



Financial Support Funds & Bursaries Policy 2025/2026

Financial Support Funds and Bursaries Policy and Procedures 2025/6



Contents	Page no.
Summary	2
Key Eligibility Criteria	2
Qualifying Benefits	3
Household Income Assessment	4
Returning Students	5
Course Fees Eligibility	5
Free College Meals	5
Essential Kit and Equipment	6
Travel	7
Vulnerable Learner Bursary	7
Childcare Funding Support	8
Advanced Learner Loan Bursary	9
Application and Assessment Process	10
Award Conditions and Attendance Adjustments	10
Exceptional Circumstances	11
Emergency Cash Payments	11
Appeals Procedure	11
Additional Bursaries and External Support Available	11



Summary

Bursary funds are intended to provide financial support to help students overcome the specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education. Funding allocated can only be used to help students with the essential costs of participating in their study programme e.g., a contribution towards travel costs, lunch, childcare, and essential kit/equipment.

Awards made will depend on individual circumstances and actual financial need; the college is therefore required to carry out individual assessments for each student who applies for support to establish household income and what kinds of costs they have.

If you require support with your wider living costs, please speak to a member of the Student Support team who will signpost you to alternative support and external agencies, such as the local Food Bank.

Key Eligibility Criteria

School Leavers
<p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2025 or Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a discretionary 16-19 bursary if they are continuing on a study programme, they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers) or have an Education, Health, and Care (EHC) Plan.
<p>Eligible Educational Provision</p> <p>Students must be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (for example Ofsted). The provision must also fall into one of these groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funded directly by the EFSA, or by the EFSA via a Local Authority Otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3) accredited by Ofqual or on the EFSA's list of qualifications approved for funding. This includes the Prince's Trust Team Programme. <p>In the case of a 19+ continuer, the programme of study must be the same as they started before, they turned 19. If it is not, please see guidance for Adult Learners below.</p> <p>Students on apprenticeship programmes, or any waged training, are considered to be employed, rather than in education and are not eligible for the bursary fund.</p>
<p>Residency</p> <p>Students must meet the residency criteria in ESFA funding regulations for post-16 provision.</p>
<p>Vulnerable Groups</p> <p>The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in care (including, Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC)) care leavers, receiving Income Support (IS), or Universal Credit (UC) 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 (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right <p>Please note, students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for vulnerable groups unless they meet the specific age criteria above.</p>



Adult Learners	
Age	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A student must be aged 19 or older on 31 August 2025 to be eligible for help from the bursary fund in the 2024 to 2025 academic year or In the case of an application for childcare support, a student must be aged 20 or older on 31 August 2024. 	
Eligible Educational Provision	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must be studying for a qualification at level 3 or below, which is co-funded or fully-funded, and which is campus-based. Students on apprenticeship programmes, or any waged training, are considered to be employed, rather than in education and are not eligible for the bursary fund. 	
Residency	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals must be ordinarily resident in the UK on the first day of learning to meet the residency requirements. Students must meet the residency criteria for ESFA funded AEB entitlement or the Advanced Learner Loan 	
Asylum Seekers	
<p>Generally, asylum seekers are not entitled to public funds. Those aged 18 and above are entitled to education, but not to public funds. Therefore, any support awarded, must be in-kind (e.g., equipment, or a travel pass). If further support is required, applications should be made directly to the Home Office. The Refugee Council may be able to provide additional guidance, please speak to a member of Student Support for further advice and guidance.</p>	

Qualifying Benefits

Qualifying Benefit/Evidence	16-18			19+
	Free College Meals	16-18 Discretionary Bursary	Vulnerable Learner Bursary	Discretionary / Advanced Learner Loan Bursaries
Income Support	✓	✓	In own name	✓
Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)	Income-based only	✓		✓
Employment Support Allowance (ESA)	Income-related only	✓	In own name + DLA or PIP too	✓
Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999	✓	✓		✓ (inc. ASPEN card + letter or ARC)
The guaranteed element of Pension Credit	✓	✓		✓
Child Tax Credit	Income of no more than £16190	✓		✓
Working Tax Credit	Run on payment only	✓		✓
Universal Credit	Net income of less than £7400*	✓	In own name + DLA or PIP too	✓
Letter from Social Worker confirming in care status			✓	

*To be entitled to Free College Meals UC claimants' earnings should not exceed £616.67 per month.



