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16-19 (19-23 LLDD) Financial Support Policy 2019-20

In line with government guidance bursary policies will be kept under review to ensure support is continued to be provided to support students who need it.

Policy Statement

The Activate Learning group is committed to encouraging and enabling participation in education so that individuals reap the personal and economic benefits of life enhancing opportunities created by lifelong learning. We recognise that money issues can be a significant barrier to participation, particularly for the most vulnerable people.

Activate Learning aims to use government bursary funds to ensure funding reaches those students who are in most need of financial support. Funds are used in the most effective and efficient way possible to ensure that the maximum number of eligible students at any of our college campuses are able to access financial support to remove any barrier to participation.

All decisions about which students receive a discretionary bursary and how much bursary they receive are based on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need. The bursary fund is intended to help students overcome the specific financial barriers they face. These will vary from student to student, depending on a range of factors, for example, their household income, their home circumstances, the distance they need to travel to the institution and the requirements of their study programme.

Purpose

This policy document outlines how Activate Learning intends to use its allocation of discretionary bursary funds during the 2019/20 academic year. The bursary schemes for future years will be confirmed once the group's 16-19 bursary allocation for the year is announced, please see separate policy for learners aged 19 and over.

Promotion

Activate Learning colleges actively promote the availability of financial support to new and continuing students throughout the admissions process via the website, prospectuses, leaflets, keep warm communications, open event advice sessions and the interview process. Text and email message reminders are sent at key times during the year. All materials are written in simple, plain English and are available in alternative formats.

The Group Student Support team identify and support students who are at risk of not participating as a result of their home circumstances leading to their need for additional support and make referrals directly to the college Bursaries and Hardship fund.

In addition, the colleges work with local schools and intermediary agencies to identify vulnerable students who may be eligible but who may be deterred from applying due to lack of confidence, fear of stigma or another reason.

We promote the following bursary schemes to all 16 - 18 students studying at Activate Learning Colleges:

- travel Bursary
- food credits (free college meals)
- vulnerable bursary
- study start-up costs, trips and work placement bursary
- young carers bursary
- residential bursary
- college hardship fund

Administration

The Activate Learning bursaries are managed according to the guidance laid out in the Education and Skills Funding Agency's document; Funding Guidance for Young People 2019 to 2020. Records of applications, eligibility evidence and payments are complete, accurate and stored securely for internal and external audit.

Eligibility

To qualify, students must meet the eligibility criteria and the evidence requirements outlined on the Student Finance Application Form and procedure accompanying this policy, see appendix 1. Students whose need has been identified by Student Support are not necessarily required to provide evidence of household income.

Students must be enrolled on a funded further education programme and have right to study.

Students must be considered a 'home' student for the purposes of further education funding. 'Home' status is the same for the bursary as it is for fee eligibility purposes. Awards will be made based on the residency information provided on the Bursary Fund Application form 2019-20 and evidence may be requested to support this. Assessments which are made by the Advice and Admissions team at enrolment will be used to confirm 'home' status and we withhold the right to withdraw awards should this status not be confirmed, or withdraw funding if a student's status changes throughout their programme.

Eligibility under a low income criterion assumes that students have applied for all other statutory government financial support, evidence of this will be required.

Student contributions

Students are expected to make a percentage contribution, such as towards their travel pass, please see details in appendix 1.

Conditions

Awards are made proportionate to the student's need.

Students who apply for a vulnerable or young carer's bursary after the autumn break will be awarded a pro-rata amount dependent on the number of weeks remaining to the end of the

year.

As the discretionary bursary is limited, awards are made on a first-come-first-served basis.

A proportion of the bursary is reserved for students joining courses throughout the year. The group reserves the right to close the scheme at any time to review the allocation of funds and it may be reopened at a later date. If applications are made when the fund is closed, they will be processed in order of the date they are received.

All the required documentary eligibility evidence must be provided before an application can be processed, incomplete applications or applications without all the required evidence will not be processed. Evidence will only be accepted if the address matches that of the student applying for the fund.

Any payment is conditional on students maintaining an acceptable level of attendance of 92%. Students whose attendance is below 92% may have a payment partially approved proportionate to their attendance or the payment not authorised.

In addition to this student must adhere to the Student Standards of Behaviour and Code of Conduct. Students' attendance will be monitored and financial support could be withdrawn if their attendance drops below this level or if a student fails to adhere to the Standard of Behaviour. No funding will be withdrawn without consideration of all the relevant factors or without notification. Payments will be stopped if students have been absent for a period of 4 continuous weeks or more.

Payments made to students may be recovered if they have not spent it for the reasons it was awarded to them. Consideration of the impact of such an action on the individual student will be taken into account before taking a final decision to do so.

The conditions of the scheme are made clear to all applicants when they apply and they are asked to sign the application form to confirm that these are understood. If they have provided an email address students receive confirmation of their bursary award by email and a reminder of the terms and conditions with regards to attendance. Otherwise they will be informed by letter.

We will communicate by email unless otherwise requested.

Bursary payments to be made to students are made by BACS. ESFA does not expect bursary payments to be paid into another person's bank account, except in exceptional circumstances where a student is unable to administer their own account.

Student's responsibilities

It is the student's responsibility to notify Activate Learning of any change of circumstances that affect their bursary award. Changes include address, bank details, study programme, childcare provider and withdrawal from their course.

Students are also responsible for planning their journey to college, informing us of the travel company and where they will embark on their chosen transport. They are required to liaise directly with the travel company if they require a replacement pass. If they withdraw from their programme students are required to return their travel pass to Activate Learning.

Any smart travel card issued will have a stop placed on it if the student withdraws from their programme, or if their attendance falls below the acceptable level.

