

STUDENT BURSARY and HARDSHIP FUND POLICY

This policy has undergone an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). This process considered the discriminatory or negative consequences for a particular group or sector of the community on the grounds of race, disability, gender, age, religion and belief and sexual orientation. The outcome of this EQIA is that there are no negative consequences in the case of this policy.

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1. Summary

The College Group recognises that the Student Bursary and Hardship Fund has an important role to play in removing barriers for some learners accessing and completing further education courses. It is the aim of the Group to use funds to make the maximum impact on recruitment, attendance, retention, achievement and success rates.

The fund will be distributed in a consistent and transparent way and in accordance with the guidance issued by both the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

The Bursary is intended to help with the financial hardship needs of individual young people studying a programme at the College. Awards from the Bursary will be used towards essential course related costs such as travel, meals at colleges equipment, trips and other costs associated with learning.

Discretionary and Hardship awards will be subject to sufficient funds being available.

2. Statement of Principles

- The bursary payment is subject to attendance, punctuality and behaviour. Attendance should normally be at a minimum of 90%. Extenuating circumstances that are affecting attendance will, however, be taken into account.
- The bursary should be applied fairly and consistently.
- The process must be easily understood and accessible to young people. Tutors will provide an overview of the process to full time students and all students will be able to see Student Services staff for a one to one interview if required. The Student Bursary and Hardship Fund will be publicised via Student Services and each College's website.
- The process should identify eligible students in a timely fashion.
- There is a commitment to ensuring bursary funds allocated to the Group are fully distributed in order to support as many students as possible. However, budgets are provided by the EFA and SFA, and therefore, the college can only make payment if there is sufficient funds.

3. General Eligibility

To be eligible to apply for the Student Bursary and Hardship Fund students must be:

- Enrolled on a course at one of the colleges within the Group which is NOT part of a government training scheme
- Aged 16 years or over
- A "home" student, i.e. having been 'ordinarily resident' in the British Isles or European Union for purposes other than education for 3 years prior to the commencement of the course
- In one or more of the priority groups page 5 4.1 or live in a household where the income is below thresholds set annually by the College.
- Maintaining satisfactory attendance and progress in the professional judgement of the tutor.

Students who are resident in Wales should apply to Student Finance Wales if they believe they are eligible for Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) or Adult Learning Grant (ALG). Students who are eligible for EMA or ALG may be eligible for help from the Student Bursary and Hardship Funds also.

4. The Bursary and Hardship Fund has four Key Elements

1. Guaranteed Bursaries of £1200 a year for students aged 16 to 18 (at the start of the academic year) who are:

- Young people in care
- care leavers
- on income support (Income support is paid to young people such as teenage parents, teenagers living away from their parents and young people whose parents have died.)
- disabled young people in receipt of both Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

Payments will be linked to attendance, achievement and behaviour.

2. 16 -18 Discretionary Bursaries (Awarded to students with a household income of £26,000 or less)

Can be awarded to any student aged 16 to 18 (at the start of the academic year) who face genuine financial barriers to staying on in education and training to help with costs such as transport, meals at College and other course related costs. (Discretionary bursaries will not usually be awarded to students in receipt of EMA).

3. 19+ Discretionary Bursaries (Awarded to students with a household income of £21,000 or less)

Provide support for students aged 19 and over at the start of the academic year (who are not eligible to apply for a 19+ loan – see below) who face genuine financial barriers to completing their course. The funding is provided to increase access, retention and achievement.

For students who are on courses that are fully funded or partially funded by the SFA, help may be provided towards childcare, transport costs, support with domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation.

4. 19+ Loan Bursary Funds (Awarded to students with a household income of £21,000 or less who have successfully received a 19+ loan)

Provide help towards childcare and travel for students aged 19 and over who are eligible to apply for a 19+ loan to cover their tuition fees (i.e. those who are enrolling on a level 3 or 4 qualification).

If a student is eligible to apply for a 19+ loan but chooses not to (i.e. they fund their own tuition fees) they will NOT be eligible to apply for help from the 19+ Loan Bursary Fund.

For students who are on courses that are fully funded by the SFA (and are therefore not eligible to apply for a 19+ loan) may apply to the 19+ Hardship

Fund for help with transport and childcare costs.

