A guide for those starting Further Education at the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)

Further Education **Financial Support** for **Part-time Students** 2026/27

cafre
College of Agriculture, Food & Rural Enterprise

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
www.daera-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe

Depairtment o' Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers

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1. Introduction

This booklet applies to students commencing or currently in part-time Further Education at the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE). CAFRE is an integral part of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

In this booklet you will find information on the financial help that DAERA has put in place for part-time further education students for the academic year 2026/27. It applies to students participating in eligible courses between 1 September 2026 and 31 August 2027 (Qualifying courses are listed in Annex A).

Applications for financial support in the 2026/27 academic year for students at CAFRE will be administered by the Education Authority, Further Education Grants Section.

This booklet is for guidance only and does not cover all circumstances.

For further information please contact:

Education Authority
Further Education Grants Section
1 Hospital Road
Omagh
Co Tyrone
BT79 0AW

Telephone: 028 9047 0155 and select option 2.
Email: fegrants@eani.org.uk

You can apply online at:
https://feportal.eani.org.uk

Note!

If you apply on-line you can upload any supporting documents.

However verification of date of birth must be sent to the FE Grants Section of the Education Authority. Original documents only (not photocopies).

If you are posting a paper application you should obtain a receipt of postage as proof.

2. What financial help is available for part-time students?

2.1 Course Grant

A means tested grant is available to help with the costs associated with part-time study at CAFRE including travel and equipment. The grant is available to students living in Northern Ireland. It applies to students who intend to commence an eligible part-time further education course at CAFRE.

Who is eligible?

Students of any age, on an eligible part-time further education course at CAFRE. You can get further information on the eligibility criteria in Section 6 of this booklet or by contacting the Education Authority (contact details on page 2 of this booklet).

If you are not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland, but you have moved to Northern Ireland to attend a CAFRE course, you may not be eligible for a part-time further education grant.

How much?

The amount of part-time grant available is:

Household income	Grant
• Up to £27,330	£400
• £27,331 - £32,000	£200
• £32,001 and over	Nil

The part-time grant is based on an assessment of your income. The Education Authority will carry out this assessment (see Section 6 on page 9 'How you are assessed and paid'). Your household income includes your income and your spouse/partner's (if applicable) income.

How is the Grant paid?

You will receive the grant in a one off payment. This will be paid by BACS transfer directly into your bank or building society account. There are a number of things that you as a student can do to make sure that you receive your payment promptly.

It is best to give your full name as it appears on your birth certificate or passport in all dealings with the Education Authority or CAFRE.

2.2 Childcare Grant

You can claim a childcare grant if you are using registered or approved childcare. Your childcare provider must be registered or approved by the Health and Social Care Trust, or an out-of-school club who provide childcare provision for up to four hours per day, and more than five days a year, which is available either before or after school and during school holidays. You could receive up to £65 per week for one child, and up to £110 per week for two or more children. How much you get depends on your income and that of your dependants (including your spouse/partner).

You **will not be eligible** for the Childcare Grant if the childcare is provided by a registered or approved childcare provider who is:

- Your partner
- A relative of the child and providing care in the child's own home
- A relative of the child providing care away from the child's own home and is only caring for children he or she is related to.

A relative of the child means a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, brother or sister related by blood or marriage, or living arrangements.

You can claim for childcare costs during:

- Term time;
- Christmas and Easter holidays if your childminder charges you;
- If you are on a two year course and need help with childcare costs for the summer holidays between year one and year two.
- The grant does not cover private study time.

NB: If your childcare provider requires you to use the childcare facility for a minimum of 2 days per week and your course runs for 1 day a week, you will only receive help with childcare costs for the days you attend the course.

What you Need to Supply

We will need the following information to process your claim:

- A childcare grant application CG2 - you can request a form by contacting the FE office on 028 9047 0155, selecting option 2 or by emaiing **fegrants@eani.org.uk**;
- Your child/children's original long version birth certificate(s);
- Your current Universal Credit notification;
- Your childminder's details of registration;
- CAFRE need to verify the number of hours involved in your course.

How is this grant paid?

- The EA will pay the childcare provider directly;
- If your childcare costs are more than the grant you receive, you are responsible for the balance.

Will you have to repay this grant?

You will not have to repay this grant unless you withdraw from the course or give inaccurate information.

Note: If you work part-time you may already receive help with childcare costs through the Tax Credits/Universal Credits system for the time you are at work. We will consider claims for additional childcare costs if they are incurred in connection with your part-time course.

2.3 Support for Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability such as a physical disability, a mental health difficulty, long term illness or a specific learning difficulty, you can apply for support. You should contact the CAFRE Student Support Officer who will talk to you and advise you on the support available. For further information on how to contact the Student Support Officer telephone 028 9442 6911.