Unless otherwise stated benefit evidence supplied can be in the student’s own name, or parent/carer they live with, or spouse they live with. If the student has a different surname to their parent/carer or spouse, a name link document should also be provided; this could be:

- A benefit letter linking to the applicant e.g., Child Benefit letter
- Birth/adoption certificate
- wedding/civil partnership certificate

Benefit evidence provided must be dated within three calendar months of the application.

Universal Credit claimants should provide a printout or screenshot from their UC app/online account showing:

- Name and address of claimant
- The calculated take-home pay for the period
- The Universal Credit payment for the period

Where an UC award is more than £616.67 per month on the most recent statement, please provide award statements from the three most recent complete assessment periods.

Household Income Assessment

Students who are not, or whose families are not in receipt of any benefits, with a household income of less than £45 000 can apply for support via. a household means test.

Income evidence should be provided for all members of the student’s household; each person in the household must supply either:

- All payslips from the past 3 months
- P60, dated for the last financial year
- Tax return letter from HMRC, dated for the last financial year

Awards from the are assessed on a sliding scale according to the following household income bandings:

Household income banding	Contribution towards travel or tuition	Essential course related kit/equipment	
		College contribution	Student deposit
Qualifying benefit	100%	100%	0%
Up to £30 000*	100%	100%	0%
£30 001 - £35 000	75%	75%	25%
£35 001 - £40 500	50%	50%	50%
£40 501 - £45 000	25%	25%	75%

Funding allocations will be reviewed in year, and if once the enrolment period has closed, there is additional funding available the College will review funding awards of 75% or less, and where possible provide an increased contribution.

All student deposits for essential course kit/equipment are refundable on the final completion of a student’s course providing kit/equipment is returned in a reasonable condition.



Returning Students

In making decisions about bursary awards, institutions can now exercise discretion as to whether they carry out checks annually or just once at the beginning of a student's study programme.

Therefore, if your household circumstances have not changed since you were approved for funding last academic year you will be required to sign and date a self-declaration form rather than resubmit benefit and/or income evidence.

Applicants should be aware that this policy is only currently applicable in the 25/26 academic year and awards will still be made based on a students' actual travel, kit and equipment costs.

Course Fees Eligibility

16-19

In almost all circumstances tuition is free on full-time courses up to and including Level 3 BTEC, A-Level and T-Level programmes for students under 19 on 31 August 2025 (or under 24 if they have an EHCP).

19+

Level 2/3 course fee waivers and direct funding options will always be explored before consideration for discretionary funding towards course fees is made. If a student is awarded support towards the cost of their enrolment costs, this will be paid directly to the institution.

Students enrolling on full cost courses and study programmes eligible for the Advanced Learner Loan (ALL) are not eligible to apply for discretionary support towards their enrolment costs. Students in receipt of the ALL can apply for a bursary to support travel costs and essential kit/equipment, these awards will be paid on a termly basis.

Further information regarding course fees is included in the College's Fees and Funding Policy.

Free College Meals

A student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2025 to be eligible to receive Free College Meals (unless they are a 19+ continuer or have an EHCP).

Under the new government scheme, the removal of the income cap for Free School Meals will come into effect from September 2026. Prior to this, for the academic year 2025-2026, there is a discretionary fund to support with meal entitlement.

For further information please visit:

[Free meals in further education funded institutions guide: academic year 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

The College will provide an award of £5.50 per day, up to a maximum weekly award for Free College Meals of £26.50. The exact amount awarded is based on individual circumstances and how many days the student is expected to attend college.

College meal awards are allocated via a cashless system onto the student's college ID card and can be used in the canteen, coffee shop and college shop to purchase food. A choice of meal deals,



including a drink are available at each, but please note the hot options are only available from the main canteen on campus.

On community-based courses, such as the Prince's Trust Team Programmes, where it is not viable to purchase lunch at the College site, a weekly cash payment will be made to the student instead.

If you have had 'Free School Meals' in the past

Students who have received Free School Meals at their previous school/college, must submit an application for Free College Meals for this to continue.

