

Falkland Islands Government – Higher Education Funding Policy

Approved by ExCo – 26th September 2023

1. Purpose

The Falkland Islands Government (FIG) provides funding for certain individuals to undertake higher education (HE) courses. The purpose of this funding is to increase the level of skills and qualifications across the population of the Falkland Islands and to broaden the horizons of young people who have permanent legal status (Falkland Islands Status) and strong physical ties to the Falkland Islands.

This document sets out:

- Who is eligible for funding
- What courses are eligible for funding
- Where courses can be taken
- What funding covers
- Conditions of funding
- Student welfare
- Dealing with Unexpected Issues
- Review of decisions

2. Who Is Eligible

In order to receive funding for HE courses under this policy, individuals must meet a number of criteria. There are criteria for both the time of application and at the time the funding is awarded.

2.1. Legal status

HE funding is only available to individuals with Falkland Islands Status who have been ordinarily resident in the Falkland Islands for a period of 12 months before the course starts.

An individual who has applied for Falkland Islands Status can submit an application for HE funding, but funding will be withdrawn if the individual does not have Falkland Islands Status by the date the course starts.

An individual who has started an HE course and is granted Falkland Island status during that course, can apply for funding for the remaining complete years of their course.

2.2 Careers advice

As part of the application process, individuals will be asked to meet with a Careers Advisor at Falkland College to discuss their goals and options. This can be a virtual meeting. Advice will be provided on the range of courses and educational institutions available and information will be given on careers in the Falkland Islands, including current and anticipated skills shortages.

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2.3 Ordinary residence

To receive funding, individuals must be ordinarily resident in the Falkland Islands when the course starts and have been ordinarily resident for at least 12 months before the course starts. They must continue to be ordinarily resident throughout the course.

If the individual is under 18, the same requirements apply to the parent who signed their application i.e. they must also be ordinarily resident when the application is submitted and have been ordinarily resident for at least 12 months before their child's course starts. They must continue to be ordinarily resident while the student is taking the course or until the student's 18th birthday, whichever happens first.

A person is ordinarily resident if they normally live in the Falklands (apart from temporary or occasional absences) and their residence in the Falklands is lawful and voluntary and for settled purposes as part of the regular order of their life for the time being, whether for short or long duration.

Where a young person has been educated outside the Falklands Islands for some or all of the 12 months period immediately before starting their further education course, they will in most cases be regarded as ordinarily resident in the Falkland Islands but it will depend on the particular circumstances of the case.

2.4 Qualifications

The Director of Education must be satisfied that the student is capable of successfully completing a course of higher education.

In our experience students are unlikely to successfully complete a course of higher education unless they have successfully completed a course of further education and achieved a minimum of 64 UCAS points (e.g. 2 Grade Cs at A level) or equivalent Level 3 qualifications. Students who do not or are not expected to achieve these grades will be expected to provide additional evidence of commitment to their studies and capability to succeed at university such as academic references from their further education provider.

3. Which Courses Are Funded

3.1 Undergraduate

All eligible students are entitled to financial assistance for courses of higher education. "Higher education" means full-time courses providing academic or professional skills and knowledge. It includes —

- undergraduate courses lasting between 3 and 7 years or more which lead to a first degree (honours and ordinary) or equivalent qualifications (otherwise known as "level 6 or 7 courses").

Such courses include degrees with qualified teacher status, enhanced first degrees, first degrees obtained concurrently with a diploma, and intercalated

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first degrees (where first-degree students, usually in medicine, dentistry or veterinary medicine, interrupt their studies to complete a one-year course of advanced studies in a related topic).

Funding is not available for foundation years (1 year pre-degree courses required before a student can enrol on an undergraduate course).

- courses lasting 2 years or more leading to a level 4 or 5 qualification such as a BTEC Higher National Diploma or a Foundation Degree.

3.2 Postgraduate funding

The Education Department can provide funding for two individuals to complete a post-graduate course in each academic year.

A post-graduate course is a course leading to a professional qualification that is an essential requirement for entry to or progression in the profession to which it relates. For example, a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education is required for teaching.

3.2.1 How to apply for post graduate funding

Students wishing to embark upon a post-graduate course must apply to the Director for funding by April of their final year of HE studies.

