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FE Student Bursary Policy	LS006	9

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LEAD PERSON	Group Head of Advice and Admissions		
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FE STUDENT BURSARY POLICY

Policy Statement

Activate Learning empowers students to participate in education and to complete their course successfully. We recognise that the cost of attending college can be a significant barrier to participation, particularly for the most vulnerable students.

We use the group's annual allocation of Bursary Funds to administer the following Activate Learning Bursary Schemes which provide financial support to students most in need:

- Travel Bursary
- Course Costs
- Bursary for Vulnerable Groups
- Meal Credits
- Childcare Bursary and Care to Learn grant funding
- Accommodation Bursary

Purpose

To provide clarity for staff and students about how Activate Learning uses its allocation of funds during the 2026/27 academic year and to signpost to the relevant associated policies and procedures. We provide bursary support for students who genuinely need help to overcome their individual financial barriers to participation.

Scope

This policy applies to all Further Education (FE) students, who have been assessed as a 'home' student for fees purposes, aged 16 or above on the 31 August 2026 and enrolled on a funded further education course at Activate Learning or its subcontracted provision. This excludes apprenticeship students and students aged 14 and 15.

The bursary fund is intended to help students with the essential costs of participating in their study programme, to help with the cost of essential protective equipment and UK field trips, the cost of travelling to college, childcare, and accommodation for specialist provision.

The bursary fund is not intended to support costs not related to education, such as general living costs, extra-curricular activities, or non-essential activities or to provide learning support services, such as counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring.

Definitions and Acronyms

ASF	Adult Skills Fund
AAT	Association of Accounting Technicians
Bursary	A bursary is money that we can use to award to a student to enable them to study at college.
C2L	Care to Learn – Governments childcare support grant funding for students aged 16-19
Completed applications	Applications submitted via the approved online system with all required evidence, including declaration acceptance, confirming agreement to the terms and conditions.
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions – Government department responsible for welfare, pensions, and child maintenance
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance – a weekly award paid to students living in Wales and Scotland who meet the eligibility criteria
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FE	Further Education **–** education for students aged 16 and above below degree level.
HE	Higher Education – degree level courses
HMRC	His 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 educational funding. For more Information on fee status please follow this link UKCISA - international student advice and guidance - England: FE fee status
Net Household Income	Household income after taxes and National Insurance contributions have been deducted
PTB	Personal Transport Budget – Local Authority funding to support travel for SEN students where transport is not directly provided.
SEN	Special Education Needs

Commitment Statement

Activate Learning will:

1. Review and update the Activate Learning bursary schemes each year once our annual allocation is known. This review covers eligibility criteria, bursary procedures and application forms.

2. Follow Government guidance on how funds are awarded, ensuring that they are used in the most effective way possible to support the maximum number of eligible students who genuinely need them.

3. Prioritise awarding travel bursaries when discretionary funds are limited.

4. Carry out a financial assessment for each student to establish their household income and make decisions on whether there is an actual financial need and any additional course participation costs. Students applying to the Vulnerable Bursary may not be required to undergo a financial assessment in the same way.

5. 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
    - Prospectus
    - Leaflets
    - Open event advice sessions
    - Targeted communications via email, phone, SMS
6. Promote and administer Government financial support schemes including Care to Learn.

7. Provide a user-friendly application process.

8. Treat all bursary applications as confidential and ensure that all records are stored securely in line with the Privacy and Data Protection Policy.

9. Process and award applications on a first come first served basis, aiming to confirm the outcome within four weeks of receiving a completed application, with bursary funds awarded from the date of confirmation.

10. Process applications submitted without complete evidence or details of extenuating circumstances in the order that the additional information is provided.

11. Keep a record of participation costs for each course.

12. Take individual circumstances and financial needs to participate in their course into consideration when making decisions, including the number of children living in the household.

13. 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.

14. Bursary terms and conditions will be made available to students as part of the application process.

15. All communications will be sent via email. Parents/Primary emergency contacts of students aged 17 and under on 31st August 2026 will be sent an email notifying them when the student has been sent a bursary communication. Students who do not wish emails to be sent to parents/emergency contacts, should contact a member of the Safeguarding Team to let them know.

