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Financial Support Policy	LS006	5	
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LEAD PERSON [job title]	Group Executive Director - Students		
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STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT POLICY

Policy Statement

Activate Learning empowers students to participate in education and to complete their programme successfully. We recognise that money issues can be a significant barrier to participation and attendance, particularly for the most vulnerable students. We use the group’s annual allocation of Discretionary Bursary Funds to administer the following Activate Learning Bursary Schemes which provide financial support to students most in need.

- Travel Bursary
- Course Costs Bursary
- Bursary for Vulnerable groups
- Meal Credits
- Childcare Bursary
- Accommodation Bursary

Purpose

This policy document outlines how Activate Learning uses its allocation of discretionary bursary funds and bursaries for vulnerable groups during the 2021/22 academic year.

Scope

This policy applies to all further education students aged 16 or above on the 31 August who are enrolled at Activate Learning or its subcontracted provision. This excludes apprenticeship learners.

In 2021/22 Activate Learning Bursaries are open to students whose household income is:

- £25,000 or less if 16-18
- £30,000 or less if 19 or over

Definitions and Acronyms

Bursary

A grant. Funds awarded to a student to enable them to study at college
Department for Work and Pensions – Government department responsible for welfare, pensions, and child maintenance

DWP

HMRC

Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs – the tax authority for the UK

Home Status

‘Home’ status means the student has met the required residency criteria. For more information on fee status please follow this link
<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Fees-and-Money/England-fee-status>

Completed applications

Applications which include all the required evidence for processing.

Commitment Statement

Activate Learning will:

- Review and update the Activate Learning bursary schemes each year once our annual allocation is known. This review covers eligibility criteria, student financial support procedures and the application forms
- Follow Government guidance on how these funds are distributed and ensure that the funds are used in the most effective and efficient way possible to support the maximum number of eligible students.
- Publish clear and accurate information about the bursary schemes and actively promote these to new

and continuing students across multiple platforms and throughout all stages of the learner journey:

- throughout the admissions process
 - via our websites
 - social media
 - prospectuses
 - leaflets
 - open event advice sessions
 - targeted communications via email, phone, SMS.
- Provide a user-friendly application form, a fair awarding process, clear and accurate communication by email and phone, including the terms and conditions of each scheme.
 - Treat all bursary applications as confidential and ensure that all records are stored securely in line with the [Privacy and Data Protection Policy](#)
 - Process applications fairly on a first come first served basis and aim to confirm the outcome of any application within four weeks of a completed application being received.
 - Take individual circumstances and financial need into account when making decisions, including the number of children living in the household.
 - Signpost students to the Student Support Team if they cannot access evidence of their financial need, or if they have extenuating circumstances and need a supporting statement for their application.
 - Provide an opportunity for students to appeal a decision within seven days of receipt of the application decision. Once the appeal has been considered by the panel and a decision has been communicated, there is no further right of appeal.
 - Provide an opportunity, if an applicant is dissatisfied with the service provided, to make a complaint through our feedback processes. See Comments, Suggestions and Complaints Policy.
 - Promote Government run financial support schemes, such as Care to Learn.

Responsibilities

Students' responsibilities:

- To ensure that their application is completed in full and that all evidence is provided.
- To ensure that their home address is on any evidence provided.
- To provide correct bank details for bursary payments.
- To notify Activate Learning of any changes affecting their bursary award.
- To adhere to their colleges behavioural expectations outlined in the Behaviours for Success policy.
- To repay funds paid to them if they have not spent them for the reasons for which they were awarded.
- To plan their journey to college, informing us of the travel company and where they will embark on their journey.
- To return their travel pass if they withdraw from their programme.
- To inform the DWP about any financial support payments they receive, as these payments may affect their eligibility to receive some benefits.

Group Financial Support Team responsibilities

- To follow Government eligibility criteria when administering bursary schemes as follows:
 - Students must be enrolled on a funded further education programme and have right to study; this does not include apprenticeships.
 - Students must be fee assessed as a 'Home' student for the purposes of further education funding, this is the same as it is for enrolment fee eligibility.
 - Eligibility under a low-income criterion assumes that students have applied for all other statutory government financial support before applying.
 - When we assess household income, we include the income of all adults in the household who are aged over 18.
 - When assessing the income of au pairs, we will accept an income statement from their employer.
 - Students applying under low-income, must provide evidence of one of the following:
 - Universal Credit - all pages of three recent statements
 - Tax Credit Award – all pages of the most recent award
 - Income Support - claim confirmation

- Job Seekers Allowance (income related) - claim confirmation
- Employment Support Allowance (income related) - claim confirmation
- State Pension Credit - evidence of the guaranteed element
- In some cases, we will accept three months of wage slips for each adult and / or an HMRC tax bill and a Council Tax bill.
- If evidence of household income is via Universal Credit statements, we will use the take home pay figure in addition to the amount of Universal Credit received after all deductions to calculate the total household income.
- All application forms must be signed by the student and parent (for students aged between 16-18) to give formal agreement to their conditions of payment.
- To make bursary payments directly into students' own bank accounts, via transfer. Only in exceptional circumstances will we pay into third party account if the student is unable to administer their own bank account.
- To backdate for payments for up to four weeks if a student has provided incorrect bank details.
- To monitor the attendance of students accessing financial support as good attendance is a condition of continued payments. Financial support could be withdrawn if attendance drops below 92% or if a student fails to comply to the Standards of Behaviour. No funding will be withdrawn without consideration of all the relevant factors or without notification.
- To stop payments if a student has been absent for a period of four continuous weeks or more. If a student withdraws from their course, any ongoing scheduled payments will stop on the last day the student attended their programme.
- To cancel (or ask the student to cancel) any bought in services such as travel and childcare if they are no longer eligible for their bursary for whatever reason. We will let the student know that they will then be responsible for any ongoing payments if they wish to continue to use the services.
- To seek to recover any payments of bursary funds if a student has provided false or incorrect information.
- To confirm by email if an application has been unsuccessful, including details on how to appeal this decision.
- To run appeals panels made up of senior college managers.

References

Government Guidance

- [16-19 Bursary Fund guide 2021 to 2022](#)
- [Free meals in further education guide 2021-2022](#)
- [Residential Bursary Fund guide 2021-2022](#)
- [Care to Learn](#)
- [Adult Education Hardship funding rules 2020-2021 version 6](#)

Linked policies and procedures

- [Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy](#)
- [Admissions Policy](#)
- [Privacy and Data Protection](#)
- [Attendance, Punctuality and Absence Management Procedure](#)
- [Student Bursary Procedure](#)
- [Student Bursary Scheme and Application Form \(16-18\)](#)
- [Student Bursary Scheme and Application Form \(19+\)](#)