5. Procedures

All categories (i.e. Guaranteed, Discretionary and 19+ Loan Bursary Awards)

- Applications are made in writing on forms that are available from Student Services, and both college websites.
- Promotion of the fund will be carried out in a number of ways to ensure the maximum number of students who need help are identified:
 - For full time courses, application forms will be given or sent out to applicants who have received a conditional offer
 - Tutors will publicise the availability of the funds during induction and also to students who start their courses late
 - Tutors will identify students who experience a change in circumstances during the year that has resulted in them experiencing financial hardship
 - For part time courses, the fund will be publicised when the student enrolls.
- 16 -18 Discretionary, 19+ Discretionary, and 19+ loan bursary awards will be subject to sufficient funds being available.
- Applicants must provide evidence of household income and/or welfare benefits.
- Applications will be prioritised in accordance with EFA and SFA guidance. Each application for a bursary is judged on the basis of 'relative financial need'¹ and not all applications will be successful. Details of the estimated total allocation of funds for each applicant will be entered onto a database that analyses the applicants' data per the EFA and SFA Return requirements. The estimated total allocation of funds will be monitored continuously while applications are being processed to ensure the most effective use of funds.

6. Assessment and Awards

Assessment

- With the exception of guaranteed bursaries, awards will be determined based on the set household income levels see pages 7-9.
- The application will be assessed by a panel that consists of two members of the Student Services team as a minimum. The outcome is recorded on an assessment form, which is then attached to the application form.
- Applicants will be notified in writing of the panel's decision
- Applicants may appeal against the panel's decision. See page 10.

¹ Relative financial need is calculated by setting income thresholds for the household the applicant lives in. However exceptional and changed financial circumstances which are impacting the student's ability to complete their course successfully will be taken into account.

7. Awards

Guaranteed Bursaries

A total payment of £1200 per academic year will be made (this amount is based on the student's course running for longer than 33 weeks and being classed as a full time course. For shorter courses or if the course is classed as part time, a pro rata amount will be calculated).

Students who are eligible for this bursary can ask Student Services to:

- Order their travel passes (Such as a College bus pass, Shropshire Council subsidised travel pass, Arriva Student Saver or GHA pass).
- To pay for meals during the college day if applicable to eligibility.

The total cost of this will be deducted from the annual payment. The remainder will be divided into 18 equal payments which will usually be paid fortnightly throughout the academic year. (The payment schedule may be adjusted during the holiday periods)

Contributions towards course related trips may also be given to students who are eligible for this bursary. These will be paid in addition to the £1200 per annum.

8. Discretionary Bursaries (students aged 16-18)

| Expense | Household income £26,000 and below | |
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| Travel (for students who live more than 2.5 miles walking distance from the College only). | <p>The College will have several buses covering different locations and students who use these buses will have their travel paid in full.</p> <p>Other travel via Shropshire Council subsidised passes, Arriva Student Saver or GHA will be considered and a contribution may be made. Only in exceptional circumstances will consideration be given to funding other forms of travel.</p> | |
| Meals at College | Meal from College to the value of £3 and breakfast club if required for all days the student is in College. | |
| Expense | Household income £16,190 and below | Household income between £16,190 and £26,000 |
| Kit/Uniform | 100% of the cost of purchasing mandatory kit and uniforms | 50% of the cost of purchasing mandatory kit and uniforms |
| Trips (Mandatory Course Trips) | 100% of the cost of the trip | 50% of the cost of the trip |
| University Open Days, Interviews and Auditions | 100% of most cost effective travel | 100% of most cost effective travel |
| Additional Exceptional Costs | These will be considered on an individual basis | These will be considered on an individual basis |

9. Discretionary Bursaries and Loan Bursaries (students aged 19+)

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| Expense | Household income £21,000 and below | |
| Travel (for students who live more than 2.5 miles walking distance from the College only). | <p>The College will have several buses covering different locations and students who use these buses will have their travel paid in full.</p> <p>Other travel via Shropshire Council subsidised passes, Arriva Student Saver or GHA will be considered and a contribution may be made. Only in exceptional circumstances will consideration be given to funding other forms of travel.</p> | |
| Childcare | Students aged 20 and over can apply for help with childcare for up to 2 children. Normally 100% of the costs up to a maximum of £160 per week per child will be awarded from the Student Bursary and Hardship Fund. Childcare providers will be notified by email of levels of support, payment terms and term dates. Only payable for days attendance at college. | |
| Meals | Breakfast Club where required | |
| Expense | Household income £16,190 and below | Household income between £16,190 and £21,000 |
| Kit/Uniform | 100% of the cost of purchasing mandatory kit and uniforms | 50% of the cost of purchasing mandatory kit and uniforms |
| Trips (Mandatory Course Trips) | 100% of the cost of the trip | 50% of the cost of the trip |
| University Open Days, Interviews and Auditions | 100% of most cost effective travel | 100% of most cost effective travel |
| Additional Exceptional Costs | These will be considered on an individual basis | These will be considered on an individual basis |

