

BURSARY POLICY

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Introduction

Wirral Met College is committed to promoting equality, diversity, inclusion and social mobility in all its activities and to ensure that all students are given the opportunity to achieve their potential.

The college seeks to ensure financial support funds are used to help overcome barriers to learning which may prevent students from enrolling, fully participating, completing and progressing.

The college recognises that funding is limited and strives to make sure the funds are available to assist disadvantaged students and those who are facing financial hardship.

The college is also committed to promoting the safeguarding and welfare of young people and vulnerable adults, including providing targeted support to those who are most in need through the student funds specified, ensuring that students have access to opportunities and the support they require to continue in learning and progress.

This policy covers the following student financial support funds:

16-19 year old students (or 19-24 with an EHCP, aged 19 continuing on a study programme started aged 16-18)

- Further Education Free Meals (FEFM)
- Vulnerable Bursary Fund (16-18s only)
- 16-19 Discretionary Bursary Fund

19+ students

- 19+ Learner Support Fund (LSF)
- 20+ Childcare Support
- Advanced Learner Loan (ALL) Bursary
- Advanced Learner Loan Childcare Support
- Higher Education (HE) Support Bursary
- HE Access & Progression Bursary
- HE Hardship Fund

Apprentices

Apprenticeship Care Leaver's Bursary

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Key Aims

This policy seeks to ensure that:

1. Student funds are distributed in accordance with the regulations and guidelines laid out by funding agencies
2. Administration of student financial support funds meet the needs of students and removes financial barriers to learning
3. Eligible students are assisted to take part in or continue in learning
4. Applications are processed efficiently and effectively
5. Systems are in place to administer, record and monitor funds, ensuring that funds are used for their intended purposes

Raising Awareness

Bursary / Learner Support Fund information is available on the college website, at pre-arranged information sessions, college open days and enrolment. Students can also obtain information from the Student Financial Support team, College Advisers, the college enquiry line and Student Services.

Application forms will be sent out to all potential and progressing 16-19 year old students prior to enrolment for completion before the start of term. Application forms for adults can be completed at main enrolment. Any students who have not applied after the start of term will be sent an application form by post and email.

Application forms are also available on the college website, Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), and at reception on all campuses.

Criteria

Students must satisfy the following criteria to access student funds:

- meet the residency requirements of the fund
- meet the age requirement of the fund
- be enrolled on an approved programme that meets the requirement of the fund

Further Education Free Meals

Free meals are targeted at disadvantaged students aged 16-19. Free meals in further education defines disadvantage as students being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Universal Credit (UC) regardless of income

16-18 Vulnerable Bursary

The defined groups for **16-18 Vulnerable Bursary** are students who meet the following criteria:

- in care
- care leavers
- receiving 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

An annual maximum of £1,200 can be claimed for eligible students dependent on their individual needs. Students eligible for vulnerable bursary will be funded to reflect the amount of support they need to participate and will not automatically be awarded £1,200.

Although students may be eligible for vulnerable bursary because they are in one or more of the defined groups, some may not have any actual financial need. This might be because their participation needs are already supported and / or because they have no relevant costs.

All students who meet the eligibility criteria for vulnerable bursary will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and awards made depending on individual financial needs to participate on their chosen course.

16-19 Discretionary Bursary Fund

To qualify for help with travel and meal costs priority will be given to 16-19 year old students with a household income below £42K.

To qualify for help with other course related costs which could include:

- equipment
- uniform
- educational visits essential to the students' study programme
- exam re-sits
- work placement

priority will be given to students aged 16-19 with a household income below £50K. Students requiring assistance with equipment costs with a household income above £50K will be considered on a case-by-case basis; taking into account whether they receive Universal Credit (UC), individual circumstances and the costs of participating on their chosen course.

19 + (LSF) & ALL Bursary

19+ LSF & ALL Bursary is available to provide financial support for students in financial hardship which may prevent them from participating in learning. Awards are based on individual needs and the cost of participation to help with costs which could include:

- books
- equipment
- trips
- travel
- exam fees
- professional memberships
- registration fees
- nutrition

19 LSF will not be used for essential equipment or facilities if a student is fully funded.

To be eligible for ALL Bursary students need to have an approved ALL to pay their course fees.

