

	TITLE		REF	VERSION
	FE Student Bursary Procedure			2
	DEPARTMENT			
	Advice and Admissions – Bursary Team			
DATE		16/09/2025	REVIEW DATE	16/09/2025

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 2025-26 academic year. All the funding rules and conditions set out in this guide apply to the bursary fund.

Enquiries, 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 meals
- Submission of an enquiry
- Using our chatbot/live chat on a college website
- Discussion with an adviser

Enquiries relating to the progress of a bursary application can be sought by:

- Speaking with an adviser at a campus Advice Centre
- Submitting a web enquiry form via a college website
- Calling 0800 612 6008

1. Application

Applicants and current students can apply for a bursary from July, a form can be downloaded from the website or collected from any campus Advice Centre or Reception. An option to complete the form online is planned for later in July.

Important Notes:

- Students must apply and select the bursaries they need on the form and include all required evidence.
- Applications without the necessary evidence will not be processed until this is received.
- All paper applications must be signed by the applicant using a handwritten (ink) signature. Typed or digital signatures will not be accepted. Applicants should read and understand the Declaration and keep a copy for their own records.

2. Evidence

Evidence must be complete, readable, and provided in a non-editable format. Applications will only be assessed when all evidence of household income or eligibility for a bursary for vulnerable groups is provided as detailed in section 2 of the application form.

Important Notes:

- Households whose income is below the means-tested benefit threshold should apply for statutory benefits before applying for a bursary. [Benefits calculators - GOV.UK](#)
- Applicants whose household income exceeds the eligibility threshold but still need financial assistance must include relevant information with their application. This includes details such as the total number of children living in their household. Failure to provide this information may result in their application being refused.
- Households that meet the residency criteria for education but are not eligible for public funds must complete an income and expenditure statement if their household income would otherwise qualify for statutory benefits. An assessment will be conducted to determine if they have sufficient funds to cover day-to-day living costs or if there are any discrepancies in their reported income.
- Applicants should only submit digital 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

3. Application Received

Complete applications are processed in the order they are received. Bursary applications and supporting evidence are reviewed and entered on our student records database. If additional information or evidence is required, we will email the applicant to request it.

Important Notes:

- Only complete applications will be processed.
- Incomplete applications or those that have not been signed will be returned, delaying the assessment and award of any bursary.
- Bursary funds are not backdated if applications and evidence are received after the start of the course.

4. Acknowledgement

Applicants receive an email within five working days to acknowledge receipt of a completed application.

5. Eligibility and 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, childcare payments, disabled child payments and Limited capability for work payments when calculating total household income.

The Bursary 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.

General Eligibility:

- Be enrolled on a funded further education course (excluding apprenticeships and students aged 14-15).
- Have a right to study.
- Be fee assessed as a home student for the purposes of further education funding.
- 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.

Specific Fund Eligibility Criteria:

- **16-18 Bursary Fund:**
 - Aged 16-18 on 31st August 2025.
 - Aged 19 and continuing a course they began when aged 16-18.
 - Aged 19-25 with an EHCP.
 - 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.
 - Students who meet specific eligibility criteria to receive a bursary for young people in defined vulnerable groups, need to evidence that they are either in care, a care leaver or receive the qualifying benefits in their own right.
 - Asylum seekers do not have to evidence household income.
 - Students applying for an accommodation bursary, the threshold is £35,000 for a single child household plus £1,700 per dependent child.
- **19+ Bursary Fund and Adult Loans Bursary:**
 - 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.
 - 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.

Household Income Assessment:

- **Universal Credit:** We add together the average take-home pay and average amount of Universal Credit (after all deductions). If the Benefits office pays rent to the landlord, the rent is added to the household income.
- **Tax Credits:** We use the total income stated under the heading 'Income,' which can be found on page 2 of the award notice.
- **Wage Slips:** The take-home pay figure is used (any deductions that are not statutory will be calculated as income).
- **All Adults:** The income of all adults 18 and over in the household is considered.

- 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
- **Excluded Benefits:** Personal Independence Payments, Disability Living Allowance, Disabled Tax Allowance payments, or childcare payments.

Specific Eligibility for Each Bursary

Travel Bursary:

- Awarded to support students attending the nearest college offering the course who have a journey of more than 3 miles walk and less than 30 miles, using Google maps.
- Applications will be refused if the journey is under 3 miles unless exceptional need is evidenced at the time of applying. Proof from a medical professional confirming the student is unable to walk the distance, or confirmation from the local authority or Student Support will be considered.
- Students will be responsible for planning their journey to college, informing us of the travel company and where they will go to and from.
- Students walking over 3 miles each way, in addition to using public transport, may be eligible for an extra travel pass if available.
- Students who evidenced extenuating circumstances and were awarded a travel bursary in 2024-25 will be granted a travel bursary in 2025-26 to enable them to complete the same course, provided they meet the income eligibility criteria, evidence that their extenuating circumstances remain unchanged is required.
- Students are not usually supported with travel expenses to travel by car unless they have evidenced an exceptional need to do so.
- 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 21st November 2025. 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 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.

