

# Discretionary Learner Support and Bursary Fund Procedures 2021/22

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## Eligibility

To be eligible for LSF all students must be enrolled on a funded course and be a 'co-funded' or 'full funded' learner – students on 'full cost' courses are not automatically eligible but in extreme circumstances they may be able to access a discretionary award. The guidance in this document should be used with the Funding & Entitlements grid in annex one (some main entitlements are also listed below).

### 16-18 students

To be eligible for funding students must:

- be aged over 16 and under 19 at 31 August 2021
- OR be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2021 and have an EHCP
- Meet the residency criteria in EFA 2021 to 2022 academic year funding regulations for post-16 provision
- Be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body which assures quality (ie Ofsted), the provision must also be either:
  - funded directly by EFA or by EFA via a local authority
  - otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including Level 3) accredited by Ofqual or pursuant to Section 96 or the Learning and Skills Act 2000
  - 16-19 traineeship programme

### 19+ students

To be eligible for funding students must:

- Be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2021
- Be studying at a learning provider funded by the Skills Funding Agency

Students must be 20 or over to get help with childcare costs. If they are 19 or under they should apply for Care to Learn instead.

For funding purposes, if a student is under 19 (or 19+ with EHCP) as at 31/08/21, any award would be made from the 16-18 funding for the entire academic year, even if they turn 19 during the year. If a student is under 19 (or 19+ with EHCP) at the start of a 2-year programme they will be funded from 16-18 funding allocation for **both** years.

## Main Entitlements (see grid for full list)

### Level 2 Entitlement

Learners aged 19-23 years of age **on the first day of their course**, studying their first full Level 2 qualification.

### Level 3 Entitlement

Learners aged 19-23 **on the first day of their course**, studying their first full level 3 qualification.

### **Additional Entitlements**

Entry or level 1 learners (excluding Basic Skills), where they meet the criteria for the Level 2 entitlement above, will be funded where they must have a highest prior attainment of Level 1 or below, but need a step up from basic skills in order to progress to a full Level 2.

Where a learner is eligible for any of the above entitlements, they should be advised to tick the appropriate box on their enrolment form.

## **Assessment of Financial Situation & Eligibility**

### **Fast Track Awards**

Students whose parents/carers are unemployed or earning less than £338PCM (or £541 if it is a joint claim) and in receipt of a qualifying benefit are classed as a fast track application. They can enrol directly using these benefits as a fee waiver and apply to LSF for additional costs such as travel etc.

Qualifying benefits are:

- Employment Support Allowance
- Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)
- Job Seekers Allowance (if paid to partner or spouse)
- Income Support
- Pension Guarantee Credit
- Housing / Council Tax Support
- Universal Credit

Proof of benefit needs to be produced at the time of enrolment. This must be dated within a month of the date of enrolment. A small number of courses (HAFLS funded) accept other qualifying benefits for fee remission.

### **Means Test Awards**

#### **Medium Track**

Students whose parents/carers are in receipt of any of the following benefits (please see list below) or who receive one in their own right are classed as MEDIUM TRACKED for their enrolment and additional costs. These benefits are:

- Working Tax Credit (with an annual income below £16,480)
- ESA (Where they earn less than 16 times the National Minimum Wage a week or £338 a month)
- Job Seekers Allowance (if paid to partner or spouse)
- Income Support
- Pension Guarantee Credit
- Housing / Council Tax Support
- Universal Credit

If claiming from the fund, LSF forms must be completed; proofs of benefits (dated within a month) are required as evidence of eligibility. Where an applicant is on more than one of the benefits listed above, it is only necessary to gain proof of one of them for audit purposes.

Where an applicant has a different surname to parents/spouse/partner they must provide proof of name link - i.e. wedding/birth certificate or benefit letter linking to the applicant. Where this is not possible refer to Head of Student Support for guidance.

### Full Income Assessment

Students who are not or whose families are not in receipt of any **benefits**, with a household income of less than £35,501 need to complete the whole application form with evidence to have an income assessment.

**IMPORTANT** - When students submit their form they should be asked if they have applied for help with their travel costs and if they are eligible for free meals.