3. When and how to apply for financial support

The steps below set out what you need to do.

New and current students

You should start thinking about applying for financial help as soon as you have applied for a place on a part-time further education course at CAFRE. You can apply online at: https://feportal.eani.org.uk.

If your course changes after you apply, contact the Education Authority straight away.

Complete your DAERA part-time Further Education Grant Application and return it to the Education Authority giving all the details and documentary evidence required, including verification of income. The Education Authority will determine whether or not you are eligible to be considered to receive help with course costs.

If you do not give income details you may not receive the money you are entitled to as the Education Authority will be unable to carry out an assessment.

Once the Education Authority has assessed your application they will send you a Financial Assessment Notification telling you how much support you can get.

If you want to receive your grant at the start of your course, you should submit the application and supporting evidence before your course commences.

If you are completing a paper form please make sure you have completed **ALL** sections and signed the form.

Late applications for financial support

If, after your course starts, you decide that you want to apply for financial help, you must apply no later than nine months after the first day of the academic year of your course (i.e. 1 September).

For example, if your course starts on 1 September 2026, you have until 31 May 2027 to apply.

Applications received after this date will not be accepted.

If you do not receive an acknowledgement of your application within 2 weeks, please contact the Education Authority Further Grants Section on 028 9047 0155, selecting option 2.

4. General information

4.1 What are the conditions for student support?

Support is subject to the following conditions:

- you attend the course regularly;
- your academic progress and conduct is satisfactory to CAFRE;
- you sign an undertaking to repay any amount overpaid, for whatever reason.

4.2 For how long will I get support?

Support will last as long as the minimum period normally required to complete the course for which it is made.

4.3 Can the support be terminated or suspended?

Yes - the Education Authority may suspend or terminate your support or withhold or reduce any payment normally due if the conditions for support are not fulfilled.

4.4 How do changes in my circumstances affect my Course Grant?

- You must inform the Education Authority immediately if you obtain any other scholarship or grant assistance for your course or acquire any source of income;

- The Education Authority must also be informed of any change in your financial or other circumstances which might affect the value of support you are entitled to.

4.5 Can I have my travelling expenses paid for?

The part-time course grant contains a contribution towards travel. The Education Authority does not reimburse travelling expenses incurred in attending course pre-admission interviews or to and from Campus during the course.

5. Extra help available

5.1 Hardship Fund

This may be available through CAFRE to provide help for students on lower income who may need extra financial support for their course and to stay in further education.

How do I apply?

If the Hardship Fund opens in 2026/27 application forms will be available from your Campus and should be returned to CAFRE when completed.

6. Part-time Course Grant

6.1 How you are assessed and paid

The Education Authority will use the information you provide in your application to decide whether you can get financial help for part-time course costs.

6.2 Eligibility for financial support

To be eligible for help with your course costs you must meet certain conditions. The part-time course you do must be approved for the further education grant at a CAFRE campus and you must meet the personal eligibility criteria.

Personal eligibility

Your personal eligibility depends on:

- where you live (this is known as the residence requirement);

Residence

Normally, you must meet the following three requirements on the first day of the first academic year of your course. On that day you must:

- be 'ordinarily resident' in Northern Ireland; and
- have been 'ordinarily resident' in the United Kingdom, (UK) and Islands (i.e. Channel Islands or the Isle of Man) for three years immediately before the starting date of the course (not wholly or mainly for the purpose of receiving full time education); and
- have 'settled status' in the UK as described in the Immigration Act of 1971. This means there are no immigration restrictions on how long you can stay in the UK.

"Ordinarily resident" is defined as "habitual and normal residence from choice and for a settled purpose throughout the three-year period, apart from temporary or occasional absences".

For EU, EEA and Swiss citizens, you may be eligible for support if you are within the personal scope of the citizen's rights provisions or a person with protected rights under the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement. This does not apply to ROI nationals meeting the 3 year residency requirement. The residence requirements are complicated and if you do not meet the requirements set out above you may still be eligible for support. You should check with the Education Authority for information about your individual circumstances. Exceptional residency types such as refugee, stateless person or those with humanitarian protection may be eligible.

The Education Authority will decide whether you meet the 'ordinarily resident' requirement.

Course criteria

Qualifying part-time courses must:

- Be at least 1 academic year in duration and be completed in no longer than twice the time it would take to complete the full-time equivalent (if appropriate).
- Be a vocational qualification equivalent to GCSE, AS or A Level (level 2 or level 3 in the national qualifications framework).
- Be at least 8 hours per week in duration (this includes taught hours plus compulsory placement hours).