Students who have received free meals since 1 April 2018 continue to be entitled even if their household earnings have risen above the new thresholds and can declare this on the application form. Students should provide evidence of the previous award, such as an award notice or letter from DWP or HMRC, and the processing team will note that their free meal entitlement is protected until the end of the academic year 2025-2026.

Essential Kit and Equipment

Certain courses require specific, essential kit, uniform, or specialist equipment. These include:

- Food Academy courses
- Hair and Beauty courses
- Art and Design courses
- Construction and Engineering courses

As part of your enrolment pack, essential kit and equipment will be listed along with details of how to purchase these from designated suppliers. **Optional extras will not be refunded.**

Curriculum/Course	Kit/Equipment	Maximum Contribution
Food Academy	Level 1 Professional Cooking Uniform	£167.50
	Level 3 Hospitality & Events	£110.50
Hair and Beauty	Level 1/2/3 Beauty Uniform	£46.00
	L1 Hair and Barbering heads & uniform	£111.80
	L2 Barbering heads & uniform	£96.98
	L2 Hairdressing heads & uniform	£126.62
	L3 Hairdressing heads & uniform	£166.38

Please note, where essential kit or equipment is not purchased from designated suppliers contributions are capped as below:

Curriculum/Course	Kit/Equipment	Maximum Contribution
Electrical Installation	Safety boots and cargo trousers	£40
	On-site Guide (L2/L3)	£30
Motor Vehicle	Safety boots and overalls	£40
All other Building / Engineering/ Construction	Safety boots and cargo trousers	£40
Art and Design	Art supplies	£50
Media Make Up courses	Make up supplies	£50

Students should retain receipts of any mandatory kit and equipment purchased and submit this with their refund request.








Refunds for essential kit and equipment will be paid after the first half term on Friday 7th November 2025 provided all evidence has been submitted by Friday 24th October 2025.

All students on fully funded programmes of study can return essential equipment purchased (with receipts) at the end of their programme of study for a refund.

Travel

Students who live 2 miles or over (measured by google maps walking) from their main campus of study can apply for a contribution towards their travel costs. The amount awarded will be based on the student's transport actual costs, up to a maximum weekly award of £50.

Mode of transport	Additional information on eligibility and awards
 	<p>Awards for use towards public transport costs will be based on student/discounted rate tickets. It is the student's responsibility to apply for this directly from the relevant organisation. Examples of discount cards you may be entitled to are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Herts Saver Card • 16+ Zip Oyster Photocard • 18+ Student Oyster Photocard • 16-25 Railcard • 26-30 Railcard
	<p>It is expected that students will use public transport to get to and from campus. Travel routes via. private cars/motorbikes/mopeds will only be considered where there are no accessible public transport options e.g. rural locations or where a disability impacts a student's ability to use public transport independently.</p> <p>Contributions towards fuel costs for private vehicles are based on a calculation of 25p per mile from the student's home address to their main campus of study.</p> <p>Daily mileage is calculated as one round trip on each timetabled day.</p>
	<p>Eligible students who choose to cycle will be awarded a one-off payment of £50 to support the costs associated with cycling and securing their bike. Any award made is intended to be used to purchase/upgrade associated safety equipment and accessories, e.g., a D lock, or a new helmet.</p>
	<p>Support towards the cost of private hire taxis and mini-cabs are not eligible for a college contribution.</p> <p>If a student cannot walk to college or access public transport because of their special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or a mobility difficulty, the family should apply for support from their Local Authority directly.</p>

Vulnerable Learner Bursary

For study programmes of more than 30 weeks eligible students in the specific vulnerable groups as defined above, may be eligible for a bursary of up to £1200. Students who meet the criteria on a study programme of less than 30 weeks, will be awarded the bursary on a pro-rata basis.

The actual amount awarded will depend on student's individual financial needs. Awards made are intended to support with costs directly related to college programmes of study e.g., for equipment and/or travel costs.

To support budgeting and money management, this year the Vulnerable Learner Bursary will be paid during half-term holidays as well as the Christmas and Easter breaks. A full schedule will be shared in the confirmation award email/letter.



Students in or who have recently left care should provide a letter from the local authority which confirms their care status. To support access, the Student Support Managers will contact local Virtual Schools to help identify qualifying students and assist the application process as necessary.

