

LEARNER SUPPORT 16 TO 19 BURSARY FUND & MEAL SCHEME – GUIDANCE 2020-2021

(Includes students who are continuing a course they started when they were 18 and students with an EHCP)

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Information in italics have been put in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Introduction

The Learner Support Fund Bursary Schemes exist to help FE students with travel, meals or course costs.

For students aged 16 to 18 at the start of their course there are two bursaries available:

- Standard Bursary
- Premium Bursary

These guidelines follow those given to the College by our funding agency for 16 to 18 year olds, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

There is no entitlement to receive a bursary even if a student meets all the eligibility criteria. If the student does not have any additional costs associated with coming to College or if there are no funds available, no bursary will be given.

2. Who Can Apply To The Learner Support Fund

2.1 Criteria ALL Students Must Meet

ALL students must:

- Be enrolled at Bradford College on a course that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality. Therefore the course must be either:
 - Funded directly by ESFA or by ESFA via a local authority.
 - Funded or co-funded by the European Social Fund.
 - Otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3) accredited by Ofqual.
 - A 16 to 19 traineeship.
- Need money to enable them to come to College. Where there are no identifiable costs students who meet all other criteria will not be given a grant.
- Be aged 16 to 18 on 31 August 2020. Except where they have an EHCP in place at the College or they are continuing a course they started when they were 18.
- Be fully engaged with their learning activities – this includes attending their classes/placements regularly and undertaking any online learning activities set for them (see section 5).
- Students must meet the residence requirement. Information about this will be gathered at enrolment and may be verified at assessment. Special arrangements are in place for asylum seeking students.

ALL students must NOT:

- Be a young offender who:
 - Is serving a custodial sentence.
 - Is on early release from a custodial sentence.
 - Has been remanded to a secure institution.
- Be studying a Higher Education course. Bradford College and other institutions have other funds that students on Higher Education courses can apply to.
- Be eligible for the EMA offered to students who live in Scotland or Wales.
- Be on a paid apprenticeship course.

- Be an employed student undertaking a Prince's Trust programme.
- Be studying a distance learning course (exceptions apply).

2.2 Premium Bursary

In addition to the criteria in 2.1, to be eligible for a Premium Bursary students must also meet ONE of the following criteria:

- Be in Local Authority Care (as defined by the Children Act 1989).
- Be a care leaver (as defined by the Children Act 1989).
- Be in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit payments in their own name. This should be because they are financially supporting themselves, or financially supporting themselves and someone who is a dependent of them and living with them (such as a child or partner).
- Be in receipt of Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (in their own name) AND Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) in their own name.
- Be aged 16 or 17 and an unaccompanied Asylum Seeker in the care of the Local Authority. If a student's immigration status has not been settled by the time they are 18, support from the Premium Bursary Scheme will stop even if this is part way through their course.

2.3 Standard Bursary

In addition to the criteria in 2.1, to be eligible for a Standard Bursary students must:

- Be enrolled on a full-time course. A full-time course is defined as a course where a student must attend classes for a minimum of 15 hours per week and must be studying for a minimum of 8 weeks.
- Have a gross household income of £25,000 or less – see section 2.3.1 below.

2.3.1 Household Income

Student eligibility will be based on the household income. Applications from households where there is no income or a very low income may not be accepted.

Students will have a gross household income of £25,000 or less if they / their parents / their partner / their guardians are in receipt of:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit)

For other students their household income will need to be calculated. We take all the following income into account for the relevant people within the household:

- Wages / Earned Income
- Contribution based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Any Employment and Support Allowance that is NOT income related
- Working Tax Credits (discounting the childcare element)

- Standard Universal Credit payments – Universal Credit assess net income (i.e. after tax, national insurance and superannuation has been deducted). The Learner Support Fund income threshold is £25,000 gross (ie before these deductions). If tax, national insurance and superannuation are taken off £25,000, the net threshold for the Learner Support Fund is £19,900
- Carers Allowance
- Unearned income such as rent being paid to the student / partner or their guardians

We do NOT count:

- Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payments
- Child Tax Credits or Child Benefit
- Childcare Element of Working Tax Credits
- Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit
- Universal Credit payments replacing any of the above

2.3.2 Whose Income Will Be Assessed

When assessing household income, it is normally the income of the household of the person/people who receive Child Tax Credits for the student. The people whose income is needed will depend on who is in the household, for example:

- If a student lives with both parents/carers, the income of both parents/carers will be assessed.
- If a student lives with both parents/carers and their grandparents, it is the income of both parents/carers that will be assessed (if it is the parents/carers who receive Child Tax Credits or the Child Element of Universal Credit for the student). The grandparents' income will NOT be included.
- If a student lives with their parent and partner (who is not the student's parent) it is the income of both the parent and their partner that will be assessed. This assumes that it is this household that is in receipt of Child Tax Credits or the Child Element of Universal Credit.
- If a student lives with their partner and no-one receives Child Tax Credits it is the income of the student and their partner that will be assessed.

3. How To Apply To The Learner Support Fund

All applications will be processed on-line from 2020-2021. Students can use College facilities to access computers if they do not have access to one at home.

3.1 On-line Application – Through PayMyStudent

This is the quickest and easiest way to apply.

To register students must visit <https://bradford.paymystudent.com/portal/>. Students will need to verify they are a student via their College email account or SMS text.

A short application form will need to be completed and supporting documents provided. All pages of documents should be uploaded and documents should be clear and easy to read.

If insufficient evidence is provided, an email or text will be sent to the student informing them that they have additional things to do. An application will not be considered as complete until all documents have been received.

3.2 Telephone Application - By Appointment

In the rare circumstances where students cannot apply online it is possible to book a telephone appointment with a member of staff. They will go through the online application with the student. An agreement will be posted out for the student to sign and return. *When this is returned with all supporting documents and the papers have been quarantined for an appropriate time, the application will be complete.*

All supporting documents must have the student's name and College ID number clearly written on them.

The College does not take any responsibility for papers that are lost in the post.

4. How Learner Support Fund Applications Are Processed

Applications will be processed on a first come, first served basis. All applications will be date and time stamped when they are complete – see above for more information about this.

When a decision has been made this will be sent out by email (post will be used for those applying under 3.2). Students who apply online through PayMyStudent will be able to see the decision as soon as it has been made.

5. Attendance/Course Changes And Withdrawals

5.1 Normal Levels Of Participation/Attendance

Students are expected to engage in all learning activities that are set for them. This includes, but is not limited to, attending classes and placements, participating in on-line activities and completing any home studies set. Participation will be carefully monitored. Students whose participation is below the required level will have their payments reviewed and risk the possibility of losing support. The first step in this process will be to monitor attendance in classes.

Any unauthorised absences (which includes sickness) will lower a student's actual attendance. Authorised absences do not lower a student's actual attendance. Students are expected to report any absence in line with Bradford College's attendance policy. *Where students are self-isolating this will be taken into account, but it will be the student's responsibility to notify us that they were self-isolating.*

5.2 Special Circumstances

Flexibility will be given to students with medical conditions and/or other special circumstances including:

- Young carers
- Students with an EHCP

that are disclosed to FE Student Funding. However, all students must attend/participate at a level that will enable them to successfully complete their course.

Where a student is working with an adviser or member of staff to improve their attendance/participation their previous record can be ignored and their attendance/participation monitored from a specific date.

Where a student has signed an attendance/participation agreement with FE Student Funding/the College.

5.3 Suspensions

If a student has been suspended from College pending disciplinary action one of these options will be applied to their attendance:

1. If, when investigated, the outcome of the disciplinary procedures is that there is no case to answer, the time the student is absent will not affect their overall level of attendance.
2. If, when investigated, the outcome of the disciplinary procedures is that there is a case to answer, any suspension will count towards their attendance calculations.

5.4 Transfers

Where a student transfers to another course, their attendance/participation will be judged on their new course only.

Where a student transfers to another course they will not automatically qualify for another course materials payment.

6. How We Pay The Learner Support Fund Bursaries

Payments that are not made “in kind” will only be paid by BACs into the student’s own account. Cheque and cash payments will NOT be made unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Where a student is unable to have a bank account of their own or manage their own money the following can be arranged:

- Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers can have their money paid to Social Services who can then make payments to them in cash.

- Where there is a Power of Attorney in place for a student (evidence required), payment can be made to a third party.

Students who are Accompanied Asylum Seekers are not allowed to receive cash/BACs payments. These students will only be eligible for help if it can be given by providing non-cash items.

No award of less than £20 will normally be made.