Course Costs Bursary:

Support will be provided for essential course items and trips, as detailed on the course participation record. Funds are not awarded for materials and equipment that can be borrowed from college. Maximum course cost award is £1,000.

Bursary for Young People in Defined Vulnerable Groups:

- Defined vulnerable groups are:
 - In care - under section 20 or 31 of the Children Act 1989. Evidence of costs met by the Local Authority is required to avoid double-funding.
 - Care leavers - who meet the full definition of a care leaver. Students with a Special Guardianship order need to evidence they meet the full definition of being a care leaver to be eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

- Receiving Income Support (IS), or Universal Credit (UC) because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner.
- 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 needs by 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 Credit Bursary.

Meal Credits:

- Awarded to students who apply for a meal credit bursary and their household are in receipt of one of the following:
 - Income Support
 - Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
 - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
 - 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))
 - Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
 - Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per year (after tax and not including any benefits payments)
 - 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

Self-Employed Parents should provide:

- Their UC award letter.
 - A copy of their HMRC Tax Calculation SA032 form or Company Registration form.
 - And sign a self-declaration form confirming their net earnings do not exceed £7,400.
- Students returning to a 19+ funded course are not eligible for meal credits.
 - Applicants unable to evidence they are eligible for meal credits and cannot provide proof they received free meals previously will be assessed for meal credits when DFE (Department for Education) shares Pupil Premium data around the end of October.
 - Students eligible for meal credits because they previously received free meals may not meet the eligibility criteria for a travel or course cost bursary.

Childcare Bursary and Care to Learn Grant Fund:

- **Age Criteria:**
 - **19+ Childcare Bursary:** Students must be aged 20+ when they start their course.
 - **Care to Learn Grant Fund:** Students must be aged 16-19 when they start their

course and evidence that they have been awarded the maximum Care to Learn (C2L) grant for a childcare bursary top-up.

- **Additional Criteria:** for a Childcare bursary or a Care to Learn grant students must:
 - Be the main carer for their child and be able to evidence that they currently receive Child Benefit.
 - Explain the reason any other parent cannot care for their child and confirm the other parent is not claiming Early Years Funding.
 - Live in England.
 - Use an Ofsted registered childcare provider or school.
 - Use their funded early education entitlement before applying for a childcare bursary or Care to Learn.
 - Complete a childcare provider form.
 - The student and childcare provider must sign an agreement to the Terms and Conditions.

Accommodation Bursary:

- **Income criteria:**
 - **16-18 Accommodation Bursary:** 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.
 - **19+ Accommodation Bursary (Residential Access Fund):** Household income of up to £35,000 plus £1,700 for each dependent child aged 18 or under living at the same address.
- **Additional Criteria:**
 - Be enrolled on a specialist subject that is not available where they live. Courses that are eligible are land-based courses at Merrist Wood College and furniture courses at the City of Oxford College.
 - Have a journey of more than 2 hours one-way on public transport.
 - Have applied for accommodation at Activate Learning.
 - Not be in receipt of Housing Benefit if applying for the 19+ Residential Access Fund.

Bursary Award

The Bursary 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.

Important Notes:

- Students' attendance will be monitored. If it falls below 90% or they fail to follow the Attendance and Student Behaviour Policies, bursary payments will be withheld. Exceptional circumstances like illness or caring responsibilities will be considered.
- If a student is involved in disciplinary proceedings or has poor attendance, funding may be withheld or reclaimed.
- Confirmation of bursary awards will be notified within four weeks of a complete application being acknowledged. This confirms the bursaries 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.

6. 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 within 10 working days of receipt of their application decision. Appeals are responded to within 15 working days.

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, Bursary Team, Banbury and Bicester College, Broughton Road, Banbury, OX16 9QA

7. How Support is Provided for Each Bursary

Travel Bursary:

- The maximum travel bursary award is £2,200. Exceptions may be considered in cases of extenuating circumstances.

