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DEPARTMENT	Advice and Admissions – Student Finance Team		
DATE	17/6/2024	REVIEW DATE	Text here

FE Student Bursary Procedure

Procedure Statement

This procedure details the process by which further education students in need of financial support to overcome specific barriers to remain in education are awarded bursaries during the 2024/25 academic year.

All the funding rules set out in this guide apply to the bursary fund as a whole.

Here is a step-by-step guide to applying for bursaries and how the bursaries are assessed and provided

1. Information, advice, and guidance

An applicant can gather information from:

- Course application and enrolment communications
- Our website
- Social Media
- Course guides
- Open events
- School liaison
- Submission of an enquiry
- Discussion with an advisor

2. Enquiries relating to the progress of a bursary application or accessing a bursary award

Information relating to applicants' specific queries relating to the progress of a bursary application, additional information required to complete the application or information on how to access a bursary award, for example a travel pass, can be sought by:

- Speaking with an advisor at the campus Advice Centre
- Emailing FEbursaries@activatelearning.ac.uk
- Calling 0800 612 6008

3. Application

Applicants and current students can apply for a bursary from June by submitting an online application form available from the website. For students who are unable to complete an online application, a paper copy is available to pick up from any campus Advice Centre or Reception. Students must apply and indicate on the form the bursaries they need and provide all evidence required. Applications without the required evidence for each bursary will not be processed until this is received.

All paper applications must be signed by the student.

Bursary funds are not backdated for applications received after the start of the course.

Applicants should only submit electronic files in one of the following formats:

- Picture files: JPEG, PNG, GIF and TIFF extensions
- Electronic files: DOC, DOCX, XLS, XLSX, PDF and XPS extensions

4. Application received

The Group Administration Team process complete applications in received date order. The bursary application and supporting evidence is checked by the Group Administration Team, then entered onto our student records database. Group Administration will email to request further information or evidence as required.

Only complete applications will be processed. Group Administration may return incomplete

applications and applications that have not been signed which could delay the assessment and award of any bursary.

5. Acknowledgement

The Group Administration team send applicants an email within five working days to acknowledge receipt of the completed application.

6. Assessment

All bursaries are means tested and based on household income. All income and benefits (including Universal Credit, Housing Benefit and Tax Credits) are considered. The college does not consider Child Benefit, Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment when calculating total household income.

The Group Student Finance Team assess complete applications to establish which bursaries the student is eligible for and the students' actual financial need to participate in their course. Students must meet the general eligibility for all bursaries below.

a. General eligibility

Students must:

- I. Be enrolled on a funded further education course (excluding apprenticeships and students aged 14-15)
- II. Have a right to study
- III. 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
- IV. Adhere to the residency criteria below:
 - Residents of Wales – students who live in Wales and travel to study at an English institution should approach their home local authority to make an application for Welsh Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Students may also apply to their English institution for help from the 16-19 Bursary fund discretionary bursary but are not eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups
 - Residents of Scotland – students who live in Scotland and travel to study at an English institution should approach their home local authority in Scotland to make an application for Scottish EMA. These students are not eligible to apply for support from the 16-19 bursary fund
- V. Adhere to the fund-specific criteria below:
 - **For the 16-18 bursary fund**, students must be either:
 - Aged 16-18 on 31st August 2024
 - Aged 19 and continuing a course they began when aged 16-18
 - Aged 19-25 with an EHCP

And have a net household income of up to £30,000 for a single child household plus £1,700 for each additional dependent child aged 18 or under living at the same address. This excludes:

- Students who meet specific eligibility criteria to receive a bursary for young people in defined vulnerable groups, who need to evidence that they are either in care, a care leaver or receive the qualifying benefits in their own right
 - Asylum seekers, who do not have to evidence household income
 - Students applying for an accommodation bursary, for which the threshold is £35,000 for a single child household plus £1,700 per dependent child
- **For the 19+ bursary fund and Adult Loans Bursary**, students must be aged 19+ (excluding those who qualify for 16-18 funding) and have a net household income of up to £35,000 plus £1,700 for each dependent child under 18 living at the same address. This excludes asylum seekers who do not have to evidence household income.

If students are aged 19+ and enrolling to a course that is eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan (ALL), they must have their loan fully approved before applying for a bursary and evidence of their approved loan is required to support their application. Students with an ALL that leave their course before the two-week liability point must repay all funds that they have received through the ALL bursary. We do not support learners with their tuition fee if the course is eligible for an ALL.

b. Specific eligibility for each bursary

i. Travel bursary

Travel bursaries are awarded to support students with the cost of travelling to and from college.

