

Bursary Fund and Free Meal Allocation Policy 2026/27

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
12.2	Reviewed and updated for 2026-27	JKA	Jun 2026

DFE Bursary Priority

The funding provided to the College from the Department for Education (DFE) for bursary allocation in 2026/27 is limited. We are required to prioritise support to students who are under 19 on 1st September 2026 and those who are on very low household incomes. The sole purpose of the bursary fund is to ensure that vulnerable students can fully participate in full-time education.

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

Students who are eligible should apply and supply the required evidence to support the application by **9th September 2026** to ensure they receive all support. Any late applications will be considered only at the discretion of the College, and subject to the availability of funds. Where possible applications should be made and evidence provided, no later than **Friday 18th December 2026**.

19+ (Discretionary Bursary Award)

Students who are 19 or over on 31st August 2026 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 to the 16-18 bursary fund.

Students who are eligible must apply, and supply the required evidence to support the application, by 9th September 2026 to ensure they receive all support. 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 2026. The college will receive funding at a rate equivalent to £2.66 per student per meal taken. The college will top this up to £5.00 to cover the full cost of a college meal deal.

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

Application Eligibility

Vulnerable Group Bursary Award

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 receive 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 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.

Awards are based on an assessment of actual financial need, and while students may receive up to £1,200 per year, they will only be allocated the amount necessary to support participation.

Discretionary Bursary Award

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 to ensure that they can fully engage with their studies.

- Students who live independently and receive a gross income of less than £35,000 per annum.
- Students who live with parents/carers, with a parental/carer gross income of less than £35,000 per annum in total.
- In exceptional circumstances the £35,000 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 Director of Operations and the Director of Resources (Associate SLT)
- Income from all sources will be taken into consideration when assessing household income and eligibility for support.

The level of support offered for Discretionary Bursary Awards will be determined by the individual requirements of the student and the number of applications. Further details on the level of support can be found in the **Information to Support Bursary Application** Document. This is updated annually and published on the college website.

Free Meal

Students under 19 on 31st August 2026 being in receipt of, or parents who are in receipt of one of the following will be eligible to apply for a **Free Meal**.

- Universal credit.
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Students will need to reapply for bursary support each academic year. Awards are not automatically carried forward, and there is no guarantee of continued support.

Evidence Requirements

For Vulnerable Group Bursary Award, one of the following:

- Universal Credit – 3 most recent monthly award statements - *UC evidence must confirm that the student is receiving UC in their own right and is financially supporting themselves (or themselves and a dependent)*
- The most recent Income Support letter relating to 2025/26.
- 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 2025/26.
- Tax Return 2025/26.
- Jobcentre Plus letter.
- P60 from both parents if in employment.
- Other documents acceptable to the College showing proof of household income. These will be reviewed on an individual basis.

For Free Meals, one of the following:

- Universal Credit. 3 most recent monthly award statements
- Letter confirming support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Payment or Collection Eligibility

All Bursary Awards are subject to students meeting the terms of their Student Learning Agreement. **Failure to comply may lead to suspension or removal of the bursary support.**

Vulnerable Group bursaries will be made via 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 including train, compulsory trips, equipment and work placement assistance) will be made when identified in an application. There may be exceptional cases where 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 to purchase a selection of meal deals. The card cannot be transferred for use by another student.

Since 2020/21, the government has released additional funds to help free meals students during the college holidays. If this is repeated in 2026/27, 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. Please note that this scheme only applies to households living in a postcode covered by Hull City Council.

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 Hardship Fund' form".

The student's circumstances, eligibility, and evidence will be assessed on an individual basis by the college. There will be a limit to the amount of support available and the number of applications that can be made by a student.

Childcare

For the year 2026/27, childcare support for eligible young parents continues to be provided through the Care to Learn (C2L) scheme. Students must complete the College's online C2L application form, provide evidence of childcare costs and eligibility, and agree to the terms of C2L.

Once approved, childcare payments are made directly to the childcare provider. Students must contact Student Services for details before submitting their application.

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 Director of Student Services.

If the appellant is unsatisfied with the outcome, they have the right to request the decision to be reviewed by the Bursary Review Group and SLT.

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