



16 to 19 Learner Support Fund Bursary & Free Meals in Further Education Procedures

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Revision history

Version	Type (e.g. replacement, revision etc...)	Date	History (reason for changes)
1	New policy and procedures	July 2026	Introduction of a formal policy to support the 16–19 Learner Support Fund Bursary & Free Meals Policy.

Monitoring and review

This procedure will be reviewed by the College Senior Leadership Team Committee annually in line with the 16 to 19 Learner Support Fund Bursary & Free Meals in Further Education Policy.

Linked Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to:

- Set out the process for administering the 16-19 Learner Support Fund and Free Meals in Further Education.
- Ensure support is awarded fairly, consistently and in accordance with Department for Education guidance.
- Support students who face financial barriers to participation in education.
- Ensure clear arrangements are in place for assessment, approval, monitoring, payment, appeals and fraud prevention.
- The entitlement includes students who
 - continue on the same study programme they started between 16 to 18 years (19+ continuers)
 - have an education, health and care (EHC) plan and are aged 19-24

The **Vice Principal (Students & Inclusion)** is responsible for:

- Ensuring compliance with Department for Education funding guidance.
- Ensuring appropriate governance arrangements are in place.
- Assess all applications against published eligibility criteria.
- Allocate funding fairly and consistently.
- Prioritise "in-kind" support wherever possible.
- Monitor engagement and eligibility throughout the academic year.
- Maintain appropriate controls to prevent misuse of public funds

The Head of Student Support is responsible for:

- Oversight of the Learner Support Fund.
- Ensuring effective operational delivery of bursary funding and free meals support.

The Student Funding Team Leader is responsible for:

- Managing the day-to-day administration of the fund.
- Ensuring assessments are completed consistently.
- Exercising discretion in exceptional circumstances.
- Managing the appeals process.
- Monitoring expenditure against available funds.

The Student Funding Team is responsible for:

- Processing applications.
- Requesting and verifying evidence.
- Communicating outcomes to students.
- Arranging bursary support and payments.

- Maintaining records to meet audit requirements.

Students are responsible for:

- Providing accurate application information.
- Providing evidence when requested.
- Informing Student Funding of changes in circumstances.
- Maintaining engagement with their course.
- Retaining receipts where reimbursement may be required.

3. Eligibility Assessment Procedure

Students must:

- Be enrolled at Bradford College on an eligible programme.
- Be enrolled on a course funded directly by the Department for Education or a King's Trust Programme.
- Meet the bursary eligibility requirements.
- Be aged 16-18 on 31 August 2026 unless:
 - they are continuing a programme started while aged 16-18; or
 - they are aged 19-24 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan.
- Be actively engaged in learning activities, including classes and placements.
- Meet residency requirements defined by the Department for Education
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-funding-rules-for-16-to-19-provision/advice-funding-rules-for-16-to-19-provision-2026-to-2027>)

Asylum Seeking Students

Special arrangements apply:

- Accompanied asylum seekers may receive education but generally cannot access public funds.
- Young asylum seekers with pending claims may receive non-cash support such as books, equipment or travel assistance.
- Cash payments must not be made where prohibited by national guidance.
- Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children may be considered for vulnerable bursary support where financial need exists.
- Students who become recognised care leavers following successful asylum claims remain eligible under vulnerable bursary arrangements where appropriate.

Students are not eligible if they:

- Are studying a Higher Education course.
- Are undertaking an apprenticeship.
- Are employed students undertaking a King's Trust Programme.
- Are serving a custodial sentence.
- Have been remanded to a secure institution.

- Are otherwise excluded under Department for Education guidance relating to young offenders.

4. Vulnerable Bursary Procedure

Students must satisfy the general eligibility criteria and one of the following conditions:

- Be in Local Authority Care.
- Be a Care Leaver.
- Be receiving Income Support or Universal Credit in their own name because they are financially supporting themselves.
- Be receiving Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit and Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment in their own name.
- Provide evidence supporting their eligibility.