If you have spent any time, but are not sure of your leaving care status, the [Coram Voice website](#), has a useful guide.

Childcare Funding Support

16-19

If you're 20 or under at the start of your course and want help with childcare costs, you can apply for [Care to Learn](#) instead. You can still apply for Learner Support for help with other costs, like travel or, in exceptional circumstances, if your childcare costs are in excess of the Care to Learn scheme's weekly maximum rates.

20+

You may be eligible for help towards childcare costs incurred whilst you participate in your programme of study at College if you are aged 20 or over, are the main carer of your child/ren (under 15 or under 17 with special needs) and your childcare provider qualifies.

You can claim up to 85% of your childcare costs, or a fixed maximum amount of £200 per week, whichever is less.

The total College contribution towards childcare costs is capped at £6800 per academic year per household.

You must pay any remaining costs directly to your childcare provider.

Please note that [free early education and childcare allocations](#), must be fully maximised prior to applying for College childcare funding support.

Students who wish to apply for childcare funding support are required to complete an additional Childcare Funding application. To qualify, your childcare provider must be one of the following:

- registered with Ofsted
- registered with a childminder agency (the General Childcare Register)
- a school

They can be a:

- childminder
- preschool playgroup
- day nursery
- after-school club

Awards are paid directly, on a termly basis, to your childcare provider and the College contribution is dependent on your individual circumstances. Before they are paid, your childcare provider must confirm your child/ren's attendance.



To support your funding application, you must provide either:

- a copy of the child/ren's birth certificate
- a letter confirming receipt of Child Benefit for that child

Your childcare provider needs to supply:

- a copy of their Ofsted registration or General Childcare Register inclusion
- confirmation of your child/ren's attendance
- their payment details and a signed childcare provider agreement

Please note, if you are studying on a Higher Education programme, you should apply for a [Childcare Grant](#) instead.

Advanced Learner Loan Bursary

The Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund is provided by the UK Government to support students who have been approved for an Advanced Learner Loan. The bursary aims to help students overcome financial barriers to participating in education and training and is non-repayable.

To qualify for the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary, learners must:

- Be in receipt of an approved Advanced Learner Loan from the Student Loans Company (SLC) and enrolled on an eligible Level 3–6 qualification funded through the Advanced Learner Loan
- Be aged 19 or over
- Must be in receipt of means tested benefits and/or with a household income of £45,000 or below

If successful, awards are paid at each half-term, directly into the students' bank account provided students are engaging with their programme of study.

Advanced Learner Loan Bursary payments towards travel, course materials and equipment are as follows:

Schedule	Award amount
Friday 7 th November	Up to £250
Friday 27 th February	Up to £150
Friday 5 th June	Up to £100

The Advanced Learner Loan Bursary can also support for childcare costs incurred whilst you participate in your programme of study at College. Please see the [Childcare](#) section of this policy for further information related to applications for support with these costs.



Application and Assessment Process

All awards are made subject to available funds and applicants will be notified if funding is no longer available.

There is no deadline for submission of applications, but all students should be advised to apply as early as possible as the College's bursary allocation is finite.

Applications forms should be submitted online, and the College aims to assess complete applications within 10 working days of receipt of a complete application and full submission of supporting evidence. Please note, in busy periods, this is likely to be longer.

Complete applications (submitted with all required supporting evidence) are processed according to date of receipt. Back payments can only be paid from the point all supporting evidence was provided.

Evidence of eligibility is retained for audit purposes and remains confidential.

Confirmation of whether an application is successful or not will be emailed to the applicant directly. This confirmation of award email will be sent to the email address provided on the application form; it will outline what support will be made, alongside any payment conditions.

The bursary fund is intended to help students with their actual costs of participating. Block, blanket, or flat rate payments are not permitted under the funding guidance and all awards must reflect the actual costs the student has.

Discretionary awards for exceptional circumstances must be agreed by the Head of Student Support.

Attendance and participation will be checked before payments are released.

Award Conditions and Attendance Adjustments

Where possible, students will receive support in kind, rather than cash. Where this is not possible, payments will be made through BACS transfers directly into a student's bank account. Monetary awards, vouchers and tickets provided are non-repayable. Loaned equipment should be returned at the end of the course or when there is no longer a need (whichever is sooner).