Refer to annex A for a list of qualifying courses.

Leaving your course or transferring to a new course

It is important to remember the rules about previous courses if you are thinking about leaving your course before it ends or transferring to a new course, as this could affect how much help you can get if you take another course in the future. So, it is very important if you want to transfer courses or withdraw from your course that you talk to your college and the Education Authority as soon as possible.

Repeat years

If you have unsuccessfully completed a year of the course and decide to repeat the year, you will not be eligible for any support unless medical or other mitigating circumstances contributed to the need to repeat the year. You will need to look into other ways of paying for your course. You should seek advice from the Education Authority.

6.3 How the Education Authority assess your grant

Parental income is not used in the assessment of support for part time students

Your entitlement depends on your own income and that of your spouse/partner (if applicable). If you want to apply for this financial support you will need to enclose evidence of your income with your application, your original birth certificate or passport -a photocopy is not acceptable. For documents relating to income you may send photocopies as long as all details are clear. If you do not give income details you may not receive the money you are entitled to as the EA will be unable to carry out an assessment.

Whose income do the Education Authority take into account?

Your own taxable income:

Taxable income is any income you receive on which you pay income tax.

What income do the Education Authority take into account for your spouse/partner?

- If your spouse/partner is in receipt of benefits the Education Authority will need verification of this from the Benefit Office;
- If they receive tax credits/universal credit they should send their most recent tax/universal credit notification;
- If they are employed the Education Authority take their total gross taxable income and will require their last monthly pay slip or their last 4 weekly pay slips;
- If they are self-employed or have income from property the Education Authority take the taxable profit - they will need their tax calculation from the Inland Revenue or a letter from their Accountant;
- If they are in receipt of pensions the Education Authority will need verification of the amount they currently receive from the Pension Branch or whoever pays their pension;
- An allowance of £2,000 will be deducted from income for the spouse, £2,000 deducted for the first child and £1,000 for each additional child in the family;
- An allowance will be deducted from income if your spouse/partner pays into a personal pension scheme that qualifies for tax relief.

Annex A: 2026/27 Qualifying Part-Time Further Education CAFRE Courses Eligible for Support

Part-Time Agriculture

- City and Guilds Level 2 Diploma in Work-based Agriculture.
- City and Guilds Level 3 Diploma in Work-based Agriculture.
- City and Guilds Level 3 Diploma in Work-based Agriculture (Poultry).

Part-Time Veterinary Nursing

- Vet Skill Level 2 Certificate in Veterinary Care Support.
- Vet Skill VTEC Level 3 Diploma in Veterinary Nursing (Companion animal).

Part-Time Equine

- City & Guilds Level 2 Technical Certificate in Forgework

Part-Time Horticulture

- City and Guilds Level 2 Diploma in Work-based Horticulture, Parks, Gardens and Green Spaces.
- City and Guilds Level 3 Work-based Diploma in Horticulture, Landscape Maintenance.
- City and Guilds Level 3 Work-based Diploma in Horticulture, Sports Turf Management.
- City and Guilds Level 3 Work-based Diploma in Horticulture, Sports Turf Greenkeeper.

Part-Time Floristry

- City and Guilds Level 3 Work-based Diploma in Floristry.

Other courses may be added to this list, please check with the Education Authority.

Apprenticeship courses are NOT eligible for the DAERA part-time grant.

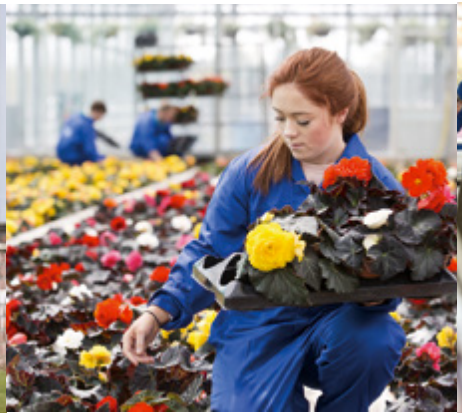
Annex B: Privacy Notice Education Authority Further Education Grants

The Education Authority (EA) and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs are joint Data Controllers under the Data Protection Legislation. We hold information for the purposes specified in our notification to the Information Commissioner including determining eligibility for a Further Education grant, assessing the maximum amount of financial support available, payment of a Further Education grant and the detection and prevention of fraud, and may use this information for any of these.

For further details about the way your information is used, who is responsible for it and the rights you have in connection with it, please refer to our full Privacy Notice available at:

https://www.eani.org.uk/about-us/privacy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-education-authority-further-education-grants

If you don't have internet access, please call us on 028 9047 0155, selecting Option 2 and we can send a copy to you.



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