The following information will be required to enable the Director to determine who should be awarded funding —

- Supportive references from their Higher Education academic leads/tutors
- Evidence of a consistent and positive attitude to their studies.
- Clear demonstration of an abiding interest in their chosen field of study e.g. they have undertaken voluntary work in a school for those wishing to become teachers
- Evidence of a related range of interests which demonstrates that they have made the most of the opportunities afforded to them by studying overseas
- Records of the student maintaining regular contact and annual visits to the Islands
- Clear demonstration that their chosen field of study is one that supports the strategic development of the Islands, as detailed in 'The Islands Plan' and their proposed career is included in the Workforce Shortage List
- Evidence of a clear commitment to return to the Islands.

4. Where Courses Can Be Taken

Funding can be granted for an HE course at a university or equivalent educational institution, in the UK or elsewhere in the world.

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5. What Funding Covers

HE and post-graduate funding is available for:

5.1 Tuition costs

- (a) For eligible students the Education Department will pay for tuition costs, up to the 'UK home status' rate for a first degree
- (b) When an eligible student is accepted onto a relevant course, they should provide their Higher Education establishment with a letter from the Education Department stating that their course is being fully funded by FIG and that invoices should be sent by **e-mail to the PA to the Director of Education** for payment. This letter must be obtained in August from the Education Office before the commencement of the course to submit to the Higher Education establishment at the beginning of the first term.
- (c) Students who choose to study at a recognised Higher Education establishment in a country other than the UK, will be funded up to the actual overseas tuition fee or up to the equivalent of "UK home status" tuition fees, (whichever cost is lower). Where an overseas tuition fee is higher than UK fees the difference between the tuition fees and the funding provided by FIG must be met by the student themselves.

5.2 Student Allowance

FIG will provide eligible students with an annual 'student allowance' towards the costs of accommodation, travel and living expenses while in full time study. It is the responsibility of the student to manage the use of their student allowance. The allowance is unlikely to cover all the student's expenses.

This allowance is reviewed annually by the Education Department, as part of the FIG budget process.

Payments will normally be made monthly in advance to a bank account in the country of study, starting in September and ending in June of the final year in Higher Education.

Students are normally responsible for paying for their accommodation direct to the university. In some instances, halls of residence may require the payment of accommodation fees termly in advance. If this is the case the Education Office will re-adjust the student allowance payments accordingly; i.e. they will deduct the amount from the student allowance and then pay the remainder in monthly instalments. This can be organised by contacting PA to the Director of Education. The Education Department can make such payments on the student's behalf.

An allowance for accommodation will not be given to a student who lives with their parent while attending the course.

5.3 Residential Courses

FIG will pay the cost of field studies course or residential courses which are an essential component of the course . Claims must be supported by evidence from the

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Higher Education establishment that the course is an essential component of the course. FIG will reimburse 50% of costs.

5.4 Materials and equipment

FIG will normally reimburse the reasonable cost of essential tools, uniforms or other specialised equipment/resources are essential for a course of study if the requirement is confirmed by the Higher Education establishment . This does not apply to text books or general study materials.

5.5 Travel costs

Eligible students are expected to pay for internal travel in the country of study. Travel expenses that are related to the course of study (e.g. for courses such as nursing and teaching, where students are required to spend time in work placements) may be reimbursed at the discretion of the Director, if confirmed by the Higher Education establishment. Students must obtain the prior approval of the Education Department and such expenses will only be paid on production of original receipts or bus/rail tickets, which should be sent to the Education Office.

5.6 Flights

Eligible students are entitled to **one** return flight per academic year. The maximum funding level is the cost of one return flight to/from the UK by the airbridge. Any travel costs above that amount in any academic year must be covered by the individual.

All flights to be paid for by the Education Department must be booked through the Education Department. This can be done by contacting PA to the Director of Education and providing the flight date, passport number and expiry date.

Eligible students making connecting flights to Camp should book FIGAS flights through the Education Office.

Students who wish to use the MPA bus should also book this through the Education Office.

Eligible students are entitled to the current baggage allowances set for permanent residents. Any excess baggage charges must be paid for by the student.

5.7 Insurance

Eligible students are covered by FIG travel and medical insurance when travelling directly to or from their educational institution on under arrangements made by the Education Department. Details of what this insurance is available from the Education Department. This cover does not extend to any other journey that students make during the period of their HE course.

Students are advised to take out additional personal insurance to cover additional journeys and personal possessions.

5.8 Freight

A freight allowance of up to £120 is available once, to students who have successfully completed their course of study. This is to provide for the return of

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personal goods to the Falkland Islands. This allowance is provided as a reimbursement and evidence of payment must be provided.