Childcare

Students who are over 20 years of age can apply for assistance with **childcare costs** for their timetabled classes. The childcare must be with an Ofsted registered provider and the fee charged for providing childcare. Students are expected to use the free early education entitlement for childcare, in the first instance, wherever possible. Students who live with a partner who does not work would not be supported with childcare unless exceptional circumstances apply. Childcare Support is a limited fund and will be allocated early, not all eligible students will be awarded support with childcare.

Students aged under 20 can apply for Care to Learn (C2L) for assistance with childcare costs. The bursary fund can also be used to provide further help if the costs exceed the weekly maximum rates of the C2L scheme where necessary and appropriate. Applications for C2L funding are available in college.

Allocation of Funds

A percentage of the funds will be held back to meet the needs of students enrolling on late-start programmes.

Administration Costs

In line with guidance, the college will allocate 5% of the total allocation towards administrative costs from 16-19 Discretionary Bursary, 19+ Learner Support and Free Meals Funds. For Advanced Learner Loan Bursary 5% from the total utilised funds.

Eligibility

Eligibility for all funds is determined by assessment of income, personal circumstances and participation costs. All applications will be assessed and awards made dependent on individual needs, priority support will be given to unwaged or low waged families (see appendix one). Students must be able to provide evidence of eligibility as outlined on the application form for an assessment to be made.

Eligibility for any funding also depends on a minimum attendance of 90% with a discretion for 80%. Discretion to waive the attendance criteria will also be used if a student is a young carer or looked after child.

Eligibility for student financial support does not give students an automatic entitlement to receive it. Students will be made aware that funding is limited and not guaranteed.

Assessment

Applications will be assessed on receipt of a fully completed form with all relevant evidence. Funding will be allocated from the start of learning or on receipt of the completed application, whichever is the later.

Back payments will only be considered for applications fully completed within four weeks of the course start date. Any applications completed after four weeks will be considered on a case-by-case basis, if there is an identified and evidenced financial need related to attending college which hasn't been met.

It is the student and parent / guardian responsibility to ensure that they provide the relevant evidence and fully complete the application form. Assistance is available with completing the form on request.

Notification of Award

Students will be notified of their award via their college email address, text message or letter.

Method of payment

The guidance encourages institutions to pay bursaries in-kind rather than cash payment as far as possible for students ages 16-19, so the bursary award would mainly be in the form of travel pass, meal cards and equipment provided for eligible students.

For adults on 19+ LSF and ALL Bursary, travel passes and meal cards will not normally be issued. Payments are made towards travel, equipment and other course related costs depending on eligibility, number of guided learning hours and the costs of participation.

Students must have their own bank account and provided details to receive payment from any of the funds. For any payments made directly to students, we will expect receipts to be provided to ensure the funds are being spent as intended.

Hardship Support (16-19s)

The college reserves the right to apply discretion to ensure that individual students' needs and personal circumstances are taken into account when decisions are made. Hardship support will usually be requested at the discretion of the Pastoral Coach, Safeguarding Managers or Specialist Support Tutor after discussing individual circumstances with the student. The following support is available:

Emergency / Crisis Support – application for meal card, travel pass and / or vouchers for students who are in serious financial difficulty can be issued for a period of up to 6 weeks (or longer in exceptional circumstances).

Reasons for application could be:

- benefit sanctions / changes
- homelessness
- domestic issues

Emergency Meal Vouchers – available from Pastoral Coach on all sites. This is intended for students displaying an occasional need and not to replace lost or forgotten meal ID badges.

Appeals

Applicants have the right to appeal if they are not satisfied with any decision regarding bursary support or payments. Appeals must be made in writing and sent to:

Bursary Appeals

Wirral Metropolitan College

Conway Park Campus

Europa Boulevard

Birkenhead

CH41 4NT

HE Bursaries

The following bursaries are available to students who are studying on a full-time degree or foundation degree programme at Wirral Met College.

HE Support Bursary **£500 per annum** for students with a household income below £25,000.