### Financial Support Available

An application form for funding must be completed with proof of benefits or income. Awards are assessed on a sliding scale according to the following income bandings:

Income bandings (i.e. total household Income)	Travel costs, tuition, materials or exam fees	Course-related items (e.g. kit/equipment/uniform) provided to students on loan for duration of their course	
		College's contribution	Student's deposit
Qualifying benefit	100%	90% of purchase cost of item	10% of purchase cost of item
Up to £25,000	100%	90% of purchase cost of item	10% of purchase cost of item
£25,001 - £30,000	75%	50% of purchase cost of item	50% of purchase cost of item
£30,001 - £35,500	50%	30% of purchase cost of item	70% of purchase cost of item
35,501 +	No entitlement	No entitlement	No entitlement

All deposits are refundable on the final completion of a student's course (e.g. they are not enrolling on the next level course) and the return of any kit and equipment in a reasonable condition.

Financial support can only be provided to students who have less (or whose parents have less) than £5,000 in savings except under exceptional circumstances - refer to Head of Student Support for guidance.

### Uniforms and Kits

All Professional Cookery and Hair and Beauty Students have to purchase their uniforms up front and will have the opportunity to have these costs refunded on the completion of their course, subject to them returning their uniform and producing receipts.

All students who are receiving LSF are eligible for support towards these costs incurred at the start of their course. For Hair and Beauty students this also includes the Dolly Heads, if they wish to purchase them.

When a student enrolls they will be told that, where possible, they need to purchase the uniform and kit up front (order forms are provided with joining instructions and saved in LSF folder). Students who are in financial hardship will be referred to Student Support at enrolment to apply for LSF for this uniform and equipment.

The student will need to complete the LSF form and supply the appropriate evidence to support their application. Where a student has purchased items upfront and their LSF application is successful, BACS payment will be made for the appropriate amount to refund the student (see previous table for percentage amounts).

In extreme circumstances a student may not be able to purchase these items upfront or pay the percentage contribution. In these cases the student must follow the LSF procedures above and if approved by Head of Student Support, the College will order items directly from the supplier using LSF money and/or the student's bank details for their contribution.

### **High cost courses**

In addition to financial support available dependent on household, the College recognises there are certain courses that have particularly high costs for materials, equipment or specialist clothing. These are identified in Annex A. To maximise inclusion on these courses, college provides eligible students participating on these courses with subsidies to help them either fund material fees or purchase the necessary equipment. The following conditions apply to be receipt of these subsidies:

- 16-18 students (as defined by Eligibility section) must comply with the following:
  - Their attendance must exceed 85%
  - They must complete their course
  - They must not be subject to a Stage 3 or 4 disciplinary
- 19+ students (as defined by Eligibility section) will have these fees funded by the College in accordance with ESFA funding rules

Failure to abide by these conditions will result in any award being withdrawn, and the College seeking repayment in full.

### **Other additional costs**

In line with changes to government policy, the College is unable to charge any fully funded student for additional equipment costs. All fully funded students regardless of whether they are entitled to LSF or not will be refunded a contribution towards the cost of some of their additional equipment.

When a student enrolls they will be told that they need to purchase any equipment upfront and will be given a refund form to complete. The students will need to bring their completed forms with their receipt to Student Support. If a student is unable to pay upfront they will be referred to Student Support for LSF. Contributions will be as follows:

Construction boots - up to £20  
Overalls - up to £15

PMM Level 3 Diploma in Performing Arts - Dance - £10 towards the cost of clothing, £10 towards the cost of ballet shoes, £10 towards the cost of jazz shoes and £20 towards the cost of tap shoes.

PMM Level 3 Diploma in Performing Arts - The black jazz shoe up to £30.00

PMM Level 2 First Diploma in Performing Arts -The black jazz shoe up to £30.00

Art & Design, Hair & Beauty and Pro Cookery materials

If a student needs to purchase materials for any of the above courses they need to apply through LSF. Applications will be assessed on a case by case basis taking into consideration their financial situation, the materials they wish to purchase and whether the cost of these materials is necessary/appropriate to their success on the course.

### Travel

Students are eligible to apply for support with transport costs, based on the following criteria:

#### **Hemel Hempstead and Watford**

Students outside a 3 mile radius of the campus they study at.

