

## **Learner Support Fund Policy 2021-2022**

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The College is committed to providing a fair and transparent policy for the distribution of publicly funded bursaries. The policy is designed to be accessible and easily understood by learners, potential learners, staff and parents.
- 1.2 In establishing such a policy, the College takes account of government policy and guidelines.
- 1.3 The funds have been developed to help learners overcome specific barriers to participation in education and all funding is subject to maintaining satisfactory levels of attendance, progress and behaviour.
- 1.4 Commercial courses, Higher Education, Waged Apprenticeships, and young people in prison or a young offender's institution or have been released on temporary license for example, day release and Work Based Learning courses cannot be funded through the Learner Support Fund.
- 1.5 The guidance within this policy are set at the time of writing but the College reserves the right to adjust the criteria in year according to the funds available and in accordance with any changes in government policy and guidelines.
- 1.6 All funds, excluding the 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary Fund, are limited, therefore applications will only be approved if sufficient funds remain available.

## 2. Types of Funding Available

### 2.1 The 16-19 Bursary Fund

This fund is available to learners who are aged between 16-18 years old on the 31 August 2021. Learners aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a discretionary bursary if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16-18 or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

### 2.2 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary

This fund is available to learners to meet one or more of the following conditions:

- (a) In Care
- (b) Care leaver (or classed as a 'Looked After Child')
- (c) In receipt of Income Support/Universal Credit (in the learner's own name) or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them such as a child or partner

- (d) In receipt of 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

Learners eligible for this fund, can receive up to £1,200 per year for support in relation to course related costs, if they are participating in a programme of study that lasts 30 weeks or more, a pro rata amount is paid to learners on a programme of less than 30 weeks. Payments will only be backdated a maximum of 4 weeks.

### 2.3 Free College Meals (FCM)

The funding is available to learners aged 16 – 18 on 31st August 2021 who are classed as disadvantaged. Free meals in further education defines disadvantage as learners being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the identified means tested benefits:

- (a) Income Support
- (b) Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- (c) Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- (d) Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- (e) The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- (f) 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))
- (g) Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- (h) Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa

Students aged 19 or over are only eligible for a free meal if they;

- (a) Are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or
- (b) Have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and meet all the 16-19 bursary eligibility criteria.

### 2.4 The 19+ Discretionary Fund

This fund is available to learners over the age of 19, and on a provision, which is funded by AEB. The fund is divided into two categories:

- (a) Hardship funding – general financial support for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners.

- (b) 20+ childcare funding – for learners aged 20 or older on the first day of learning who are at risk of not starting or continuing learning because of childcare.

To be eligible for funding, learners be in receipt of a means tested benefit or be dependent on someone in receipt of a means tested benefit e.g. Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, Full Council Tax Benefit, Universal credit or on a low wage (less than £18,000 per annum) or dependent on someone on a low wage income.

## 2.5 Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund

This fund, funded by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), is available for learners who have secured an Advanced Learner Loan and have a household income below £18,000. Funding is divided into three categories:

- (a) Financial hardship
- (b) Childcare

## 3. Banding and Funding Criteria

3.1 Along with meeting the agreed criteria of each funding stream, learners will be assessed based on their household income. Learners with a household income below £35,000 will be eligible to apply for funding. All funds (excluding the 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary Fund) are limited and completed applications including all required documentation and evidence will be assessed on a first come first served basis.

3.2 Learners with a household income of above £35,000 and evidence of exceptional circumstances will be reviewed individually by a panel.

**Table 1: 16 – 19 Banding & Funding Criteria:**

Banding	Criteria	Travel	Equipment	Educational visits	Meals	Additional Payment
ICAP Bursary	Meet Conditions of Bursary and assessment of need.	Free College Bus Pass	100% Funded.	100% funded (up to £250)	Payable to 16 – 18 only, £3.00 per timetabled or placement attendance day.	Up to £1200 subject to assessment of individual circumstances.
1	Household income below £16,190	Free College Bus Pass	100% funded up to £250	100% funded up to £250	Subject to eligibility £3.00 per timetabled or placement attendance day.	
2	Household income below £35,000	Free College bus pass if more than 1.5 miles from the College	100% funded up to £250	100% funded up to £250	Subsidised meals £3.00 per day. Maximum of 2 days.	

**Table 2: 19 Plus Banding & Funding Criteria:**

Banding	Criteria	Travel	Equipment	Educational visits	Childcare (20+only)
I	Household income below £18,000 and in receipt of means tested benefits.	Termly payment of between £100 and £150 depending on study hours if more than 1.5 miles from the College	100% funded up to £250	100% funded up to £250	100% funded Up to £150 per week

## 4. Exam and Tuition Fees

4.1 In exceptional circumstances 19+ learners can apply for help with tuition fees and exams fees. Learners can only apply for tuition fees support if they are:

- applying for a Level 1 or 2 (funded) course
- Not in receipt of a means tested benefit and earning less than £25,000 per year
- If not in employment, living in a household where income is below £25,000 per year gross
- Dependent on a spouse/partner earning less than £35,000 per year gross

4.2 Learners eligible for an Advanced Learning Loan cannot receive help towards tuition costs.

4.3 Students who have successfully applied to receive discretionary funding for course fees cannot additionally apply for funding for travel and childcare.

