



“Inspiring learning, developing character, building futures”

Student Support Policies and Procedures

Bursary/Free Meals/Access Fund Scheme Policies and Procedures

Aim: To set out the college framework within which all bursary applications will be administered.

Policy Authorisation:	Management: Senior Leadership Team
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Policy Author	Head of Student Support

Bursary/Free Meals/Access Fund Scheme Policies and Procedures

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the college framework within which all bursary applications will be administered.
- 1.2 The college follows the Education and Skills Funding Agency guidelines for 16-18 bursaries.
- 1.3 Bursary support is available to students with the greatest financial need and provides a funding mechanism that is fair and consistent. The bursary award provides financial support towards travel and study based on individual circumstances.

2. Responsibilities

- 2.1 The Deputy Head of Student Services is responsible for the management of the bursary scheme and Student Finance staff will support the daily administration of the bursary scheme.
- 2.2 The MIS team is responsible for setting up the IT systems to support the application process and eligibility based on attendance.
- 2.4 The Student Finance staff are responsible for advising students and staff about the bursary scheme.

3. Eligibility Criteria

- 3.1 Bursary A (including college credit, travel and free meals)
 - in care
 - care leavers
 - receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them such as a child or partner
 - receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right
- 3.2 Bursary B (including college credit, travel and free meals)
 - 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 and have a gross income of no more than £16,190 per annum (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit*), as assessed by HMRC
 - Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - Universal Credit with net earnings (after tax and not including any benefits) not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum

* Students whose parent(s)/carer(s) are entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 **will not be entitled to Bursary B** but may be eligible for a Bursary C (see below).

- 3.3 Bursary C (including college credit, travel but **without** free meals)
- Working Tax Credit, and gross income is no more than £16,190 per annum
 - Universal Credit with net earnings (after tax and not including any benefits) not exceeding the equivalent of £14,280 per annum

3.4 The Access Fund

This is an emergency fund for students who experience short-term financial hardship and are struggling to meet costs associated with college. The fund is there to help cover costs such as textbooks, course materials, DBS checks and essential course-related visits. Students may be required to provide evidence of their family's income such as benefit entitlement, P60 or Tax Credit Award Notice as part of the Access Fund application process.

- 3.5 A student can qualify for one bursary only but may be entitled to other types of financial support, for example a grant/loan from the Access Fund.

4. Application and Assessment

- 4.1 All completed application forms with supporting documentation returned to Student Finance will be marked as received. The application form and supporting evidence will be stored securely in the student's bursary file.
- 4.2 An administrator in Student Finance will check the college database to confirm that the student has either enrolled at college or has applied to start a programme of study.
- 4.3 If the application form is incomplete or relevant supporting evidence is missing, Student Finance will contact the applicant to advise on what is required to complete the application process.
- 4.4 Any subsequent supporting documentation received in Student Finance will be attached to the application form prior to assessment of eligibility.
- 4.5 Once all evidence is in place, a bursary assessment is carried out and an award decision is made. The decision is recorded on the bursary database and a reference number is generated.
- 4.6 Student Finance staff will forward completed application forms with all relevant supporting documentation to the Deputy Head of Student Services for the eligibility assessment to be authorised. Once approved the application file is securely filed in locked bursary cabinets.
- 4.7 All applicants who successfully complete a bursary application will receive an award letter, including a Notice of Entitlement and Bursary Contracts.
- 4.8 All completed application forms received by the end of September will have credit backdated to the beginning of the term/course, provided that the student meets the eligibility requirements. Otherwise credit will be made from the date that the completed application form was received.

5. Registration on the Bursary Scheme

- 5.1 Once students have enrolled at college they should bring their Notice of Entitlement and Bursary Contracts to the Student Finance Office.
- 5.2 The Bursary Contract Part 1 will be signed by the Student Finance staff, retained and placed in

the student's bursary file.

- 5.3 The Contract Part 2, signed by students and parent/carer, must be returned to the Student Finance Office. On receipt of this the student will be "authorised for credit".
- 5.4 Bursary credit cannot be made until both contracts (1 and 2) have been received.

6. Bursary Elements

6.1 There are up to three elements to the bursary.

i) The credit element which is split into three packages as follows:

- a. Option 1 (college credit)
- b. Option 2 (catering credit)
- c. Option 3 (50:50)

Students will select which option they want on the application form and this will be credited to their chosen in-house account (see above) every half term based on attendance.

ii) The travel pass element which is issued directly to the student through Student Finance

iii) The free meal element is credited to a student's online cashless catering account for each day the student attends college. This does not include study days unless off site for work placement. College will also make arrangements for free meals for students on days when they are off-site as part of their study programme, for instance attending a work placement or work experience.

- 6.2 At the end of each half term, the Student Progression Administrator will produce a list of students who are registered on the bursary scheme and have an official attendance at, or above, 90% for the credit period.
- 6.3 The bursary credit is usually granted if an eligible student maintains a minimum 90% attendance throughout the relevant payment period. However, a reasonable adjustment may be agreed as part of the fitness to study procedures that a lower minimum expected level of attendance is acceptable and this will be recorded as part of the fitness to study contract. At the end of each half term the fitness to study review board will confirm which students on fitness to study have met their expected level of attendance.
- 6.4 The list of students eligible for credit will then be uploaded to the student's in-house chosen accounts.

7. Appeals Against Assessment of Eligibility

- 7.1 Appeals in respect of the bursary award should be made in writing to the Head of Student Support within 10 days of the receipt of the Notice of Entitlement letter.
- 7.2 Appeals can only be considered on the grounds of extenuating circumstances, which have not previously been disclosed, or new financial evidence that has not been considered. Any additional evidence must be included with the appeal.

- 7.3 Applicants with a long term medical condition which means that they cannot access public transport and/or have their transport to college provided by the local authority may be eligible for an additional £40 monthly credit in place of the transport element of the bursary. Applicants in this position must apply in writing to the Head of Student Support, providing appropriate evidence.
- 7.4 Applicants will be informed of the result of the appeal within 5 working days of the receipt of the appeal letter and in receipt of all necessary evidence.

8. Appeals against non payment of monthly bursary payments

- 8.1 Where a decision has been taken that a student does not receive the credit element of the bursary based on not meeting the eligibility criteria in terms of attendance and behaviour, then they have a right of appeal.
- 8.2 Appeals must be made, in writing, using an “Appeals Form” available from the Student Finance Office.
- 8.3 The form must be completed explaining all absences and if appropriate must be accompanied by any relevant additional evidence or information.
- 8.4 Completed appeal forms should be handed in at the Student Finance Office.
- 8.5 The Deputy Head of Student Services will review the appeal with the Student Finance staff and students will be informed of the result of the appeal within 5 days of receipt of the appeal form.
- 8.6 If the appeal is successful, the Student Finance staff will arrange back-pay
- 8.7 College will allow only one appeal per withheld payment and an appeal decision is final.

9. Monitoring

- 9.1 The bursary fund is monitored at monthly Finance Panel meetings by SLT and the Head of Finance.
- 9.2 There is an annual audit of the bursary fund completed by the Head of Finance.

10. Other related policies

- Attendance policy
- Fitness to study policy
- Transport support policy