place when they resume training.

Maternity leave – all social work students

Universities must follow the process outlined below for all students who are taking a period of maternity leave regardless of when they commence their maternity leave (including if it

is during a 'holiday period') and regardless of whether or not they are enrolled on a capped place

Undergraduate and postgraduate students who are nominated for a capped place may continue to receive bursary payments for up to a maximum of 12 months from the agreed date of the start of the maternity leave period or from the day after the date of birth. Students must provide the university with medical evidence of the pregnancy prior to commencing maternity leave (usually form MATB1). The start date of the maternity leave must be agreed with the university prior to commencement of the leave. Universities must forward a form SWB02 to Student Services annotated to confirm the student has provided relevant evidence including the expected date of confinement, the last date of attendance and the date of return if the student is expected to return to complete the course.

Undergraduate and postgraduate students who resume training after a period of maternity leave will retain their capped place for the duration of the course. Universities cannot reallocate or transfer a capped place from a student on maternity leave to another student.

In addition students who have taken a period of maternity leave may receive an extension of funding for up to a maximum of 12 months in order to complete the course (this may be extended in exceptional circumstances if the student also has to repeat part of the course). Universities must forward a form SWB03 to student services annotated to confirm the student has returned to training including the date they returned, the cohort they have joined, the new expected 'end date' of the course and any other information that will help clarify the student's personal circumstances.

Students who are not nominated for a capped place (those in receipt of the Placement Travel Allowance (PTA) only, or EU Fees only postgraduate students) are not eligible to receive the PTA or payment of fees during a period of maternity leave. They may be eligible to receive the PTA (and payment of fees if relevant) when they resume training.