If you stop attending your programme of study funding awards will be reduced or may be stopped entirely.

Usual adjustments are as follows:

Weekly attendance	Adjustment to usual travel payment
51-100%	No adjustment made
1-50%	Reduction of 50%
0%	£5 maximum payment to support return to college
Over 3 weeks non-attendance	Payments paused

The College will use discretion at certain times of the year where there is increased disruption to usual student timetables, such as the beginning of the year and during exam periods the College will pause attendance related adjustments to support student participation.



Exceptional Circumstances

Assessment to establish financial hardship is usually based on income and evidence, except in exceptional circumstances. In this instance, awards can be made on a discretionary basis according to the individual's circumstances and financial hardship. Any exceptional circumstances will be considered on an individual basis and must be approved by the Head of Student Support.

In exceptional circumstances, and where there is real need, food support can be provided without undertaking checks on household income or gathering usual Financial Support Funding evidence. For audit purposes signed confirmation of receipt of funding should be retained.

If a student is unable to pay for any essential kit or equipment upfront to participate in their course, they can apply for funding support before the end of their studies. Applications for the College to order items directly from uniform suppliers must be approved by the Head of Student Services.

Emergency Cash Payments

The College recognises that a student's circumstances and needs may change later in the year and therefore small emergency fund will be retained.

Where emergency payments are made, they must be authorised by either the Head of Student Support, the Student Support Co-ordinator or appropriate delegate (such as the Evening Duty Manager) and detail the reasoning for the payment. Where cash or a payment in-kind is provided (e.g., a bus pass), the student must sign to confirm receipt and copies should be retained for audit purposes.

Appeals Procedure

If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of their application, they should appeal in writing to the Head of Student Support, outlining the reason for their appeal and any relevant information about their individual circumstances. Appeals will be responded to, in writing, within ten working days following a review by the Head of Student Services, Head of Student Support and the College's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

If a student is not satisfied with the way their application has been dealt with or any aspect of the application process, then they should follow the college's usual [Complaints Policy](#).

Additional Bursaries and External Support Available

Apprenticeships Care Leavers' Bursary

Apprentices who are in care, or have previously been in care, may be entitled to the Care Leavers' Bursary. If you have spent any time, but are not sure of your living care status, the [Coram Voice website](#), has a useful guide.

For an apprentice to be eligible for the care leavers' bursary, they must:

- be aged under 25 at the time they start their apprenticeship
- not have received the care leavers' bursary before



- be either an eligible child, a relevant child or a former relevant child

Young people should speak to their local authority personal adviser (PA) or social worker for professional advice and information about their leaving care status.

Find out about apprenticeships and what help is available for care leavers in the [Amazing Apprenticeships care leavers guide](#).

You can also find out about career and employment development opportunities on the [Care Leaver Covenant](#) website. [Resources for care leavers, employers and organisations working with care leavers](#) are available from the Learning and Work Institute. These include case studies and practical tips on supporting care leavers in apprenticeships.

Citizens Advice Bureau

The [Citizens Advice Bureau](#) represents a network of charities who offer confidential advice online, over the phone and in person, for free. They are independent and impartial; the Citizens Advice Bureau can provide information and advice relating to benefits, debt/money, housing, and immigration.

Connelly Foundation Bursary

Students enrolled on specific Health and Social Care courses based at Barnfield College may be entitled to an additional bursary to support via [the Connelly Foundation](#). All potentially eligible students will be emailed with further information about the eligibility criteria and the application process.

Food Banks

Student Support Advisors at all campuses are able to support with direct referrals to [Watford](#) and [Luton](#) Food Banks.

Higher Education Bursary

Students in receipt of getting [student finance](#) for higher education you can check if you are eligible for extra support [here](#) instead.

Occasionally Hardship Funding becomes available in year for specific courses. In these cases, all potentially eligible students will be emailed with further information about the eligibility criteria and the application process.

Refugee Council

If you are a refugee or asylum seeker, the [Refugee Council](#), can provide information and advice.

Turn2us

[Turn2us](#) is a national charity who provide practical help to people who are struggling financially. They have a free and easy to use [Benefits Calculator](#) and [Grants Search](#) tools to check what benefits and grants might be available to claim/apply for.