Care Leaver Definition

A care leaver is defined as:

- A young person aged 16 or 17 who was looked after for at least 13 weeks after the age of 14 and who left care after the age of 16.
- A young person aged 18 or over who was looked after before turning 18 for at least 13 weeks after the age of 14 and who left care after the age of 16.

Additional Assessment Requirements

- A financial need assessment must be completed.
- Evidence of care or care leaver status must be obtained.
- Students in kinship or private fostering arrangements are not considered looked-after children for bursary purposes.
- Students who have left care through arrangements such as a Special Guardianship Order may be considered care leavers and therefore eligible.

5. Discretionary Bursary Procedure

Students must:

- Meet all general eligibility criteria.
- Be enrolled on a full-time programme.
- Attend a minimum of 12 guided learning hours per week.
- Have a gross household income of £50,000 or below.

6. Household Income Assessment Procedure

The income requirement is automatically satisfied where the household receives:

- Income Support.
- Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Pension Credit Guarantee.

Income Included

The following income is considered:

- Wages and earned income.
- Contribution-Based Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Non-income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Working Tax Credit.
- Universal Credit.
- Carer's Allowance.
- Unearned income including rental income.

Income Excluded

The following income is disregarded:

- Disability Living Allowance.
- Personal Independence Payment.
- Child Benefit.
- Child Tax Credit.
- Childcare element of Working Tax Credit.
- Housing Benefit.
- Council Tax Benefit.

Low or No Income Applications

Applications showing no income or extremely low income will normally require additional evidence, including evidence of non-entitlement to benefits unless exceptional circumstances apply.

Returning Students

Returning students on the same study programme may reapply without submitting new household income evidence where:

- They received bursary support in the previous year; and
- Household circumstances remain unchanged.

Students must still complete the reapplication process when requested.

Whose Income Is Assessed

The College will normally assess the income of those financially responsible for the student, including:

- Both parents or guardians.
- A parent's partner.
- A sibling where they have financial responsibility for the student.

Grandparents' income will not normally be included unless they are the student's financial guardian.

7. Application Procedure

Students must apply through the PayMyStudent Portal.

Applications must:

1. Be completed in full.
2. Include all requested evidence.
3. Be submitted using accurate information.

Where evidence is missing:

- Students will be notified through their College email account.
- Applications will remain incomplete until all evidence has been received. Support is available from the Student Funding Office.

8. Assessment and Decision-Making Procedure

Applications will:

- Be processed on a first-come, first-served basis.
- Be treated as complete only once all required evidence has been received.
- Be considered subject to funding availability.

Applications may close where available funding has been fully allocated.

Normally, no further applications will be processed after 1 June 2027 unless the student is enrolling on a short course that begins after this date.

Students will receive decisions through their College email account.

Due to the volume of applications and the requirement to verify evidence, there may be a delay between application submission and receipt of support. Students should provide accurate information and retain receipts where reimbursement may later be required.

9. Attendance, Engagement and Course Changes Procedure

Students are expected to:

- Report absences in accordance with the Student Attendance Policy.
- Attend all timetabled classes.
- Attend English and Mathematics classes where required.
- Attend work placements and timetabled activities.
- Work towards 100% attendance wherever possible.

The College may apply discretion to support retention and meet individual student needs.

Bursary support may continue where students are:

- Fully engaged.
- Partially engaged.
- Following a reintegration plan.

Attendance will be reviewed termly and students may be notified where bursary entitlement is at risk.

Financial support will cease where a student is withdrawn from College.

Transfers

Where a student transfers course, attendance will be assessed against the requirements of the new programme only.

10. Payment Procedure

The College will provide support in kind wherever possible.

Cash payments will only be made in exceptional circumstances via BACS transfer.

Payments will normally only be made to the student's own bank account.

Exceptions may include:

- Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children where all reasonable attempts to obtain a personal bank account have been exhausted.
- Students subject to a Power of Attorney arrangement.

11. Financial Support Available

Support is assessed individually and awarded according to need.

Assessments will be based on the programme(s) the student is enrolled on at the time of application.

Students must notify Student Funding of any subsequent enrolments requiring reassessment.

The College reserves the right to:

- Amend incorrect awards.
- Recover overpayments.
- Increase awards where under-assessment is identified.