#### **New Bedford Road and Enterprise Way**

Students outside a 2 mile radius of the campus they study at.

Any discretionary travel costs outside of this may be authorised by Head of Student Support. Awards will be financially assessed according to the income bandings and any award above £50 per week must be authorised by Head of Student Support.

### Free Meals

There is a separate allocation of funding to provide 'free school meals' (lunches) to students in financial hardship. In order to qualify for this, students must be under 19 at the start of the course and they/their parent/carer must be in receipt of one of the following:

- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual income of no more than £16,480, as assessed by HMRC
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Universal Credit (if you apply on or after 1 April 2018 your household income must be less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get))
- Income support
- Income based JSA
- Income related ESA

Students aged 19 to 24 who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are also entitled to a free meal while attending College if they meet the eligibility criteria listed above.

The College is funded £2.41 per student to provide a meal and we cannot give the student cash instead. The College will 'top up' the amount so it is £3 per student per day - this funding will come from the 16-18 allocation. Funding goes onto the student's card which they can use in the coffee shop, canteen or shop to purchase food. An emergency cash payment for food would therefore need to come out of the 16-19 or 19+ allocations as appropriate.

From the start of the year any student who is eligible for LSF will also be eligible for free college meals at £3 per day – this will come from the 16-18 allocation. As the funding comes from two different allocations it’s still necessary for students to provide the correct evidence for FCM if they are eligible.

**Childcare**

Students aged 16-19 must apply for childcare costs from Care to Learn:  
[www.gov.uk/care-to-learn](http://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn)

**20 + Childcare Support** - Childcare support is available for students who are at risk of not participating or continuing in Further Education.  
 Up to 80% may be awarded towards childcare costs.

**Requirements**

Student must complete the separate application form for Childcare costs and must provide the following:

- Childcare provider contract
- Copy of the Ofsted registration certificate
- Signed childcare provider agreement
- Birth Certificate

**Childcare Calculations 2021/22**

Autumn Term	13 weeks	Holiday Weeks 4
Spring Term	12 weeks	Holiday Weeks 3
Summer Term	8 weeks	Holiday Weeks 1

Payments will be made directly to the childcare provider on a termly basis on the following dates:

- Autumn term – 22nd October
- Spring term – 7th January
- Summer term – 15th April

**IMPORTANT** - When assessing childcare for part-time courses, please remember to check the number of weeks the course runs for as they will sometimes differ from the above.

**Trips**

Financial support will be prioritised for all the above types of support in the first instance. However if funds are available, financial support will be available for students to pay for trips. Support will be prioritised for trips which demonstrate clear academic or employment opportunities.

## 16-19 Vulnerable Student Bursary

Students in the following categories who are under 19 at time of enrolment may be eligible for up to a £1,200 bursary. This would be paid weekly.

- Young people in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit in place of Income Support
- Young people who are classed as looked after children or care leavers
- Disabled young people in receipt of both Employment Support Allowance **and** Disability Living Allowance or ESA and Personal Independence Payments (PIP)

Students will need to provide proof of their circumstances to support application i.e. letter from Social Services stating they are in care. In addition to the above criteria, the college will make an assessment on an applicants financial situation to assess individual need.

The Bursary should cover all costs associated with College (travel, kit etc.) but can be topped up with funding from the 16-19 pot where needed – any requests need to be authorised by Head of Student Support. All students eligible for the bursary will automatically be funded for free meals from the 16-19 allocation. Money for free meals will go on to their cards in the same way as those eligible for free meals. Student Advisers must update the LSF team if they think a student doesn't need to receive FCM.

**Bursary calculations are still to be finalised but will be broadly as follows:**

Autumn Term	13 weeks	@ £36.00	= £468.00
Spring Term	1 week	@ £67.00	= £67.00
	11 weeks	@ £35.00	= £385.00
Summer Term	9 weeks	@ £35.00	= £280.00
			Total £1,200.00

## 19+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary

Learners who are in receipt of a 19+ Advanced Learning Loan can apply for funds from the 19+ Advanced Learning Loan Bursary. Students can be supported for the same types of needs e.g. travel costs, childcare, kit and equipment. Eligibility is the same as all applicants to the Learner Support Fund – students must complete an LSF form and provide information and evidence as per LSF guidelines. Please note – if a student doesn't apply for the loan and self funds (full cost) they are NOT eligible for LSF support (discretionary awards may be available in extreme circumstances).

