



FE Bursary Policy

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Audience:	All Students, Prospective Students, Staff & Governors.

FE Bursary Policy

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1** The College bursary funds are designed to widen participation and to support our students to attend College and achieve their goals, as well as to support their general welfare. The funds are distributed in accordance with Department for Education (DFE) and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) funding rules.
- 1.2** The purpose of this Policy is to set out the College's approach to the allocation of Financial Support funds available for learners from recognised government funding.
- 1.3** The College is committed to promoting equality of opportunity by improving social inclusion in supporting learners who may be excluded from further education by financial hardship.
- 1.4** This Policy now incorporates and supersedes the FE Learner Financial Support Policy

2.0 Scope

- 2.1** This bursary guidance is for applicants, students and staff of the College. This Policy must be followed when making College bursary awards and when considering student appeals.
- 2.2** This Policy relates to all learners who are studying a further education study programme but does not include those enrolled on an apprenticeship or traineeship.
- 2.3** The College receives a bursary allocation or access to funding for the following from the DFE:
 - Vulnerable bursaries (16-18, EHCP)
 - Discretionary bursaries (16-18, EHCP)
 - Free College Meals Fund (16-18, EHCP)
 - Care to Learn (16-19)
 - Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund
 - Hardship Funding - Learner Support Fund (19+ DFE/WMCA funded students)
- 2.4** Other policies and procedures linked to this Policy include:
 - Financial Regulations
 - Admissions Policy
 - Data Protection Policy
 - Equality and Diversity Policy
 - Complaints Policy

3.0 Entitlement

- 3.1** Funds are allocated to students who can demonstrate a financial barrier to their learning which is assessed by measuring household income. All funds have published financial eligibility criteria which are also detailed in the bursary application forms.
- 3.2** All bursaries are to be awarded based on each individual's eligibility and need, and bursaries will not be applied at flat rate in line with funding guidance. Awards will be based on each student's household income, financial situation, distance to travel and length of programme, Student Services will use thresholds to ensure a fair distribution of the funding available.
- 3.3** Receipt of bursary funding for 16-18-year olds does not affect receipt of other means-tested benefits paid to families such as income support, job seekers allowance, child benefit, working tax credit housing benefit or generally universal credit.
- 3.4** If a student is in receipt of disability living allowance (or Personal Independence Payments) and Employment Support Allowance, parents cannot claim certain household/family benefits for that child.
- 3.5** Learners who study with the College via partners or subcontractors are eligible for funding and may submit an application to the College.
- 3.6** This Policy also covers any additional FE discretionary funding schemes that may be implemented during the academic year.
- 3.7** The support funding cannot be used for learners who are paying the full cost of their course fees. The support funding also cannot be used where there is an alternative source of financial support such as from Job Centre Plus.
- 3.8** To support its decisions on payments, the College will use its own information such as attendance statistics and the likelihood of completing the course.
- 3.9** The Learners Support Fund is both limited and discretionary. There is no automatic entitlement to support from this fund.
- 3.10** Successful applications may not cover all costs, but will make a reasonable contribution depending on funding available.
- 3.11** In order to assess an application, the College requires personal financial information from applicants or their parents/carers. All information supplied is treated as confidential.
- 3.12** Any appeal against a decision regarding Learner Financial Support should be dealt with via the College's complaints procedure.
- 3.13** It is the responsibility of the learner to inform the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about any learner support they receive from the College, as the learner support payment may impact the benefits they receive.

4.0 Responsibilities

Board of Governors

4.1 Responsibility for reviewing and approving this Policy on a biennial basis, or more often in cases where funding body guidance changes significantly.

Deputy Principal Finance & Resources

4.2 Responsibility for reviewing and updating this Policy on a biennial basis, or more often in cases where funding body guidance changes and the College needs to reflect this in how it manages and distributes its bursary funds.

4.3 Responsibility for ensuring that relevant information is recorded and stored correctly to allow full and proper financial returns to the funding bodies which prove expenditure against the bursaries.

Assistant Principal Learner Services

4.4 Where appeals against the allocation of bursary funds have been rejected, the Assistant Principal Learner Services (or a person nominated by them) will have responsibility for investigating and responding to any formal complaint raised by the claimant.

Learner Services Team (Bursaries) are responsible for:

4.5 The assessment, confirmation, monitoring and payment calculation for bursary payments.

4.6 Retaining copies of any documents the student has signed to give formal agreement to their bursary fund conditions, including the impact on payments if they do not attend, meet their commitment targets or the institution's rules about returning equipment paid for from the bursary funds.