To be eligible, students must:

- I. Live more than 3 miles walking distance from college (using Google Maps), in line with local authority policies for free school transport
- II. Be attending the nearest college offering their chosen subject
- III. Have a journey less than 30 miles to college
- IV. Be responsible for planning their journey to college, informing us of the travel company and where they will go to and from

Students needing to walk more than 3 miles in total for their journey each way may be supported with an additional travel pass where available.

Students who have transport provided by the local authority who need a bursary to pay their contribution for the transport are required to provide a copy of the local authority's transport invoice by 22nd November 2024. Payments will be made to the student directly to enable them to pay the local authority invoice.

We are not able to support the cost of taxis to college unless the taxi is for SEN transport provided by the local council.

Students are not usually supported with travel expenses to travel by car unless they have evidenced an exceptional need to do so.

Students attending work/industry placements who live more than 3 miles from the placement and need support with additional travel costs must complete a work placement form to provide more details. This must be signed by the student and their tutor.

Students supported with an accommodation bursary are only awarded a travel bursary to contribute towards their travel costs in exceptional circumstances.

ii. Course costs bursary

Awards for this bursary will only be made to students with costs related to course participation costs which are detailed on the course participation record.

Funds are not awarded for materials and equipment that can be borrowed from college.

Awards are made for costs relating to university open events / interviews, UCAS fees, exam fees, UK field or residential trips and essential items for courses that faculty cannot provide, for example specialist protective clothing.

iii. Bursary for vulnerable groups

To be eligible, students must evidence that they are in one of the following defined vulnerable groups:

- I. In care
- II. Care leavers
- III. Receiving Income Support (IS) or Universal Credit (UC) because they are financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner
- IV. Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right, as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right

Students will be assessed to identify their financial need with support from a member of the Student Support team, who will complete a financial assessment form and supporting

statement for their application if required.

Students who are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups are not automatically eligible for meal credits.

iv. **Meal credits**

To be eligible, students must evidence that their household receives one of the following:

- I. Income Support
- II. Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- III. Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- IV. Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- V. The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- VI. Child Tax Credit (provided you are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of not more than £16,400 as assessed by His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
- VII. Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- VIII. Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per year (after tax and not including any benefits payments)
- IX. Receipt of free meals at school or another college – all students already receiving free meals on or after 1st April 2018 continue to be eligible to receive free meals
- X. If their parents are self-employed, they need to provide:
 - Their UC award letter
 - A copy of their HMRC Tax calculation letter of their Company Registration form if their business is new
 - Evidence that their net earnings do not exceed the UC threshold
 - A signed declaration form confirming their net earnings do not exceed £7,400

A student is only eligible to receive a free meal when they, or a responsible adult on their behalf, have made a successful application to the institution where they are enrolled.

Students returning to a 19+ funded course are no longer eligible for meal credits.

We will encourage students who received free meals at school to apply for meal credits.

v. **Childcare bursary**

For a 19+ childcare bursary, students must be aged 20+ when they start their course.

For a 16-18 childcare bursary, students must be aged 16-19 and provide evidence that they have been awarded the maximum Care to Learn award and have childcare costs that exceed Care to Learn's weekly maximum rates of £230 per week.

Students are expected to use their funded early education entitlement, where this applies, before applying for a childcare bursary.

To be eligible, students must provide:

- I. The Ofsted registration number for the childcare provider
- II. Evidence that confirms the student receives Child Benefit for their child
- III. A complete childcare provider form

Please note: both the student and the childcare provider must return our signed Terms and Conditions before invoices can be paid

vi. **Accommodation bursary**

To be eligible, students must:

- I. Meet the following income criteria:
 - **For the 16-18 accommodation bursary**, students must have a household

income of up to £35,000 for a single child household plus £1,700 for every additional dependent child aged 18 or under living at the same address

- **For the 19+ accommodation bursary** (called the Residential Access fund), students must have a household income of up to £35,000 plus £1,700 for each dependent child aged 18 or under living at the same address
- II. Be enrolled on a specialist subject that is not available where they live e.g. land-based, rugby academy, basketball, and furniture
 - III. Have a journey of more than 2 hours one-way on public transport

Students need to apply for accommodation at Activate Learning before applying for an accommodation bursary.