16. Provide support in kind where possible and by the most cost-effective means, which may not always be the applicant's preferred method of transport.

17. Only make BACS transfer payments into student's bank accounts in the following circumstances:
    - Refunding students upon submitting receipts for membership to professional bodies, UCAS fees, university open events and interview.
    - Travel, if it is the most cost-effective method.
    - Students aged 19 or over who are ASF funded if it is the most cost-effective method of providing bursary support.
    - BACS payments will NOT be made to students aged 16-19 who are asylum seekers unless they are an unaccompanied asylum seeker in the care of a local authority.
    - Bursary funds do not support laptops or other IT equipment, counselling, extra support, tutoring, or costs relating to extra-curricular activities

18. Provide travel bursary support to students who are already in receipt of a travel bursary and relocate during the academic year. Due to limited bursary funding, this support will only be provided if funds are still available, and students have not already received the maximum bursary award. We will only support one change of journey due to relocation in an academic year.

19. Award bursary funds to as many eligible students as possible, however funds are limited and cannot be guaranteed.

20. Process fully complete bursary applications received by 17th August 2026 within our four-week standard period, if fully complete bursary applications are received by 10th August 2026 the bursary support will be in place for 7th September 2026.

21. Close bursary applications by 25th September 2026 or sooner if most funds have been allocated. Funds are closed to reconcile against our allocated budget and recycle any unused funds. Fully completed applications received after 25th September 2026 will be added to a waiting list. If additional funds are identified, we will reopen for applications on the waiting list and process in the order in which they were received. Bursary awards for students on a waiting list are awarded from the date the fund reopens and not backdated.

22. Not make travel costs awards exceeding £2,600. Additional awards exceeding £2,600 may be granted if extenuating circumstances are evidenced and funds remain available.

23. Not make awards for course costs more than £1,000

24. Allocate funds for approved essential course costs and UK field trips detailed on the participation record. Funds will be paid as the cost is incurred.

25. Provide Meal Credits to eligible students in line with Government guidance. These are assessed separately from bursary applications and support the cost of meals on study days of half a day or more.

26. Set funds aside for eligible Online students that need a travel bursary to attend exams. We will award students 10% of their travel costs by public transport up to a maximum of £300. A higher award will be considered if there are extenuating circumstances.

27. Provide an opportunity for students to evidence appeal a decision within 10 working days of receipt of the application decision. Outcome of any appeal will be responded to within 15 working days. Once the appeal has been considered by the panel of senior managers and a decision has been communicated, there is no further right of appeal.

28. Provide an opportunity for applicants to feedback on our service. Students are also signposted to our Customer compliments, comments and complaints procedure if they are dissatisfied with our service.

General Eligibility

Students must be enrolled on a funded further education course and:

1. Have the immigration right to study.

2. 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.

3. 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 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.

4. **For the 16-18 bursary**, students must be:
    - aged 16-18 on 31st August 2026,
    - or aged 19 and continuing with the same course they began when aged 16-18
    - or aged 19-25 with an EHCP

    Students must have a net household income of £30,000 or less for a single child household plus £1,700 for each additional dependent child aged 18 and under living at the same address. This excludes asylum seekers who do not have to evidence household income.

    Households receiving Universal Credit, whose income exceeds the standard eligibility threshold and who do not receive any additional income, will be assessed as meeting the household income criteria for bursary funds.

5. Students who meet the specific eligibility criteria to receive a bursary for young people defined in vulnerable groups will need to evidence that they are either in Care, a Care Leaver or receive the qualifying Benefits in their own right.

6. **For the 19+ Bursary**, students must be aged 19+ with a net household income of £35,000 or less plus £1,700 for each dependent child aged 18 and under living at the same address. This excludes asylum seekers who do not have to evidence household income.