4.7 Dealing with appeals against the College not granting a bursary allowance by re-checking calculations against published funding body criteria.

5.0 General

Vulnerable Bursary

5.1 A Vulnerable Bursary can be awarded up to the sum of £1,200 a year for students aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August or 19-24 year old students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who are in one of the following vulnerable groups:

- In care,
- Care Leaver,
- Financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and in

- receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit,
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment in their own right and in receipt of Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit.

5.2 Students that are identified as being in one of these groups are not automatically entitled as the award is based on financial needs or where these needs are not covered from other sources. Students may receive a lower amount or no bursary at all if they do not have any participation costs.

5.3 Eligible students may be supported with the following costs; transport, meals, books, uniform and equipment. The bursary amount paid relates to the actual costs spent, not a general or global amount of £1,200.

5.4 As stated in the funding guidance we are unable to cover other living costs, extra-curricular activities, counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring. In the event of a withdrawal any unspent funds are re-claimed.

5.5 Students should keep receipts showing that the award is being spent as intended, checks may be carried out to ensure the funds are being used for their intended purpose.

5.6 Where IT equipment such as laptops are provided, these are a loan and are required to be returned at the end of the course in the same condition when issued.

Discretionary Bursary (16-18 & EHCP)

5.7 Up to 100% Discretionary Bursary is available to students aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August or 19-24 students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), where their household income is up to £30,000 or if the parent/carer is in receipt of a means tested benefit.

5.8 This fund can support the cost of transport, meals, books, uniform and equipment but does not cover extra-curricular activities or provide learning support such as counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring.

5.9 Students should keep receipts showing that the award is being spent as intended, checks may be carried out to ensure the funds are being used for their intended purpose.

5.10 Students on apprenticeship programmes, or any waged training, are employed, rather than in education are not eligible for the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund and the DFE does not expect students on distance learning provision to need help based on what the bursary is intended to cover.

Free College Meal Fund (Free School Meals)

5.11 To be eligible for Free Meals, students must be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August, or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and be in receipt of, or have parents in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)).
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit.
- Any family in receipt of Universal Credit (from September 2025)

5.12 Eligible students will be entitled to a free meal allowance of £3.00 each day for attended activities, this will be subject to change based on demand, the lowest amount awarded will be £2.58 in line with the Government guidance (and funding). Free meals funding is available to the student from the point of a successful bursary application and cannot be back dated.

Care to Learn

5.13 Care to learn (C2L) helps young parents under the age of 20 (at the start of their course) to continue in, and return to education after the birth of a child. It does this by providing funding for childcare whilst the young parent is studying. The scheme can provide up to a maximum total amount of support of £180 per child per week and covers only days in which the student has attended timetabled course activity.

5.14 Registration fees charged by the childminder or childminder agency, up to a maximum of £80 per child, will also be paid by the scheme if requested. Young parents are expected to take up the funded early education entitlement before applying for funding from C2L.

5.15 The young parent's study programme must have some direct public funding and C2L will only fund childcare provision which is

- Registered with Ofsted,
- Registered with a Childminding Agency,
- Is a School.

5.16 Young parents, their education institution and their childcare provider must all meet the eligibility criteria to receive C2L. They must be under the age of 20 and have the legal right to be resident in the UK on the date they start their programme.

5.17 Young parents must complete and submit a new C2L application for each academic

year. Childcare providers and education institutions also need to provide information for each young parent who applies. Students submit applications online via the Student Bursary Support Service (SBSS) online portal Apply for Care to Learn funding (education.gov.uk).

- 5.18** If applying after the student starts their programme then payments can only be backdated to the beginning of their study programme if their application is received within 28 days of the start date. For any applications received outside of this timeframe, payments will only begin from the Monday of the week the SBSS receive the application.
- 5.19** The SBSS will only make payments for childcare while the young parent is attending their study programme and the child is in childcare. Providers are required to confirm attendance on a monthly basis and any withdrawals are to be notified to determine if further payments should be made.
- 5.20** Summer retainers can be paid, if required by the childcare provider, to enable the childcare place to remain open over the summer holiday but students must meet the eligibility criteria and apply online to SBSS before the closing date.

Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund

- 5.21** This fund is available to students who have taken up an Advanced Learner Loan to fund their course who have a gross household income of less than £30,000 or who are living independently and have a gross income of less than £21,000. Support is available for accommodation, travel, course materials and equipment, childcare and classroom assistance for a disability or learning difficulty (once assessed by the College).
- 5.22** Students must be 19 or older on the first day of their course. The course must be a Level 3, 4, 5 or 6 qualification.
- 5.23** Students will need to be approved for the loan and pass the initial liability point (two weeks (14 days) of attendance) for the College to claim the loans bursary fund to support them.
- 5.24** Students will be expected to use any free childcare funding they receive to cover the course hours, and the bursary will support additional hours. Childcare funding is only available for childcare delivered by Ofsted registered providers.
- 5.25** The cost of books, uniforms and equipment costs are usually charged direct by the curriculum area and the items are purchased on behalf of the student. The costs available are defined for each course to meet the needs of that course. Travel is paid on attended days of the course for individuals where the home to College journey is more than 3 miles.

Learner Support Fund (for 19 plus students)

5.26 Students aged 19 or over are eligible to receive a learner support bursary if 19 or over, on a further education course at Level 3 or below and facing financial hardship.

5.27 19+ students can receive a learner support bursary while they continue to attend education (in the case of a 19+ continuer, this must be the same programme they started before they turned 19), as long as their eligibility continues and their institution considers they need the support to continue their participation.

5.28 To be eligible for support students must be:

- 19 or over
- Studying for a qualification funded by the DFE or WMCA
- Meet the DFE or WMCA residency criteria of home student
- Gross income less than £21,000 if living independently, or gross household income up to than £30,000

5.29 Eligible students can receive support with childcare (if they are aged 20 or older on the first day of their course), travel, course materials and equipment. Students will be expected to use any free childcare funding they receive to cover the course hours, and the bursary will support additional hours.

5.30 The cost of books, uniforms and equipment costs are usually charged direct by the curriculum area and the items are purchased on behalf of the student. The costs available are defined for each course to meet the needs of that course. Travel is paid on attended days of the timetabled course.

5.31 In exceptional circumstances, the College will use the hardship funds to assist with course fees for learners who need financial support to start or stay in learning.

6.0 Payment Categories other Additional Information

Travel

6.1 All students who are eligible for a bursary and claim for travel support must live more than 3 miles away from the campus they attend, the following is offered for the days they are in College:

- eTicket for bus travel (termly, monthly or weekly)
- Paper bus pass (for those without a smart phone)
- Travel by car then they can be awarded 30p per mile
- Travel by train – full fare can be claimed
- Travel by taxi where appropriate – full fare can be claimed
- Travel for work placements

6.2 A cap may be applied on paying for travel over 30 miles, this cap may be lifted if there is evidence that the course studying is specialist and not available at a provider that is

closer to the student's home address. This will be assessed on a case by case basis and may not be awarded for the full amount requested.

6.3 Students should keep receipts showing that the award is being spent as intended, checks may be carried out to ensure the funds are being used for their intended purpose.

Attendance

6.4 All awards are subject to one of the following:

- Minimum attendance of 85% in all subjects/courses
- Meeting the agreed targets detailed in your Commitment Statement
- Formally agreed as an exceptional circumstance where there are extenuating reasons as to why neither of the above are appropriate

Changes of Circumstance

6.5 Students are required to disclose any change of circumstances during the year that may affect their eligibility for bursary funding. If a student leaves before the end of their course they may be required to repay their award, or return any equipment purchased from bursary funding.

6.6 Completion of the form and evidence provided should be correct and complete to the best of your knowledge, providing false or incomplete information may lead to the suspension and recovery of funds.

Unforeseen Emergency Support

6.7 The College will set aside an element of funding which will provide a safety net for genuine emergencies that cannot be foreseen or provided for in advance.

Application Process

6.8 Application forms are available from Student Services Hubs. Applications will be checked against the eligibility criteria and students will receive a written outcome, and if successful details of the awards and payment dates.

6.9 All copies of application forms and evidence will be kept securely by the College for six years.

Appeals

6.10 Students have the right to appeal in writing to the Learner Support Fund Team, and have 10 working days to do this from receipt of their award notification. The appeal should set out their reasons and include any supporting evidence. The Assistant Principal Learner Services, or their nominated representative, will consider the appeal and provide the student with an outcome in writing within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal.

7.0 Monitoring and Review

- 7.1** The College will review this Policy biennially. This review will take place in July and any Policy revisions will be completed and published prior to the commencement of the next academic year.
- 7.2** The internal monitoring of the implementation of this Policy will be the responsibility of the Assistant Principal Learner Services, who will produce regular progress reports, upon request, to the Board.
- 7.3** The Deputy Principal Finance & Resources is responsible for ensuring that this Policy and its associated processes and procedures remain appropriate and complies with changes in legislation or funding guidance from the DFE or WMCA.