

16 To 19 LEARNER SUPPORT FUND BURSARY & FREE MEALS IN FURTHER EDUCATION POLICY DOCUMENT 2022-2023

Includes students who are continuing a course they started when they were aged 18 and students with an Educational Health Care Plan aged 19-25

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Bradford College

1. Introduction

The Learner Support Fund Bursary Scheme exists to help students continue with and complete their course where they would otherwise be unable to do so on financial grounds. The amount granted to students should make a significant impact on them coming to College or being able to remain on their course.

For students aged 16 to 18 the following bursaries are available:

- Premium Bursary
- Standard Bursary

The details in this policy document follow the guidelines given to the College by our funding agency, 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 further bursaries will be given.

2. Who Can Apply To The Learner Support Fund

2.1. Criteria All Students Must Meet

The student 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 financial support to enable them to be able to afford to come to College
- Be aged 16 to 18 on 31 August 2022, except where they are aged 19-25 and have an Educational Health Care Plan in place at the College or they are continuing a course they started when they were aged 18
- Be fully engaged with their learning activities – this includes attending their classes / placements regularly and undertaking any on-line 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

The student 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 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

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 / Universal Credit **and** Disability Living Allowance / Personal Independence Payments in their own name
- Be aged 16 or 17 and an Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child in the care of the Local Authority. If a student's immigration status has not been settled by the time they reach the age of 18, support from the Premium Bursary 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 £30,000 or less (see Section 2.3.1.)

2.3.1. Household Income

Students will meet the income requirement if they / their parent(s) / their partner / their guardian(s) are in receipt of:

- Income Support

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Pension Credit Guarantee

For other students their household income will 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
- Any Employment and Support Allowance that is not income related
- Working Tax Credits
- Universal Credit payments
- Carers Allowance
- Unearned income such as rent being paid to the student, partner or parent(s) / guardian(s)

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 made in replacement of any of the above

Applications where a household has no income or a very low income may not be accepted.

2.3.2. Whose Income Will Be Assessed

It is normally the income of the person / people who receive Child Tax Credits / Child Benefit / child element of Universal Credit for the student. The people whose income is needed will depend on who is in the household, for example:

- If a student lives with parent(s) / guardian(s), the income of parent(s) / guardian(s) will be assessed
- If a student lives with both parents / guardians and their grandparents, it is the income of both parents / guardians that will be assessed. 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
- If a student lives with their partner and no-one receives Child Tax Credits / Child Benefit / child element of Universal Credit it is the income of the student and their partner that will be assessed

3. How To Apply To The Learner Support Fund

Wherever possible applications will be processed on-line. 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

Access to the bursary portal is available on the Bradford College website: <https://bradford.paymystudent.com/portal/>. Students use their Bradford College Microsoft user ID and password to access the bursary portal.

The on-line application will need to be completed and supporting documents provided. All pages of the supporting documents must be uploaded and the documents must be clear and easy to read.

Where 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. Application In Person

Where students cannot apply on-line, the student will be able to apply in person. A member of staff will go through the application with the student.

Supporting documents must be provided at the time of application.

Where insufficient evidence is provided, the student will be advised they have additional things to provide. An application will not be considered as complete until all documents have been received.

4. How Learner Support Fund Applications Are Processed

Applications will be processed on a first come, first served basis. All applications will be dated when they are complete.

When a decision has been made this will be provided in writing / sent out by email. Decision paperwork will be given to students who make an application in person. Students who apply on-line 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.

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.

5.2. Special Circumstances

Flexibility will be given to students with medical conditions and/or other special circumstances that are disclosed to FE Student Funding including:

- Young Carers
- Students with an EHCP

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 advisor 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:

- 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
- 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 level of attendance will be judged only on their new course. Where a student transfers to another course they may not automatically qualify for another course materials payment.

6. How We Pay The Learner Support Fund Bursaries

Payments for books and course materials and, when bus passes are not provided will be made by BACs into the student's bank account.

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

- An Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Child can have their money paid to a Third Party who can then make arrangements for payment to them
- Where a Power of Attorney is in place for the student, payment can be made to a third party

7. What Financial Support Can A Student Get

All applications are assessed individually and how much money a student gets depends on personal circumstances.