HE Access & Progression Bursary **£500 per annum** for students with a household income between £25,000 and £43,600 who have completed level 3 studies at Wirral Met College in the two years prior to commencing an undergraduate course.

Payment of £250 will be processed in term one and term two for eligible students.

HE Hardship Bursary Priority is given to student requiring assessment for DSA, payments are considered on a case-by-case basis dependant on individual circumstances

Apprentices

Apprenticeship Care Leaver's Bursary

Funding is applied for and payments processed in line with the government apprenticeship funding rules for students who meet the eligibility criteria

Appendix One

Eligibility Criteria 16-19 Discretionary Bursary Fund

Eligibility Criteria	Support Level	Award	Examples of Evidence Required
- Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) - Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 - The guarantee element of State Pension Credit - Universal Credit with total income NOT exceeding the equivalent of £42k pa (if above see support level 4)	One	- Free travel pass - Free meals - Required equipment / uniform for participation - Trips essential to students' study programme goals and course objectives	Award letter from DWP UC recent monthly statement Home office letter
Household income below £42K for households not in receipt of Universal Credit	Two	- Free travel pass - Free meals - Required equipment / uniform for participation - Trips essential to students' study programme goals and course objectives	Proof of household income e.g. payslip, p60 or tax return etc.
Household income between £42K-£50k for households not in receipt of Universal Credit	Three	- Required equipment / uniform for participation - Trips essential to students' study programme goals and course objectives	Proof of household income e.g. payslip, p60 or tax return etc.
Household income above £42k for households in receipt of Universal Credit	Four	- Free meals - Depending on individual circumstances, required equipment / uniform may be provided, essential trips may be supported	Award letter from DWP UC recent monthly statement

Household income above £50K for households not in receipt of Universal Credit	Will be considered on a case-by-case basis.	Depending on individual circumstances, required equipment / uniform may be provided, essential trips may be supported	Proof of household income e.g. payslip, p60 or tax return etc.
Students identified as: • In care • Have been in care and now classed as a care leaver • In receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit in your own right because you financially support yourself • In receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in your own right and Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit in your own right	Vulnerable Bursary	• Free travel pass • Free meals • Required equipment / uniform for participation • Trips essential to students' study programme goals and course objectives • Additional funding may be awarded based on assessment to identify any additional participation costs.	Local authority letter showing care status UC recent statement / tenancy agreement / utility bill UC / ESA and DLA or PIP award letter
Work Placement Will be considered on a case-by-case basis for students not eligible for bursary to support travel and cost of participating.		• Dependent on need	Relevant staff request and confirmation of dates / days

****care leavers aged 18 and living in Liverpool City Region will be issued a free travel pass from the local authority***

Eligibility Criteria 19+ Learner Support Fund /ALL Bursary

Eligibility Criteria	Support Level	Award	Examples of Evidence Required
- Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) - Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 - The guarantee element of State Pension Credit - Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa	One	- Four weekly payment towards travel / meals for students studying full time or substantial part time - Possible one off payment towards cost of any equipment required for the course	Award letter from DWP UC recent monthly statement Home office letter
Household income below £42K	Two	- Four weekly payment towards travel / meals for students studying full time or substantial part time - One off payment towards cost of any equipment required for the course	Proof of household income e.g. payslip, benefit award etc.
Household income between £42K-£50k	Three	One off payment towards cost of any equipment required for the course	Proof of household income e.g. payslip, benefit award etc.
Household income above £50K	Will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking into account individual circumstances e.g. number of children in household, cost of equipment required to participate	Depending on individual circumstances, payment may be processed to enable purchase of equipment required for the course	Proof of household income e.g. payslip, benefit award etc.

Uncontrolled document when printed, refer to staff intranet for current version

Note: to be eligible for ALL Bursary students must have an approved Advanced Learner Loan to pay their fees
to be eligible for 19+ Learner Support Funds students must be studying a funded further education course.

ALL funding will end on 31/12/2026; any previously funded ALL courses commencing after this point will be eligible for LLE funding and maintenance through Student Loans Company subject to student application.

Other factors including number of children in the household, participation costs, individual circumstances and number of study hours will be considered when assessing eligibility for any bursary funding.