Travel Pass:

- **Application Deadline:** Complete applications must be received by 11th August 2025 to receive the pass at the start of term.
Bursaries are provided from the date the bursary application was complete. Funds are not backdated, and students are responsible for their travel costs until the pass arrives. Travel passes will be purchased for students based on their bursary application, considering the most cost-effective route.
- **Providers:** Travel passes are provided from the following companies:
 - Falcon Buses
 - Oxford Buses (Inc. Thames Travel)
 - Reading Buses (Inc. Thames Valley)
 - Stagecoach Oxfordshire and South
 - Great Western Railway (GWR)
 - Southwestern Railway (SWR)
 - Chiltern railway journeys – a GWR or SWR pass will be issued
- **Types of pass:** Students are either provided with a physical pass or a prepaid code for them to order their pass from the travel provider. All passes expire on 3 July 2026.
- **Collection:**
 - Passes are usually available for collection within three weeks of the award notification. Students will receive a text message when the pass is ready for collection from an Advice Centre or Reception. If the course is not based at an Activate Learning campus, the travel pass will be posted to the place of learning.
 - When collecting the pass students will be asked to sign a form to confirm when they are required to return their pass.
 - 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.
 - 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.
- **Storage:** Students are advised to store their pass in a plastic wallet to avoid damage and to take a picture of their pass for reference in case of loss.
- **Replacement:**
 - Details of how to obtain a replacement pass can be found on the Travel drop down menu that is available on our website.

- Students are responsible for arranging lost or damaged travel passes except for train passes. Travel companies may replace travel passes up to twice in an academic year.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Students who relocate may be supported with the cost of one change of travel pass if funds are still available and they have returned the original pass to the Advice Centre.
- **Return of passes:** Students who leave or complete their course before the end of the academic year, or whose attendance is below 70% the previous four weeks are required to return their passes to the Advice Centre, Students may be charged for the remaining value of the pass if the pass is not returned within three weeks. A stop will be placed on travel smart cards.

Travel Expenses:

Awarded if:

- Public transport is not available.
- Students are timetabled to attend college less than three days per week.
- There is not a purchasing agreement with the travel provider.
- The student uses local authority SEN transport.
- As an exception if the need to travel by car is evidenced.

The cost of travelling by taxi is not supported.

- **Reimbursement:**
 - Travel by train will be reimbursed based on the cheapest fare using any railcards the student may be eligible for. Expenses for fuel are awarded at 25p per mile for the return journey and paid by bank transfer.
 - Students awarded travel expense payments for travel on public transport are required to provide three travel receipts to evidence their travel costs before the funds will be paid. They must also provide three 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.
 - Travel expenses are paid fortnightly in advance during term time. Payments are adjusted if a student hasn't attended college in the previous weeks to top up the funds that will not have been spent on college travel from previous payments.
 - Funds awarded for SEN transport are paid to students' bank accounts in termly instalments.
 - Students will receive reduced or cancelled bursary payments if they have been paid for travel costs but have not attended college, as the funds were not used as intended. An email notification will inform students of any changes. Payments will resume once minimum attendance requirements are met.

Please note: Bursary funds do not support the cost of taxis.

Course Costs Bursary:

Eligibility:

Awards are made for essential course participation costs detailed on the course participation record.

Support Provided:

Support is only provided in kind for course items that are not available to be borrowed and essential UK field trips. All equipment and books needed for the course are available to borrow from college. The items and trips supported are an essential part of a student achieving their study programme's goals/ qualification and are detailed on the course participation record. The maximum course costs award is £1,000

- **Protective Clothing:** Reimburse faculty for essential specialist protective clothing they have purchased on the students' behalf.
- **Field Trips:** Support for the cost of essential UK-only field trips. The funds are paid by internal transfer.
- **AAT membership fees:** Reimburse 19+ funded students for AAT membership fees upon receipt submission. If faculty purchase AAT membership, they are reimbursed via internal transfer.
- **University Events:** Reimbursement for attending university open events, interviews, and exam resits. Payments are made in arrears via BACS transfer upon submission of a completed course costs form with receipts.
- **UCAS Applications:** as an exception, support for the cost of applying to UCAS.
- **Clothing:** BACS payment for essential clothing that cannot be purchased without fitting for safety reasons.
- **Exam resits**

Exclusions:

- Laptops, IT equipment, counselling, stationery, and extra-curricular activities are not supported.

Return of items purchased with bursary funds:

Students are required to return any specialist protective equipment when they complete or withdraw from their course. Any items not returned will be charged.

Bursary for Vulnerable Groups:

- **Maximum Award:** Up to £1,200 based on financial need.
- **Assessment:** Financial needs are assessed by a member of the Student Support team, who will complete a Vulnerable Bursary Assessment form and supporting statement if required. Students who have no financial need because they have no participation costs, or their participation costs have already been met will have their application refused.

Students who live less than 3 miles walking distance from college will be awarded a travel bursary if they provide medical evidence that confirms they are unable to walk the distance.