The Residential Access fund supports students aged 19+ who meet the eligibility criteria above and stay in Activate Learning managed accommodation. Students must not be in receipt of Housing Benefit.

c. How household income is assessed

- I. If the household receives Universal Credit, we add together the average take-home pay and average amount of Universal Credit (after all deductions) when calculating the annual household income. If the Benefits office pays your rent to the landlord, we add the rent awarded to you to the household income
- II. If the students have provided wage slips as evidence of low income, we use the take-home pay figure (any deductions that are not statutory will be calculated as income)
- III. If students provide Tax Credits as evidence, we use the total income stated under the heading 'Income,' often on page 2 of the award notice
- IV. When assessing household income, we will include the income of all adults aged over 18 living in the household
- V. Eligibility for meal credits is assessed according to the guidance in the following link: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1145247/Example_of_a_UC_monthly_award_notice.pdf
- VI. We do not include Personal Independence Payments, Disability Living Allowance or Disabled Tax Allowance payments when calculating household income

7. Bursary Award

The Group Student Finance Team award bursaries if the student has provided evidence that they meet the eligibility for that bursary and this award is proportionate to the student's needs.

Students may be awarded bursary funds if their learning continues past the planned end date if they need.

Students' attendance will be monitored and if it falls below 90%, or they fail to adhere to the Attendance and Student Behaviour Policies, bursary payments will be withheld. The impact on attendance that might be caused by illness, caring responsibilities or other exceptional circumstances will be considered. If a student is involved in disciplinary proceedings or has poor attendance, funding may be withheld or reclaimed.

8. Confirmation of bursary award

The Group Student Finance Team notify students of the outcome of their application within four weeks of their complete application being acknowledged. This confirms the bursaries they have been awarded, how each bursary is provided and the conditions of the award.

If their application for a bursary is unsuccessful, the student will be informed of the reason and the appeals procedure will be explained. Response times may be slower during peak times (September to October).

9. How to appeal a decision

If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of their application and wishes to appeal, they should submit their appeal in writing with a supporting statement no later than 7 days after receipt of their

application decision.

Appeals will be reviewed by a panel and the decision will be final. The panel will include the Group Head of Advice and Admissions. Once the appeal has been considered by the panel and a decision has been communicated, there is no further right of appeal. Appeals should be addressed to the Group Head of Advice and Admissions:

- By email – FEbursaries@activatelearning.ac.uk
- By letter – Group Head of Advice and Admissions, Activate Learning, Group Student Finance Team, Banbury and Bicester College, Broughton Road, Banbury, OX16 9QA

10. How support is provided for each bursary

a. Travel bursary

i. Travel pass

- I. If complete applications are received by 12th August 2024, students will receive their pass at the start of term
- II. We will purchase a travel pass on the student's behalf for the journey detailed on their bursary application form
- III. We provide travel passes from the following travel companies:
 - Arriva
 - Falcon Buses
 - Oxford Buses (Inc. Thames Travel)
 - Reading Buses (Inc. Thames Valley)
 - Stagecoach Oxfordshire
 - Stagecoach South
 - Chiltern Railways
 - Great Western Railway (GWR)
 - Southwestern Railway (SWR)
- IV. Travel passes are usually available for collection within three weeks of the award notification. Students will receive a text message as soon as the pass is ready for collection
- V. Passes may be collected from the campus Advice Centre. If the course is not based at an Activate Learning campus, the travel pass will be posted to the place of learning
- VI. Students who have been awarded a Stagecoach bus pass will receive an email with details of how to order their pass from stagecoachbus.com. If students need support ordering their pass, they can do this at a college Advice Centre.
- VII. We recommend that students take a picture of their travel pass. This is to ensure they have the pass number if they lose the pass and need a replacement
- VIII. We recommend students store their pass in a plastic wallet to avoid damaging the print and magnetic strip on the back
- IX. We do not exchange travel passes for a different travel company if the original pass provided enables the journey to college from the student's home address
- X. Funds will not be backdated, and students are responsible for the cost of travel until their travel pass arrives
- XI. Any travel pass that is not collected within two weeks will be returned to the travel company and there may be a fee for reissuing the pass
- XII. Travel passes are the students' responsibility. Therefore, if they are lost or damaged, students must contact the travel company directly and arrange for a replacement. The only exception to this is train passes and Arriva bus passes
- XIII. Details of how to obtain a replacement pass can be found on the 'How to obtain a replacement travel pass' document that is available on the website
- XIV. We will order replacement train passes if the pass is damaged. The damaged pass must be returned before collecting the replacement pass or the student will be liable to pay for the full cost of the pass