Travel Support

Eligible students may receive the most cost-effective travel support available.

This may include:

- U19 WY MyAcademicYear Bus Pass.
- MCard Mobile App travel products.
- Train travel support where appropriate.
- Metro travel card top-ups.
- Travel reimbursement based on attendance.

Students must:

- Create an MCard account where required.
- Use their College email address.
- Carry appropriate age identification. [\[](#)

Exceptional travel support outside West Yorkshire may be considered up to £750 upon presentation of receipts.

Disability and Medical Travel

Where students cannot use public transport due to disability or a long-term health condition and are not already receiving transport support through another route, assistance may be provided based on the most cost-effective transport option available.

Taxi Support

Taxi costs may be supported where:

- A temporary injury prevents the use of public transport.

Support is available up to £750 per academic year.

Receipts may be requested to verify costs.

Meals Support

Eligible students may access meals:

- On timetabled attendance days.
- On examination days where attendance is required.

Support will normally be provided through a cashless meal allocation accessed using the student ID card.

The current allocation is up to £7 per eligible attendance day.

Students attending programmes that do not meet bursary eligibility criteria, including many adult and community evening programmes, will not normally qualify for meals support.

Kit and Equipment

Eligible students may receive support for:

- Stationery.
- Textbooks.
- Uniforms.
- Protective clothing.
- Essential course equipment.

Where curriculum areas are unable to provide equipment directly:

- Reimbursement may be considered.
- Receipts must be submitted.
- Claims must relate to the current academic year.

Digital Devices

Eligible students may receive loan equipment including laptops.

Priority will be given to students who:

- Require a device for learning.
- Do not already have access to a suitable device.
- Have not previously received a device from the College.

Students must sign a loan agreement and return equipment by the agreed date. Failure to do so may result in charges being raised.

Additional Support

Subject to available funding, support may be available for:

- UCAS application fees.
- Work placement travel.
- University interview travel.
- Essential course trips.

Accommodation costs linked to placements may be considered only where the College determines they are essential to course participation and supporting evidence is provided.

Support will not normally be available for non-essential trips or extracurricular activities.

Childcare

Students under 20 years of age may receive support through the Care to Learn scheme.

Additional bursary support may be considered where Care to Learn funding does not meet reasonable childcare costs.

Hardship Support

Students experiencing exceptional hardship may receive support including:

- Emergency food.
- Emergency accommodation.
- Emergency clothing.
- Short-term financial assistance.
- Other safeguarding-related support.

Support may take the form of vouchers or BACS payments.

12. Free Meals in Further Education Procedure

Students may be eligible where they come from a household receiving:

- Universal Credit.
- Income Support.
- Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance.

- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- Pension Credit Guarantee.
- Child Tax Credit without Working Tax Credit and an annual income not exceeding £16,190.

Applications for Free Meals are incorporated into the online bursary application process.

Students must submit an application to be considered.

Students from households receiving Universal Credit where household income exceeds the discretionary bursary threshold may still receive Free Meals support only.

No additional support for travel, kit or equipment will normally be available in these circumstances.

13. Exceptional Circumstances

Where circumstances arise that are not specifically covered by this procedure:

- Cases will be considered individually.
- The Student Funding Team Leader may exercise discretion.
- Decisions will be documented and retained for audit purposes.

14. Appeals Procedure

Students may appeal where they believe:

- The policy or procedure has not been followed correctly.
- An assessment decision has been made incorrectly.

Appeals must:

- Be submitted within 10 working days of the decision.
- Be submitted in writing.
- Clearly state the grounds for appeal.

Appeals should be sent to:

Student Funding Team Leader
studentfunding@bradfordcollege.ac.uk

The decision following appeal will be issued in writing and will be final.

15. Fraud and Misrepresentation

Where fraud is suspected, evidence will be investigated.

Where fraud is confirmed, the College may:

- Stop future payments.
- Withdraw outstanding awards.
- Require repayment of funding received.
- Apply disciplinary action.
- Refer matters for further investigation where appropriate.

The College reserves the right to pursue recovery of public funds and take appropriate action where deliberate misrepresentation is identified