10. 19+ Discretionary Funds

Students aged 19+ who live in a household where the income is below £21,000 will be eligible to apply for help towards the following (Subject to government allocation):

- 1. Travel.** Assistance will be given towards travel costs based on the most cost effective and practical method of travel to College. This will usually be in the form of travel passes for public transport. Only in **exceptional** circumstances will the funding of alternative methods of transport be considered. Where it has been agreed that it is appropriate to pay mileage expenses, these will be paid at a rate of 20p per mile. This rate will be reviewed regularly.
- 2. Childcare.** Students aged 20 and over can apply for help with childcare for up to 2 children. Normally 100% of the costs up to a maximum of £160 per week per child will be awarded from the Student Bursary and Hardship Fund. Childcare providers will be notified by email of levels of support, payment terms and term dates.

For students who are not fully funded by the SFA:

- 1. Trips** – Each trip will be assessed on its relevance to the course. When the trip is approved for assistance, the level of contribution to be given will be determined based on the cost of the trip and the number of students eligible for help.
- 2. Books, kit, uniform, equipment and materials.**
For relevant full time courses students will be encouraged to apply to the Radbrook Foundation Charitable Trust for assistance. Help may be given towards any remaining costs (i.e. after the amount awarded by the Foundation has been deducted) as follows:
 - For households with an income of £16,190 or less, 100% of the costs of mandatory books, kit, uniform, equipment and materials
 - For households with an income between £16,191 and £21,000 50% of the costs of mandatory books, kit, uniform, equipment and materials
- 3. Fees, exam and registration costs.** Help may be given towards fees, exam and registrations However, only the first chargeable occurrence will be paid.

11. 19+ Loan Bursary Fund (Subject to change due to government allocations)

Students aged 19+ who are:

- In receipt of a 19+ loan to cover their level 3 or 4 qualification tuition fees and live in a household where the income is £21,000 or below will be eligible to apply for help towards the cost of childcare, (up to a maximum of £160 per child per week) for a maximum of 2 children.
- Travel will usually be in the form of travel passes for public transport. Only in **exceptional** circumstances will the funding of alternative methods of transport be

considered. Where it has been agreed that it is appropriate to pay mileage expenses, these will be paid at a rate of 20p per mile. This rate will be reviewed regularly.

12. PAYMENT

- Payments will be made direct from the College to a third party wherever possible. (e.g. bus passes, childcare and equipment).
- **Fortnightly** guaranteed bursary payments will be made by BACS transfer only into student's bank account, travel and meals will be deducted if required.
- *If students are eligible for free meals, they can collect a meal ticket from the Student Services Team.*

Payment Criteria

- Where attendance or behaviour proves to be unsatisfactory², monies may be withheld. If attendance drops below 90% payments will require authorisation and confirmation of satisfactory academic progress from the Tutor.
- If students receive a warning or sanction under the formal disciplinary procedures future payments will be affected.
- If students have received financial assistance and leave before the completion of their course they may be required to repay all or part of the discretionary bursary.

13. Exceptions from standard levels

Exceptions from standard levels can apply when personal circumstances or academic need suggest that a higher level of support is required and this is supported by professional recommendations from tutors or external bodies. Bursary levels will be determined at the discretion of Student Services staff.

14. Appeals Procedure

- If the applicant does not agree with the panel's decision they should give notice that they wish to appeal via the Student Services team.
- The applicant must give notice of their appeal within 10 working days from receipt of the original decision.
- The applicant will be asked to state the reasons for disagreeing with the decision and why it is unfair.
- A panel will be convened within 20 working days. The panel will consist of members from the Senior Management Team.

² Student Services will undertake an initial check of registers (including behaviour register markings) and also check the student's disciplinary record. Where they believe payment should be withheld due to attendance and behaviour issues, they will consult with the relevant Tutor who may override the decision based on known mitigating circumstances.

- The applicant will be asked to attend a meeting of the panel and may wish to be accompanied by a friend / representative.
- The panel will review the action taken by Student Services in the original decision.
- The applicant will be notified of the panel's decision in writing within 5 working days.
- The decision of the panel will be final.

15. Linked Documents

This policy is followed in conjunction with:

Student Behaviour (Disciplinary) Policy

Prevent Strategy

Free School Meals Policy

Student Fitness to Study Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Quality Handbook.