- XV. Lost travel passes will only be replaced up to a maximum of two times, after which the student is responsible for the full cost of the pass
- XVI. Travel passes will expire on the 4 July 2025 unless we have a prior agreement and authorisation from your tutor that your pass needs extending
- XVII. If a student relocates, the bursary fund will support the cost of one change of travel pass, providing:
 - The original pass has been returned to the Advice Centre
 - The combined travel bursary and course costs bursary award does not exceed our maximum combined travel bursary of £3,500
 - Funds are still available
- XVIII. If a student needs a change of travel pass and they have reached the maximum bursary award or the funds have closed, they will be awarded travel expenses to the value of the refund we receive for their original travel pass
- XIX. If students complete or withdraw from their course before the end of the academic year, the travel pass must be returned to college. If we do not receive the travel pass within three weeks from the date the student left the course, these will be charged to the student for the remainder of time remaining on the pass
- XX. If a student leaves college and has received a smart travel pass, a stop will be placed on their card

ii. Travel expenses

- I. Students may be awarded travel expenses if:
 - It is the most cost-effective method of support
 - We do not have a purchasing agreement with the desired travel company
 - Public transport is not available for the journey
 - Students have evidenced the need to travel by car due to exceptional circumstances
 - Support is needed towards the student's contribution for Special Education Needs (SEN) travel provided by the council
- II. Expenses for fuel are awarded at 25p per mile for the return journey and paid by bank transfer
- III. Expenses for travelling by train will be awarded based on the cheapest fare using any railcards they may be eligible for. The cost of the railcard will be reimbursed when the student evidences that they have a railcard
- IV. Students who are awarded travel expense payments for travel on public transport are required to evidence that the amount awarded to them matches the cost of their travel. Students are required to provide three of their return travel receipts within two weeks of confirmation of their travel expenses award. They must also provide a couple of receipts at the beginning of each term. Awards may be reduced (or increased) if the cost of travel differs from the amount of expenses awarded. Payments will be withheld if travel receipts have not been provided. Details of how to submit receipts will be included in the email that confirms the travel expense award
- V. Students' attendance record will be used to confirm that those awarded expenses to travel by car have spent the funds on the purpose for which they were awarded
- VI. While the government bus fare cap is in place, bus receipts are not needed for journeys costing £2 per trip
- VII. Funds awarded for SEN transport are paid to students' bank accounts in termly instalments
- VIII. Travel expenses for on-campus courses are paid fortnightly, in advance, during term time
- IX. Bursary funds do not support the cost of taxis
- X. Students whose attendance rate is less than 90% for the previous three weeks may receive a reduced or cancelled payment as the funds received would not have been spent on their travel to college. They will be sent an email to notify them of the reduced or cancelled payment. Payments will resume providing they meet the

attendance requirements

b. Course costs bursary

- I. Support will only be provided in kind for course items that are not able to be borrowed. These are detailed on the course participation form and include specialist clothing, essential trips and exam resits. Bursary funds will be paid to faculty to cover their costs
- II. As an exception, students may be awarded a BACS payment, after receipts have been provided, for essential clothing that cannot be purchased without it being fitted for safety reasons
- III. Awards are made in arrears to reimburse students for UCAS fees and costs to attend university open events and interviews. These payments are made by BACS transfer into the student's bank account when a completed course costs form with receipts has been provided
- IV. Awards for 19+ funded students may be eligible for AAT (Association of Accounting Technicians) professional membership fees after receiving a receipt for the payment
- V. Bursary funds do not support laptops or any other IT equipment, counselling or counselling supervision, stationery or costs relating to extra-curricular activities
- VI. When students complete or withdraw from their course, all equipment and books purchased using bursary funds must be returned. Any equipment not returned will be charged
- VII. **For students aged 19+ only** and are enrolled on a funded course that is not eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan, we may in exceptional circumstances award a contribution towards their course fee. Students awarded a bursary towards tuition fees payable directly to Activate Learning need only to pay the balance due minus the bursary they have been awarded (usually 50%)

c. Students enrolled on ESOL courses

Students needing support towards their course fees in exceptional circumstances will be awarded a bursary towards the fees for the course they are enrolled on at the time of application.

Students enrolling on a new ESOL course each term in the academic year do not need to complete another bursary application. They should inform us each time they enrol onto a new course so that we can increase their bursary award if funds are available.

d. Bursary for vulnerable groups

- I. Students in the defined vulnerable groups may be awarded up to £1,200 of their financial support from the vulnerable group bursary funds. The award is based on an assessment of their actual costs to attend college and participate in their course
- II. Bursary funds are awarded in accordance with the eligibility criteria for each specific bursary unless Student Support assess that they have an exceptional need
- III. Students who meet the criteria for bursaries for vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to a bursary if they do not have financial needs and/or their financial needs are met from other sources
- IV. Students who live less than 3 miles walking distance from college will be awarded a travel bursary if a valid reason as to why the student is unable to walk to college is provided by the Local Authority or Student Support

e. Meal credits

- I. Students are awarded one meal credit per day, and this can be used for a free breakfast or lunch on the days they are scheduled to attend their course
- II. Students obtain their free meal by presenting their student ID card at the till
- III. Students may choose any meal deal options advertised on the plasma screens around college and displayed in our catering outlets
- IV. Students on a work placement or based on a campus without catering facilities will be provided with a link to obtain a supermarket voucher of their choice to buy food for lunch