The assessment that is done will be based on the course(s) the student is enrolled on at the time they apply to the fund. If they enrol on additional courses after this, it is their responsibility to notify FE Student Funding so they can be re-assessed.

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.

Below are the guidelines used to decide what help is available for each student.

7.1. Full-time Premium Bursary

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

Travel

Students who:

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

Provision of bus passes or where the student prefers payments equivalent to the cheapest form of transport to College.

Meals

If the student is not eligible for the Free Meals in Further Education (see Section 8) payments of up to £30 per week.

Students eligible for the Free Meals in Further Education (see Section 8) top-up payments for additional refreshments.

Course / Other Costs

Depending on how much a student needs to spend on books, course materials, uniform, University visits, course visits, internet connection and IT equipment 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. Part-time Premium Bursary

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). Days when students are asked to come into College for exams or other activities which are not normally timetabled will not be counted.

Example:

If a student is in College 2 days per week for the full College year, the maximum they would receive is:

$$£8 \times 2 \text{ days} \times 30 \text{ weeks} = £480$$

As with the full-time Premium Bursary the amount given will be broken down into elements for travel, meals and course / other costs.

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

7.3. Standard Bursary

Course Costs

Depending on the course(s) the student is studying an initial payment of up to **£150** will be given for course-related costs. In some cases, this payment will not cover all costs but is an initial payment to help.

Where students are on high cost courses and the amounts given do not cover the 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 £750 even if the student is taking a number of courses.

Travel Support

Where a student lives more than a mile from their place of study or where there are medical or other reasons why a student cannot walk a mile and third-party evidence is provided:

Provision of bus passes

Where a student has a disability or long-term medical condition and cannot access public transport and are not entitled to transport or funding (e.g. mobility element of Disability Living Allowance) for transport through another means:

Payments to cover the cost of the cheapest mode of transport (using all passes and concessions available)

Taxi Fares

If a student must use taxis because:

They have a short-term injury which means they cannot use public transport:

Full cost of taxi up to a maximum of £750

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 must not delay support being given.

It will be the student's responsibility to notify FE Student Funding that they fall into the above categories and to provide appropriate supporting information.

Meals Support

In exceptional cases students may be put onto a Meals Scheme. This is usually as a result of a referral from an appropriate member of staff within the College.

7.4. Accompanied Asylum Seeking Children

The College is unable to make any payments either by cash, cheque or BACs to Asylum Seeking Children unless they are classed as Unaccompanied.

Funding that can be given to Accompanied Asylum Seeking Children is help that does not include payments, e.g. bus passes, and free meals in further education.

8. Free Meals In Further Education

In order to be eligible for the Free Meals in Further Education, 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
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Pension Credit Guarantee
- Child Tax Credit (providing 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. This is equal to:
 - Assessed income for 1 period £616.67 or less
 - Combined assessed income for 2 periods £1,233.34 or less
 - Combined assessed income for 3 periods £1,850.00 or less

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 transitional arrangements have been put into place:

- From 1 April 2018, all students already on Free Meals in Further Education 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 Free Meals in Further Education 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 Free Meals in Further Education has been combined with the 16 to 19 Learner Support Fund Bursary Application.

9. Discretion In Special Circumstances

In the majority of cases the 16 to 19 Learner Support Fund Bursary & Free Meals In Further Education Policy Document 2022-2023 will be followed.

However, it is recognised that special circumstances may arise that cannot be written into policy.

Therefore, the Student Finance Co-ordinator has discretion to respond on an individual basis, if it is felt that there is a genuine need. This is to ensure that a student can start or be able to continue their course.

10. Appeals / Complaints Procedure – All Funds

Appeals can be made if a student feels this policy document has not been followed and this has resulted in them not being given a bursary, or not receiving as much as the policy document 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 Finance Co-ordinator, c/o FE Student Funding, and emailed to studentfunding@bradfordcollege.ac.uk.

A decision will be sent in writing and the 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 FE Student Funding so any new evidence can be considered.

11. Fraud – All Funds

Where there is evidence of fraud, the evidence will be reviewed 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 OR
- Disciplinary action

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