7. How Much Money Can A Student Get?

Every care is made to ensure each student receives the correct assessment. However, if an error is made in assessing a student's grant and too much is awarded to the student, the College reserves the right to amend the award and, if already paid, ask for the money to be repaid. If too little has been awarded to the student this will be amended so the student receives the correct amount.

If a student's situation changes during the academic year, they should contact FE Student Funding (by email or telephone) so any new evidence can be considered.

The information in this section is flexible and will depend on how the COVID-19 lockdown easing progresses.

7.1 What Costs The Learner Support Fund Can Help With

This will depend on whether a student qualifies for the Premium Bursary or Standard Bursary and whether they are Asylum Seekers.

The Premium Bursary can pay up to a maximum of £1,200 for a full-time student who is eligible for the whole academic year. Each individual student's financial need will be assessed and the amount awarded will depend on this assessment. This means that if a student has no costs, no grant will be given.

Students eligible for the Standard Bursary will be considered for help with:

- Course costs (books, materials, uniforms, course visits, residentials, internet connection and a laptop)
- Travel costs
- Meals whilst at College

7.2 How Much A Student Will Receive Over The Year

7.2.1 Full-time Premium Bursary Payments

Students eligible for the Premium Bursary all academic year will be considered for the following elements of funding (capped at £1,200):

Travel – for students who:

- Live more than a mile from College.
- Have special circumstances that mean they cannot walk a mile.

Provision of termly First West Yorkshire Student bus passes OR, where First buses cannot be used or where the student prefers, payments equivalent to the cheapest mode of transport to College.

Meals – If not eligible for Free Government Meals students will receive one of the following:

- Credits loaded onto their College ID card to allow them to get a Meal Deal from any of the College catering outlets in the scheme
- Where there is no appropriate College catering outlet payments of up to £30.00 per week will be allowed.

If the student is eligible for Free Government Meals, they will be put onto this system – see Section 8 – and a top-up grant paid for additional refreshments.

Course/other costs – depending on how much a student needs to spend on books, materials, uniform, University visits, course visits, internet connection and equipment (including a laptop) a grant will be given for course costs. There is no minimum/maximum grant, but the overall support the student can receive from the Premium Bursary will not exceed £1,200.

7.2.2 Part-time Premium Bursary Payments

For every day a student is timetabled to be in College they will receive a maximum of £8 per day for the number of weeks the course officially runs (maximum of 30 weeks).

For example, if a student is in College 2 days per week for the full College year, the maximum they would get is £8 x 2 days x 30 weeks = £480. As with the full-time bursary the amount given will be broken down into elements for travel, meals and course costs. Days when students are asked to come into College for exams or other activities where not normally timetabled will not be counted.

Payments will be spread over the academic year, but not necessarily in equal payments.

7.2.3 Standard Bursary – Materials, Equipment And Other Course Costs

Depending on the course the student is studying an initial grant of up to £100 will be granted for course related costs. In some cases this grant will not cover all costs, but is an initial grant to help with these costs.

If funds are still available in March/April, students will be invited to bring in receipts/price lists (signed by their tutor) to claim additional funding.

The maximum that will be awarded to any student is £500 even if students are taking a number of courses.

Allowable costs include books and materials, kits (e.g. Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy kits), uniforms, equipment, visits/trips and expenses of attending University interviews. They do not include the purchase of IT equipment.

7.2.4 Standard Bursary – Help With Travel Costs

Where a student lives more than a mile from their place of study they will be considered for help with travel costs.

Where there are medical or other reasons why a student cannot walk a mile and third party evidence is provided about this, consideration will be given to giving help with travel costs.

Where a student can use First Buses and they have to be in College or on an industrial placement for 3 or more days per week:

- First Termly & First Monthly Student Bus Passes.
Where a bus pass is lost or stolen a charge of £20.00 will be made for a replacement. This is only available once in any academic year.

Where a student cannot use First Buses - either:

- Payments equivalent to the cost of the First Termly & Monthly Student Bus Passes. If funds are still available (usually in March/April), additional payments can be made based on a student's actual costs – providing the student is travelling by the cheapest reasonable method of travel.
- Payments to cover the cost of the cheapest mode of transport (using all passes and concessions available).

In each case the lowest amount will be paid.