If a student fails to notify Activate Learning of any changes affecting their bursary award or withdraws from their course, we may seek to recover any overpayments of bursary funds. Any ongoing scheduled payments will stop on the last day the student attended their programme.

Students are responsible for providing correct bank details to enable bursary payments to be made. Any bursary payments withheld due to student's correct bank details not being provided will be back dated to a maximum of four weeks.

Students are responsible for informing the Department of Work and Pensions about any financial support payments they receive, as these payments may affect your eligibility to some benefits

Appeals

Students will receive confirmation by letter or email that their application has been unsuccessful, including details on how to appeal this decision.

Once their appeal has been considered and a decision has been communicated, there is no further right of appeal.

Feedback and evaluation

Activate Learning listens to students and works in partnership with them, to create policies and procedures that improve the learning experience and maximise student success. Students' satisfaction with the financial support schemes and how they are administered is carried out through learner voice round tables and feedback surveys.

The group evaluates the impact of financial support by evaluating the retention rate of students in receipt of support from the scheme and by equality measures.

Inclusion and diversity

Activate Learning does not discriminate against any student group, either directly or indirectly. We also measure and report on uptake of the scheme by gender, ethnicity, ability, level of programme, curriculum area, mode of study and personal circumstance to be assured that no group is excluded and those students potentially facing the greatest barriers are able to benefit from the available funds. Positive steps are taken to review and address any inequality or imbalance.

Data protection and confidentiality

Students and parents/carers who wish to discuss their family situation in private will be offered a confidential meeting space. Information is only shared on a strictly need-to-know basis.

All personal and/or sensitive information is stored securely on our server and in lockable cabinets with access limited to relevant staff only. All relevant information is held for seven years and then destroyed through a confidential disposal system.

Scope

This policy is relevant for all 16-19-year-old students, students aged 19 to 24 and have an Education, Health and Care (EHCP) and students aged 19 or over and continuing on a study

programme they began aged 16 to 18 who are eligible to apply for financial support. Non-employed students aged 16 to 19 who are participating in a Prince's Trust Team Programme are eligible to receive the bursary in the same way as any other student participating in an eligible, publicly funded course. The policy applies to students at Banbury and Bicester College, Bracknell and Wokingham College, City of Oxford College, Farnham Sixth Form College, Guildford College, Merrist Wood College and Reading College or anyone at our operational sites enrolled onto a further education study programme with Activate Learning.

Definitions

ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency
Bursary	This is provided to colleges to remove financial barriers to participation.
Gross	Income before tax and employment deductions
ALL	Advanced Learner Loan
LDA	Learning Disability Assessment
EHCP	Educational Health and Care Plan.
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
UASC	Unaccompanied asylum-seeking child
BACS	Bank Automated Clearing Services

References

- [16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2019-to-2020](#)
- [Free Meals Guidance 2019-2020](#)
- [16 to 18 Residential Bursary Fund guide: 2019 to 2020](#)
- [Care to Learn guide for institutions: 2019 to 2020](#)
- [Appendix 1 – 16 - 19 Financial Support Award Procedure](#)

Equality Impact Assessment

We believe that people from a range of backgrounds and experiences can enhance the life and development of the institution and that all individuals should be treated on the basis of individual merit and without prejudice. Activate Learning will, therefore aim to provide an education service which actively promotes equality of opportunity and freedom from discrimination on grounds of protected characteristics, namely age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnerships, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and beliefs, sexual orientation and socio economic status in both education and employment. Activate Learning expects all employees, students, and associated partner organisations to adopt this policy.

Activate learning is committed to carrying out Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) on its policies and procedures in order that some measurement is made of the contribution that the policy/procedure makes towards equality and diversity objectives.

Name and role of person(s) carrying out EIA	
Name of policy, procedure, practice, plan or process	
What is the main aim or purpose of the policy, procedure, practice, plan or process?	
Is this a new (N) or existing (E) policy, practice, plan or process? (Please tick relevant box)	N E
Person responsible for policy, practice, plan or process	
Date of equality impact assessment	

Evidence

What information has been gathered to inform the EIA? Consider, for example, people's views from focus groups and surveys, and statistical information or other relevant evidence. Consider both quantitative and qualitative information	
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What has this information revealed?	
Is further information required? If so, how will this information be gathered and used?	

Impact

<p>Has the equality impact assessment identified potential or actual areas of concern, negative impact, or areas of inequality? If so, please tick the relevant boxes.</p>	<p>Race Disability Gender (including Gender reassignment) Pregnancy / maternity Sexual orientation</p>	<p>Age Religion and belief Marriage / civil partnership Socio-economic Other area of equality (please state)</p>
<p>Has the equality impact assessment identified areas that would further advance equality if changes were made, for example fostering good relations between different groups, meeting needs or encouraging participation? If so, please tick the relevant boxes.</p>	<p>Race Disability Gender (including Gender reassignment) Pregnancy / maternity Sexual orientation</p>	<p>Age Religion and belief Marriage / civil partnership Socio-economic Other area of equality (please state)</p>

<p>Please provide a brief summary of the outcomes of the EIA including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Issues identified in the EIA · Areas of potential inequality · Opportunities to further advance Equality <p>Opportunities to foster good relations</p>	<p>Number of students participating vs whole college, amounts received, unsuccessful applicants by</p> <p>Gender</p> <p>Ethnicity</p> <p>Ability</p> <p>Level of learning</p>
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	Curriculum area
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Action - Equality Action Plan

Issue	Planned Actions for Improvement	Expected Outcomes and Targets with Milestones & Target Dates	Person Responsible for Completion
<p>If the action proposed will not fully eliminate potential or actual negative impact, Please state:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Why is this and how can it be justified? <p>Please discuss this issue with your senior manager</p>			