7. If students are aged 19+ and are enrolling onto a course that is eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan, they must have their loan fully approved before applying for a bursary. Evidence of their approved loan is required to support their application. Students with an Advanced Learner Loan that leave their course before the two-week liability point must repay all funds that they have received through the Advanced Learner Loan bursary.

8. For Care to Learn grant funding, students must:
    - Be under 20 years old on the start date of their study programme.
    - Be the main carer of the child and in receipt of Child Benefit.
    - Be enrolled on a publicly funded study programme in England.
    - Use an Ofsted-registered childcare provider or a school-run setting exempt from registration.

There is specific eligibility relating to each Bursary - please see FE Student Bursary Procedure for details.

Responsibilities

Group Student Finance Team are responsible for:

1. Administering the bursary applications and awarding process.

2. Assessing applications against the eligibility criteria for each bursary applied for.

3. Communicating awards and payment schedules by email to students and parents of students aged 17 and under on 31 August of each academic year.

4. Processing bursary award payments.

5. Sending communications to students/parents who have provided an incomplete application, telling them what additional evidence is required.

6. Monitoring attendance and withdrawals and adjusting bursary payments as required.

7. Placing a stop on smart travel cards if students withdraw, complete early or if their attendance falls below 70% in the previous four weeks.

8. Withdrawing incomplete bursary applications if the evidence required has not been provided within four weeks of receipt of an email requesting the additional documents.

9. Processing and assessing Care to Learn grant funding application against eligibility, determining the amount of support required and paying childcare providers.

10. Make payments to childcare providers after confirming the student's attendance on their course and the child’s attendance at their childcare provider.

The student is responsible for:

1. Ensuring they have applied for all other government sources of financial support before applying to our bursary. Students can check this here: https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators.

2. Providing accurate information and all evidence required to support their application.

3. When applying for a bursary, applicants who do not meet the general or specific eligibility requirements should provide evidence of any extenuating circumstances with their application to ensure we apply our discretion to any decision.

4. Students must confirm that the information provided in their application is accurate and that they understand and agree to the bursary terms and conditions as part of the online application process. By submitting the application, students are agreeing to these conditions and any bursary award made.

5. Providing all additional evidence within four weeks of receiving an email detailing any further documents required to assess their application.

6. Meeting a minimum attendance of 90% and understand that action will be taken if attendance falls below.

7. Adhering to the Student Code of conduct and Student Positive Behaviour Management Policy

8. Attending the nearest college providing their course.

9. Repaying funds paid to them if they have not spent them for the reasons they were awarded.

10. Informing DWP about any financial support payments they receive, as these payments may affect their eligibility to receive some benefits.

11. Providing details of their own bank account if awarded a BACS payment.

12. Providing receipts for travel expenses, membership to professional bodies AAT, UCAS fees, university open events and interviews, if awarded.

13. Paying their residential accommodation fees if they transfer from a specialist subject to a non-specialist subject mid-year and wish to stay in their accommodation or if they withdraw. Bursary funds will only be used to pay for accommodation up to the date of the transfer or withdrawal.

14. Returning their travel pass and any books or equipment if they withdraw or complete their course before the end of the academic year.

15. Covering the cost of attending college until they have provided a fully complete bursary application and received confirmation that their bursary application has been successful as bursary funds are not backdated.

16. Notifying the Bursary Team if their learning continues past the planned end date and they still need bursary support to complete the course.

17. Notifying the Bursary Team of any changes of circumstances that effect their eligibility for a bursary, such as:
    - Change of address
    - Change of contact details
    - Change of timetable
    - Withdrawal from course
    - Any exceptional circumstances that cause you to be absent from college

Procedure and Forms

- FE Student Bursary Procedure
- Participation cost record –for details of costs for each course see faculty for more details

Government Guidance

- 16-19 Bursary Fund
- Free Meals in further education
- Residential Bursary Fund
- Care to Learn
- Advanced Learner Loans Bursary

Linked policies

- Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Privacy and Data Protection
- Attendance, Punctuality and Absence Management Policy
- Student Code of conduct
- Student Positive Behaviour Management Policy