



Wirral Met College

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)

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

19+ students

- 19+ Discretionary Learner Support
- 20+ Childcare Support
- Advanced Learner Loan Bursary
- Advanced Learner Loan Childcare Support
- HE Support Bursary
- HE Access & Progression Bursary
- HE Hardship Fund
- ITE 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, welcome events, 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 for 16-19 year olds can be completed at welcome events for potential students and at progression enrolment for existing students for the following academic year. Application forms for adults can be completed at main enrolment. Any students who have not applied at 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.

Eligibility

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

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 Support
- income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- 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
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her 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 pa (after tax and not including any benefits)

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

- in care
- care leavers
- receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit 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 or Personal Independence Payments in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right

An annual maximum of £1,200 can be claimed for eligible students from weekly bursary dependent on their individual needs, this amount should cover any costs related to attending college including meals, travel and equipment.

To qualify for help with travel and meal costs priority will be given to 16-19 year old students with a household income below £35K.

To qualify for help with equipment, uniform and educational visits costs, 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 individual circumstances and the costs of participating on their chosen course.

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%

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.

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 to 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.

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, Discretionary Learner Support and Free Meals Funds. For Advanced Learner Loan Bursary 5% from the total utilised funds.

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. Funds may not be backdated unless the student can demonstrate exceptional circumstances prevented them applying at an earlier date. 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 and / or letter sent to their home address.

Method of payment

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

For adult students, travel passes and meal cards will not normally be issued. Payments are made towards travel, equipment and other course related costs depending on eligibility, mode of study and the costs of participation.

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 Support Mentor, 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

Mitigating Circumstances - application for payment to students who have been unable to achieve 90% attendance due to a serious mitigating circumstance or unavoidable absence. Reasons for application could be:

- unavoidable appointments that can't be made outside of college hours
- caring responsibilities
- illness

Emergency Meal Card – available from reception on all sites. This is intended for students displaying an occasional need and not to replace lost or forgotten meal cards.

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

Higher Education Bursaries

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

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

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 at the end of 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.

A bursary focus group will meet on a half termly basis with the Director of Student Services, the Financial Controller, Student Finance Manager, Vice Principal Curriculum and Executive Assistant Principal Student Support & Foundation Learning to review expenditure.

Appendix One – Eligibility Criteria 16-19 Discretionary Bursary Fund

Eligibility Criteria	Support Level	Award	Examples of Evidence Required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income Support (IS) • Income-Based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) • 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 • Child Tax Credit (CTC) with a total annual gross income of less than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and not receiving Working Tax Credit • Working Tax Credit (WTC) run-on paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for WTC • Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa 	One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free travel pass • Free meals • Required equipment / uniform for participation 	Award letter from DWP UC recent monthly statement Home office letter
Household income below £35K	Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free travel pass • Free meals • Required equipment / uniform for participation 	Proof of household income e.g. payslip, benefit award etc.
Household income between £35K-£50k	Three	Equipment provided for participation	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	Depending on individual circumstances, required equipment / uniform provided for participation	Proof of household income e.g. payslip, benefit award etc.

	equipment required to participate		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 	Weekly Bursary (up to £1,200 pa)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free travel pass • Free meals • Required equipment / uniform for participation • Education visits / trips • Weekly allowance if required for any other course related 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent on need 	Relevant staff request and confirmation of dates / days

The same income criteria will be used when assessing eligibility and awards for adult students applying to Advanced Learner Loan Bursary, 19+ Learner Support Fund and Childcare Support Fund.

Other factors including number of children in the household, participation costs, individual circumstances and mode of study will also be taken into account when assessing eligibility for bursary funding.