## 5. Childcare

5.1 Learners aged 20+ can apply to the fund for help with childcare payments, the childcare provider must be Ofsted registered. Any learner receiving an Advanced Learner Loan must have their loan approved before funding is released.

5.2 If the learner is under 20 years old when they start learning they must apply to Care to Learn for their childcare support if they live in England. Applications will need to be made online at <https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn>.

5.3 Childcare funding is capped at £150 /week (first child), £300 per learner (for those with more than one child). Anything over this amount, is the sole responsibility of the learner.

- 5.4 Learners who receive free government childcare funding are asked to use this allocation towards their course time-tabled hours. Any childcare hours in addition to free entitlement will be funded through the bursary to the childcare provider.
- 5.5 Childcare agreement must be signed by the nursery before any funding is released.
- 5.6 Childcare is paid one month in arrears directly to the childcare provider on receipt of an invoice.
- 5.7 Private childcare/child-minder fees will be calculated on 43 weeks which includes half terms, Christmas and Easter. Breakfast and After School Club will be calculated on 36 weeks.
- 5.8 The fund can only cover the costs for time spent in College lectures, and not private study time.
- 5.9 Continued support is subject to satisfactory attendance, at least 90% per term, for all subjects. All learner attendance is monitored for continued receipt of the bursary. If funding is withdrawn, the learner will be liable to cover their childcare costs.

## **6. Equipment, Educational Visits, Books and DBS**

- 6.1 Equipment (including core textbooks), kit or uniforms will be purchased on the learner's behalf by the College if it is essential to their course. Support is also available for IT equipment and associated technology to enable remote access to the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment by the College. Any equipment that is bought by the fund for the learner (uniform etc.) will be returned to the College at the end of the academic year.
- 6.2 Approved educational visits can be funded up to a maximum of £250 per year. Anything over this amount will be the responsibility of the learner.
- 6.3 Funding is available for DBS costs, where this is a mandatory requirement for their course.

## **7. Travel**

- 7.1 A free College term time only bus pass, or train pass for 16-18 students living more than 1.5 miles away from College or placement is available. Any student not living on a bus or train route covered by the College standard ticket issue will be considered on an individual basis. In these circumstances, a contribution towards the cost of travel may be made.

- 7.2 Other than in exceptional circumstances, bus passes will only be replaced once within the academic year and who lose their pass will be required to pay a £10.00 replacement fee. Learners are required to contact the travel provider directly and make efforts to find their bus pass before requesting a replacement. If a learner loses a bus pass after a replacement has been sourced, they will be responsible for funding travel costs from that point forward.
- 7.3 19+ learners living more than 1.5 miles from the College and on a programme with more than 7 taught hours per week are eligible for funding to support travel costs. Learners attaining over 90% attendance will receive a termly payments of between £100 and £150 depending on hours studied. Partial payments for attendance between 80% and 90% will be considered depending on circumstances and available funding
- 7.4 Learners who are attending a work placement as part of their study programme can apply for travel support. Learners and lecturers are encouraged where practicable to arrange a placement that is convenient for the learner to attend.

## 8. Hardship Awards

- 8.1 Hardship awards are available to help support all learners who experience unexpected financial difficulties or a change of circumstances during their programme of study. All awards are assessed on an individual basis.
- 8.2 Learners must complete a hardship application form and discuss their needs with a member of staff in Student Services. Each case will be considered on an individual basis and must be approved by the Head of Student Services.
- 8.3 All support for eligible students who are asylum seekers will be provided in kind. No cash payments will be supplied. Instead students will receive support though course-related books, equipment or a travel pass for example. Asylum seekers can apply for discretionary finding to cover the cost of their course fees.

## 9. Funding Approval

- 9.1 Application forms will only be assessed when the form has been completed fully and submitted with the required evidence.
- 9.2 All funding is subject to maintaining satisfactory levels of behaviour, attendance above 90% and positive progress and maybe withdrawn if a students' conduct falls below the expected standards set by the College
- 9.3 Applicants will normally be notified within 15 working days on the outcome of their application.



## 10. Appeals

- 10.1 A learner who is refused support under this policy may appeal to the Head of Student Services within 14 day's receipt of the allocation or letter of decline. The appeal must be submitted in writing setting out the grounds for appeal providing appropriate documentary supporting evidence.
- 10.2 The appeal will be considered, by a member of the College's senior management team and a written outcome provided within 15 working days.