6. Conditions of Funding

All eligible students must sign a funding agreement as a condition of receiving funding. If the individual is under the age of 18, a parent who is ordinarily resident in the Falklands must also sign the funding agreement. The funding agreement sets out the conditions that students must comply with during their course. Breach of the conditions may result in funding being reduced or terminated and repayment may be claimed by FIG from the student or, if appropriate, their parent.

6.1 Behaviour

FIG expects students to apply themselves fully to their course and meet high standards of personal and academic behaviour. The Director has the power to terminate funding and reclaim any sums paid to or for the benefit of any student who does not meet these standards. Students are expected to comply with the policies of the education provider they attend.

FIG operates a zero-tolerance attitude towards students engaging in any forms of criminality including recreational drug use and any acts of violence against others.

6.2 Progress Reports

As a condition of funding, students must give permission for FIG to receive direct progress reports from their educational institution and boarding/accommodation provider if applicable. Students are contacted by the Education Office bi-annually for a progress report. These Progress Reports are essential. If they are not received by the stated deadline, the student allowance will normally be withheld until a report has been received.

6.3 Breach of Conditions

If the Director of Education is satisfied that the terms of the funding agreement are not being met, the Director of Education may give written notice to the student. The notice will include:

- particulars of the breach of condition;
- what action is required to be taken by the student to remedy the situation; and
- the action that will be taken by the Director if the issue is not resolved

7. Student Welfare

The safety and wellbeing of students is a primary concern of FIG. Although students are expected to seek assistance from their higher educational institution in the first instance, FIG makes additional arrangements to provide emergency support to students.

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7.1 Safety plan

Students must have an approved safety plan in place before departing for their educational institution. A safety plan sets out the arrangements in place and resources available to students for pastoral care and to prevent, identify, and address any welfare issues that may arise. This safety plan must detail a person to act as their emergency contact. The emergency contact must reside in the country of study and be able to support the student in an emergency.

There is an emergency guardian service for HE students who are under 21 and studying in the UK.

This service will provide backup emergency guardian service when it is essential to protect the safety of the student. This is not a full guardian service. A student who needs the service (or anyone else on behalf of the student) should contact the Education Department.

Falkland Islands Government Office (FIGO) in London will provide emergency assistance to students in the UK in the event that they are not able to access appropriate support elsewhere.

7.2 Medical Requirements

Relevant details of student's medical history should be sent to their prospective Higher Education establishment as required by that establishment. It is also recommended that students undertake a dental check-up and any necessary treatment before their departure. It is the responsibility of the student to maintain his or her general and dental health whilst overseas.

8 Dealing with Unexpected Issues

There are occasions when students experience unexpected issue/s or events where they may not know how to resolve the issue/s by themselves. If such issues do arise, they should initially seek help from Student Services at the establishment where they are studying, as it is likely that any issues that have arisen may be solved by such contact. The student should also however alert the Education department to any such issue in case they may be able to offer any assistance.

8.1 Changes of Course for Higher Education Students

A change of course may be permitted after one year, if good reasons are given and providing that the first year of the course has been completed successfully. In these cases, students must request prior permission from the Education Department before making the change and submit a letter of support from the HE establishment.

8.2 Repeat Years

FIG will not provide funding for repeat years unless there are very exceptional circumstances (such as certified ill health).

9. Financial Repayments

9.1 Repayment will not normally be required from a student who has a diagnosed medical condition which, in the opinion of a suitably qualified medical practitioner has impeded the student's progress and/or prevented them from completing their course of study.

9.2 Repayment will normally be required if:

- the student withdraws from the course without the agreement of the Director
- the student is excluded from the HE institution due to criminal behaviour or a serious breach of the establishment's rules.

The amount of repayment that will normally be required is as follows:

- The fees for the academic year in which the student withdraws or is excluded must be repaid in full.
- 50% of all flight costs to and from the Falkland Islands incurred in that year must be repaid.
- All student allowance paid after the date of withdrawal or exclusion must be repaid in full.

For Higher Education these repayments could amount to a considerable sum of money. Students are encouraged to contact the Treasury to agree a schedule of repayments if they are not able to repay the funding in full immediately.

10. Reviews

A person whose application for funding for a course of HE or a post-graduate course is not accepted can ask for a review of the decision. A student who is asked to repay all or part of the funding provided for them can also ask for a review of that decision.

The request for a review should be made to the Board of Education.

The outcome of the review may be:

- The decision is upheld
- The decision is overturned and a new decision is substituted
- The decision is referred back to the original decision maker for reconsideration

Any requests for review must be made within four weeks of the original decision being communicated. The person undertaking the review may request additional information.