Meal Credits:

Government Provision: £2.61 per meal per day timetabled to attend college for eligible students.

Top-Up: Activate Learning tops up the meal credit award to £4 per day if students meet the household income criteria to be eligible for discretionary bursary funds.

Support provided:

- **On campus:** Students can obtain a free meal by presenting their student ID card at the till. They may choose either a breakfast or lunch advertised meal deal option.
- **Vouchers:** Students on work placements or campuses without catering facilities will receive fortnightly supermarket vouchers sent in advance as a link via email. The value of the voucher will be adjusted based on the number of days they attended their course during the previous fortnight.
- **Meal credit expenses**, paid by bank transfer, will be awarded by exception if there no catering facilities or supermarkets nearby.
- Students who have not attended all their timetabled classes in the previous fortnight will be provided with a reduced or no meal voucher or expenses the following fortnight.
- An email will be sent to notify the student of the reduced value or the absence of a voucher. If the student meets the attendance requirements in the following fortnight, the subsequent voucher/payment will be approved as usual.
- **Receipts:** Students who are in receipt of meal vouchers or expenses must provide receipts to evidence their meal costs at the beginning of each term.
- **Special Dietary Requirements:** Students with specific dietary needs can discuss their requirements with the catering team on campus.
- **Emergency meals:** Students in severe hardship, assessed by Student Support, may receive a meal credit bursary for their timetabled college days without household income checks. Short term support is provided for up to 6 weeks. 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. Students are required to sign confirmation of receipt of funding spent on food that day if actual receipts are not obtained.

Childcare Bursary and Care to Learn Grant Fund

- A contribution towards childcare costs for timetabled classes, the fund and does not support independent study.

Maximum Award Childcare bursary award:

- **Students Aged 20+:** £230 per week per child.
- **Students Aged 16-19:** £50 per week to top up their Care to Learn.
- Awards are initially for up to two children per household.
- Funding for additional children will be subject to availability.

Care to Learn:

Information about Care to Learn can be found at [Care to Learn: Overview - GOV.UK](#)

You can get up to:

- up to £180 per child per week (or £195 in London).

Care To Learn can help with:

- Support towards travel costs between home and childcare provider, if additional to normal travel to college.
- Up to £250 per child for deposits and £80 towards registration fees
- Summer retainers for childcare places (up to 8 weeks)
- independent study time where it is required as part of your study programme
- time needed to undertake work experience or industry placements that have been identified as part of your study programme

Payments: Made in arrears directly to the childcare provider after receiving monthly invoices and checking the student is attending their course and the child is attending the childcare provider.

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.

Accommodation Bursary:

Support Provided: Awards are based on net household income and may vary with accommodation costs.

- **Band 1:** Income less than £30,000 (+ £1,700 per additional child) - Award: Up to £4,500
- **Band 2:** Income £30,001 - £35,000 (+ £1,700 per additional child) - Award: Up to £4,000

Further awards may be available in the second and third terms if funds permit. Bursary funds cover accommodation until the student withdraws or transfers to a non-specialist course.

Support for Online courses

- **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
- **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.
- **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. Support for the cost of parking will be considered if there are extenuating circumstances.

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

8. 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](#)
- [Surrey County Council – Travel Assistance Policy for learners aged 16-25](#)

9. Glossary

- **Net household income:** Household income after taxes and National Insurance contributions have been deducted.
- **SEN:** Special Educational Needs
- **Essential items and specialist clothing:** Needed to participate in the course
- **Essential trips:** Outlined in the qualification specification

10. Related Policies and Procedures

- [FE Student Bursary Policy](#)
- [Privacy and Data Protection](#)
- [Student Code of conduct](#)
- [Student Positive Behaviour Management Policy](#)
- [Attendance, Punctuality and Absence Management Policy](#)

11. Related Forms

- [16-18 Bursary Application](#)
- [16-18 Bursary Guidance](#)
- [19+ Bursary Application](#)
- [19+ Bursary Guidance](#)
- [Household Income Evidence Guide](#)
- [Self-Declaration Form](#)
- [Childcare Provider Form](#)
- [Course Costs Bursary Form](#)
- [Work- Industry Placement Form](#)
- [Vulnerable Bursary Assessment Form](#)
- [Change of Details Form](#)
- Replacement travel passes

12. Appendices

- Student Bursary Application Form (16-19)
- Student Bursary Application Form (19+)
- FE Bursary Guidance 2025-26 for Students Aged 16-18
- FE Bursary Guidance 2025-26 for Students Aged 19+
- Childcare Provider Form
- Work Placement Form
- Self-Employed Declaration Form
- Course Costs Form