- V. Meal credit expenses of £4 per day, paid by bank transfer, will be awarded by exception if there are no catering facilities or supermarkets nearby
- VI. Students awarded meal vouchers or meal credit expenses whose attendance is less than 90% for the previous three weeks will not have spent the funds to support them to attend timetabled classes. Their next voucher/payment will be reduced or not approved. The student will be sent an email to notify them of the reduced value of the voucher or a voucher not being provided. The following voucher/payment will be approved as usual if the student meets the attendance requirements
- VII. Individual students who are experiencing severe hardship may, in the short term, be awarded meal credits without undertaking checks on household income or gathering other evidence that would normally be required. The meals will be awarded following Student Support's assessment of the student's exceptional need. Records of the number of students supported this way, the number of days, the value of support given and the rationale for providing the meal support will be kept

f. Childcare bursary

- I. Students aged 20+ will be awarded a maximum of £230 per week per child to enable students to attend their course. Payments are made in arrears directly to the childcare provider after receiving monthly invoices
- II. Students aged 16-19 who are 16-19 funded will be awarded a maximum of £50 per week to top up their Care to Learn. Students aged 19 who are enrolled onto an ASF course are not eligible for a bursary award to top up their Care to Learn
- III. Funds are initially allocated for up to two children per household. Funding for additional children will be subject to availability
- IV. Students' childcare providers are informed by email if they have been awarded a childcare bursary and both the student and childcare provider will receive the terms and conditions
- V. Funds to pay childcare invoices are paid directly to the childcare provider

g. Accommodation bursary

Awards are based on the net household income:

- Band 1
 - Criteria: Income less than £30,000 (plus £1,700 for each additional child)
 - Award: Up to £4,500
- Band 2
 - Criteria: Income between £30,001 and £35,000 (plus £1,700 for each additional child)
 - Award: Up to £4,000

Further awards may be made during the second and third term if funds are remaining

h. Support for online courses

- I. Childcare bursary: Students enrolled on an online course are awarded up to three days childcare for full-time courses and one-day's childcare for part-time courses
- II. Course costs bursary: Students needing essential equipment that is not included in the course will be supported with costs that are detailed on the course participation record
- III. Travel bursary: Students needing to travel to a campus to sit exams may be awarded 10% of their travel costs up to a maximum of £300. A higher award will be considered if there are extenuating circumstances. The funds will be awarded in arrears after attending the exams and receipts for travel by public transport have been submitted

11. In year support

- Activate Learning will support students to order replacement travel passes or provide a code for students to order their pass from the company website. Students will receive a text message when their travel pass is available for collection from the Advice Centre
- Course costs forms are processed throughout the academic year and funds are awarded for

costs identified as necessities, such as costs to attend work and industry placements

- Support may be awarded for students to attend additional days for catch-up/revision sessions and exams
- Activate Learning will approve scheduled payments after checking students' attendance

References

Government Guidance

- [16-19 Bursary Fund](#)
- [Free Meals in further education](#)
- [Residential Bursary Fund](#)
- [Care to Learn](#)
- [Adult Skills fund](#)
- [Advanced Learner Loans Bursary](#)
- [Bracknell Forest Council Post-16 Transport Policy Statement](#)
- [Oxfordshire County Council Post 16 Transport Policy Statement](#)
- [Reading County Council- Brighter Futures Post 16 Transport Statement \(To be updated when 2024.2025 available\)](#)
- [Surrey County Council – Travel Assistance Policy for learners aged 16-25](#)

Glossary

- Net household income - Household income after taxes and National Insurance contributions have been deducted.
- SEN – Special Educational Needs

Related Policies and Procedures

- [FE Student Bursary Policy](#)
- [Privacy and Data Protection](#)
- [Student Behaviour Policy](#)
- [Replacement travel passes with details update](#)

Appendices – To be updated

- [Student Bursary Application Form \(16-19\) update](#)
- [Student Bursary Application Form \(19+\) update](#)
- [Childcare Provider form](#)
- [Work Placement Form](#)
- [Self – employed Declaration Form](#)