7.2.5 Standard Bursary – Payment Of Taxi Fares

If a student must use taxis because:

- They have a short term injury or medical condition which means they cannot use public transport.
Amount payable: Full cost of taxi up to a maximum of £500, amount to be based on actual attendance.
- They have a disability or long term medical condition and cannot access public transport and are not entitled to/have not been provided with transport or funding (e.g. Mobility Element of Disability Living Allowance) for transport through another means.
Amount payable: Up to 50% of the actual costs, maximum of £1,000 per year.

It will be the student's responsibility to notify FE Student Funding that they fall into one of these categories and provide appropriate supporting information from a third party.

At least one taxi receipt will be requested to confirm the cost of the journey. If possible this should also be done in emergency situations, but this will not delay support being given.

7.2.6 Standard Bursary – Meals

Students will be put onto an appropriate meal scheme. Where possible this provides credits through a student's College card so they can have a meal on the days they are in College. Where there are no facilities to provide a meal, students will receive a payment that is equivalent to the cost of the relevant meal scheme. *Where meals credits cannot be given students will be paid £3.00 per day of study for their meals.*

7.2.7 Asylum Seekers

The College is unable to make any payments (either by cash, cheque or BACs) to Asylum Seekers unless they are classed as Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker children. Therefore, the only element of the funding that can be made available to Asylum Seekers is the help that does not include payments, e.g. travel passes and meal credits.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers are allowed to receive payments. However they can only have the Premium Bursary until their 18th birthday. At this point, if their application for asylum has not been considered/decided, they will no longer be eligible for the Premium Bursary and will be treated as all other Asylum Seekers.

8. Government/College Meal Schemes

In order to be eligible for the Government Meal Scheme students must apply for the scheme and come from a household that is in receipt of:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (providing they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum. As Universal Credit assessments use monthly figures, this is equal to:
 - The assessed income for 1 period being £616.67 or less
 - The combined assessed income for 2 periods being £1233.34 or less
 - The combined assessed income for 3 periods being £1850.00 or less

The new eligibility criteria relating to Universal Credit was introduced by the Education and Skills Funding Agency in April 2018. To ensure that no student suddenly loses their meal entitlement because of this new regulation, transitional arrangements have been put into place. Therefore:

- From 1 April 2018, all students already on the Government Meal Scheme will continue on the Scheme whilst Universal Credit is rolled out (or they are no longer eligible

because of their age). This will apply even if the Universal Credit assessment shows their household earnings have risen above the new threshold.

- Any student who becomes eligible for the Government Meal Scheme after the threshold was introduced will also continue on the Scheme during the Universal Credit rollout (or they are no longer eligible because of their age). This will apply even if subsequently, the Universal Credit assessment shows their household earnings has risen above the new threshold.

The application for the Government Meal Scheme has been combined with the 16 to 18 Learner Support Fund Application. If a student is not eligible for the Government Meal Scheme they may still get help with meals through the Learner Support Fund.

9. Discretion In Special Circumstances

In the majority of cases the Learner Support 16 to 19 Bursary Fund & Meal Scheme - Guidance 2020-2021 will be followed. However, it is recognised that special circumstances arise that cannot be written into guidance therefore, the Student Funding Co-ordinator has discretion to respond on an individual basis, if it is felt that there is genuine need. This is to ensure that a student can start or be able to continue their course.

10. Appeals Procedure – All Funds

Appeals can be made if a student feels this guidance has not been followed and this has resulted in them not being given a bursary, or not receiving as much as the guidance states they should.

Appeals must be made within 10 working days of the date on their decision letter and must be in writing, clearly stating the grounds of the appeal. Appeals should be addressed to The Student Financial Support Committee, c/o FE Student Funding and emailed to studentfunding@bradfordcollege.ac.uk.

The decision of the Student Financial Support Committee will be sent in writing (usually by email) and their decision will be final.

If a student's situation changes during the academic year, there is no need to submit an appeal. They should contact the FE Student Funding (by email or telephone) so any new evidence can be considered.

11. Fraud – All Funds

Where there is evidence of fraud, the evidence will be reviewed by the Student Financial Support Committee and, if fraud is confirmed, this will result in:

- The loss of all future payments. OR
- The loss of some payments not already made. OR
- The student being asked to repay all funding received and the loss of all future payments.
- Disciplinary action.

In certain circumstances the College may have a duty to pursue fraud as a criminal matter.

