

## **Bursary Fund and Free Meal Allocation Policy 2025/26**

Version No	Purpose/Change	Lead	Review Date
<i>Previous versions available</i>			
12.0	Reviewed and updated for 2024-25	GJP	Jul 2024
12.1	Reviewed – date changes	GJP	Jul 2025

### **ESFA Bursary Priority**

The funding provided to the College from the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for bursary allocation in 2025/26 is limited. We are required to prioritise support to students who are under 19 on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 and who are on very low household incomes. The sole purpose of the bursary fund is to ensure that vulnerable students are able to fully participate in full time education.

19+ students on continuing courses can be assisted from the 16-18 ESFA bursary fund.

Students who are eligible must apply, and supply the required evidence to support the application, by 7<sup>th</sup> September 2024 to ensure they receive all payments. Any late applications will be considered only at the discretion of the College, and subject to the availability of funds.

### **Free Meals**

Free Meals must be made available for all eligible students from September 2025. The college will receive funding at a rate equivalent to £2.41 per student per meal taken. The college will top this up to £4.50 to cover the full cost of a meal.

Students who are eligible must apply, and supply the required evidence to support the application, as soon as possible during/after enrolment.

### **19+ (Discretionary Bursary Award)**

Students who are 19 or over on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 and enrol on new courses, will be assisted financially in the form of the 19+ Discretionary Bursary Award, awarded using the same criteria as outlined for the 16-18 students. The 19+ funding is from the Adult Education Budget (AEB) and is a limited fund compared the 16-18 bursary fund. A £1,200 award will only be issued if funds allow.

Students who are eligible must apply, and supply the required evidence to support the application, by 7<sup>th</sup> September 2025 to ensure they receive all payments. Any late applications will be considered only at the discretion of the College, and subject to the availability of funds.

## Application Eligibility

Students who are in any of the following categories will be eligible to apply for a **Vulnerable Group Bursary Award** of up to £1,200, paid in regular instalments throughout the year, commencing September:

- Students in care or care leavers.
- Students who are 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 such as a child or partner.
- Students who are in 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.

New and continuing students who are in any of the following categories will be eligible to apply for the **Discretionary Bursary Award**, payable to meet specified needs in order to ensure that they can fully engage with their studies.

- Students who live independently and receive a gross income of less than £37,500 per annum.
- Students who live with parents/carers, with a parental/carer gross income of less than £37,500 per annum in total.
- In exceptional circumstances the £37,500 limit can be exceeded particularly if family circumstances change during the year. This will be at the discretion of the Bursary Review Group consisting of the Student Services Manager and the Business Manager.

The amount paid for Discretionary Bursary Awards will be determined by the number of applications.

Students under 19 on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025 being in receipt of, or parents who are in receipt of one of the following will be eligible to apply for a **Free Meal**.

- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 in total.
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance.
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit.
- Universal credit with net earnings not exceeding £7,400 pa.

Students on work placements away from the College can apply for a bursary to cover the extra costs associated with the placement. Whilst the families' gross income will form part of the consideration the upper limit of £37,500 will not automatically apply and consideration will be given to the value of the extra costs incurred.

## Evidence Requirements

For Vulnerable Group Bursary Award, one of the following:

- Universal Credit – 3 most recent monthly award statements.
- The most recent Income Support letter relating to 2024/25.

- The most recent Disability Living Allowance and ESA letters.
- A letter from the Local Authority or Support Worker confirming care arrangements.

For Discretionary Bursary Award, one of the following:

- Universal Credit – 3 most recent monthly award statements.
- Tax Credit Award notice 2024/25.
- Tax Return 2024/25.
- Jobcentre Plus letter.
- P60 from both parents if in employment.
- Other document acceptable to the College showing proof of household income.

For Free Meals, one of the following:

- Universal Credit. 3 most recent monthly award statements
- The most recent Income Support letter relating to 2024/25.
- The latest Tax Credit Award notice.
- The latest Tax Return.
- Jobcentre Plus letter.
- Letter confirming support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- Pension Credit M1000 Award notice.

## **Payment or Collection Eligibility**

All Bursary Awards are subject to students meeting the terms of their Student Learning Agreement.

Vulnerable Group bursaries will be made via a regular payment to a student bank account.

In most cases, Discretionary bursaries will be disbursed in-kind via meal cards and bus passes. Direct payments for goods and/or services (examples include train/taxi, trips, equipment, university applications and work placement assistance) will be made when identified in an application. There may be exceptional cases where a regular payment is made into a student's bank account, determined by application.

Eligible students are allocated a meal card that can be redeemed in the College canteens. The card cannot be transferred for use to another student.

Since 2020/21, the government have released additional funds to help free meals students during the college holidays. If this is repeated in 2024/25, the college will provide help in the form of vouchers issued to students via the e-vouchers website. The college has used this system successfully during the last three years.

## **Exceptional Hardship Fund 16+**

Students suffering exceptional financial hardship which prevents them from studying, and who do not fall into any of the categories above, will be able to apply for exceptional financial help by completing an 'Application to the Bursary Fund' form available from Student Services. The student's circumstances and eligibility will be assessed on an individual basis by the Student Services Manager.

## **Childcare**

For the year 2025/26 childcare costs are being administered by 'Care to Learn' via the Student Bursary Support Service (SBSS) for the ESFA. An online application needs to be completed, giving details of income and childcare costs. Students must contact Student Services for details. Payment for provision of childcare is made directly to the childcare provider.

## **Appeals Procedure**

Appeals regarding allocation of, and eligibility for, the Bursary Fund (16-18 and 19+) or Free Meals will be considered in the first instance by the Student Services Manager.

If the appellant is unsatisfied with the outcome, they have the right for the decision to be reviewed by the SLT manager for Student Services.

Each stage of the Appeals Procedure will be completed within ten working days.