## Assessment and Processing Awards

- All awards are made subject to available funds and applicants will be notified if funding is no longer available
- Applications must be date stamped and signed as soon as a form is handed in
- Incomplete forms should not be taken in but returned to the student with a covering letter indicating what information or evidence is missing. A copy of the top page should also be taken

- The forms will be assessed within 10 working days of receipt of application and appropriate evidence and the student (and parents/carers) informed of any award. Applications are not to be assessed whilst the student is waiting
- There is no deadline for submission of applications but all students should be advised to apply as early as possible
- Applications are processed according to date of receipt of completed applications with correct supporting evidence
- Confirmation award emails are sent out
- Discretionary awards for exceptional circumstances must be agreed by the Head of Student Support
- Attendance will be checked before weekly travel payments are released
- Emergency cash payments throughout the year MUST follow the emergency cash procedures
- For funding purposes, if a student is under 19 as of 31/08/21 any award would be made from the 16-19 Bursary Fund for the entire academic year, even if they turn 19 during the year. If a student is under 19 as of 31/08/21 and is on a two-year programme, they can be funded from the 16-18 funding allocation for the two years.
- All refusals must be authorised by Head of Student Support before the letter is sent

## Other Assessment Criteria

**Carers Allowance** will be ignored when assessing income.

### **Disability Living Allowance (DLA)**

Disability Living Allowance should be ignored when assessing disabled students' income in relation to Discretionary Learner Support, to avoid the risk of discrimination under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

## 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.

### **Completing discretionary award requests**

When putting discretionary requests through for consideration please outline them clearly and briefly with bullet points as example below:

Student Name, Student ID, Age, Course

- £30 weekly travel and food support
- Recently estranged from family and sofa surfing
- Has not applied for benefits yet and has no income – appointment made to start this process

Additionally, they must complete an LSF application form with details to refer to, putting a copy of the discretionary request email in the file so it is clear for auditing purposes.

## Emergency cash payments

- Complete emergency cash payment memo
- Check students details on Prosolution to confirm age etc
- Delete account codes as appropriate e.g. 16 - 18 or 19+ (remember this is their age on 31/08/21)
- Ensure all details on the memo are completed including the category tick box
- Print off memo
- Get authorisation signature from Head of Student Support, Student Support Coordinator, Head of Admissions, Head of Student Admin, Evening Duty Manager, Director of Curriculum , Director of Marketing, Director of Student Experience, Deputy Principal.
- For Hemel Hempstead/Enterprise Way/New Bedford Road contact Head of Department/Coordinator for authorisation and email memo through
- Print reply and memo and staple together
- With the student take one copy of the memo to Student Admin to collect money
- Both the member of staff and student must sign memo
- Take a photocopy of authorised memo for records
- Money can then be given to the student
- For exceptional cases where a student is receiving emergency payments for more than one date a separate memo should be completed for each date

### LSF Administrators

- Add the details to Prosolution
- Create LSF file, complete top sheet of the LSF form and calculations sheet if necessary
- File copy of memo in the LSF student file

## Appeals Procedure

In the first instance if a student is not satisfied with the award/decision or outcome of the application, they can appeal in writing to the Head of Student Support.

If a student is not satisfied with the way their application has been dealt with or any aspect of the application process they are able to access the Colleges Complaints procedures, details of which are included in the letter informing the student of the application outcome.

## Annex

### List of Account Codes

- 91110 - 16-19 Bursary Fund
- 91111 - 16-19 Vulnerable Student Bursaries
- 91115 - Free School Meals (cannot be cash only on card)
- 91120 - 19+ Hardship Fund
- 91130 - 19+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursaries
- 91140 - 20+ Childcare
- 91310 - College Hardship Fund (students who can't be funded from other allocations)

## **Annex A**

Full time Further Education courses in the following subject areas are deemed high cost courses. The College will contribute £75 to the material/enrolment fees associated with these courses for all eligible students:

- Art & Design
- Building Services
- Engineering
- Hair & Beauty
- Hospitality
- Sport (Football Programme)