



Student Support Funds Policy

Policy Area: Finance

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Approval By: Resources, Culture & Impact Committee

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1. Purpose

Student support funds have an important role to play in overcoming financial barriers to some students accessing and completing further education courses.

It is the aim of the college to use funds to make the maximum impact on attendance, retention, achievement and success rates.

The funds will be distributed in a consistent and equitable way and in accordance with guidance issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA):

- [Adult Skills Fund \(ASF\) funding rules 2024-25](#)
- [Care to Learn](#)
- [ESFA funding regulations 2024-25](#)

2. Overview

- 2.1. Student eligibility will normally be determined through an income-related assessment together with an assessment of the actual need for support. Awards will be calculated on actual need. This process will be managed by the Director of Student Services.
- 2.2. The college has a flexible approach to allocating funds and in exceptional circumstances, will consider applications from students who do not fall within the eligibility criteria but during their time at college, face significant financial hardship due to changes in personal circumstances and need support to complete their studies.
- 2.3. In exceptional circumstances consideration will also be given to students who are not in receipt of benefits or employed and are living on savings of less than £15,000 and can demonstrate a financial need.
- 2.4. In 2024/25 six funds/schemes are available to support students:
 - 2.4.1. 16-18 Priority Bursary (16-19 Bursary Fund - bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups)
 - 2.4.2. 16-18 Discretionary Bursary (16-19 Bursary Fund)
 - 2.4.3. Free further education meals
 - 2.4.4. 19+ adult education bursary including childcare for students aged 20+
 - 2.4.5. Advanced Learner Loans bursary fund including childcare for students aged 20+
 - 2.4.6. Care to Learn

3. Important notes for all student support funds/free further education meals

- 3.1. Payment/awards will be based on 85% attendance at college or at work placements in the current term and acceptable behaviour
- 3.2. Students need to apply for each academic year as eligibility criteria and awards may change.
- 3.3. The budget for student support funds is finite. Students who are eligible for the discretionary element of the student support funds are not automatically entitled to it. Reduced awards may be given if demand exceeds the available funds. When the fund(s) is/are fully committed no further awards will be made.
- 3.4. Payments in subsequent terms (where paid) may be at a lower rate if there is high demand on the funds.
- 3.5. Funds will only be released after the student has enrolled and attended their programme

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and may take up to 4 weeks from the course start date or from the date of receipt of application, whichever is the latest. For loan bursaries, students' awards will only be made once the student has an approved loan and has passed the initial liability point (2 weeks from student start date).

- 3.6. Awards, including for childcare, are dependent on the student achieving and maintaining satisfactory progress and 85% attendance in all their classes and will be stopped or reduced if either of these are deemed to be unsatisfactory.
- 3.7. Payments and/or awards will be based on 85% attendance at college or at work placements in the current term and acceptable behaviour and conduct.
- 3.8. Students who need to make appointments or other legitimate absences may be able to have these authorised; evidence needs to be submitted to the tutor / faculty administrator for authorisation, in order that the payment can be made.
- 3.9. Awards may be refused or made at reduced rate if the student does not meet the required standard.
- 3.10. Payments will stop where students have been absent for a period of 4 continuous weeks or more (excluding holidays).
- 3.11. The college reserves the right to reclaim awards from students who fail to attend classes. The student will be responsible for the payment of all outstanding fees, including those for childcare, from the date of withdrawal from the course.
- 3.12. For childcare, the college will not pay for extras such as meals, taster sessions or administration charges. If the college withdraws the funding, the student will be responsible for payment of any outstanding fees.
- 3.13. Childcare will be paid for the hours a student is timetabled to be in college up to the maximum as detailed in the policy. Additional hours will be paid by the students.
- 3.14. Awards are normally available for one programme of study in each academic year. Students enrolled on more than one course will be assisted only with costs relating to their main course.
- 3.15. Students on two-year courses will need to re-apply for financial assistance at the end of the first year. Criteria and awards made in the second year may differ from first year awards.
- 3.16. Applications from students who are repeating a course, or who are studying a course at the same level but in a different subject area, will be considered on an individual basis. If an award is agreed, it may be given at a rate that differs from the published rate.
- 3.17. If a student is in receipt of funding from Job Centre Plus or from any other government scheme, this will be taken into account before any award is made.
- 3.18. Travel awards will be considered if the student lives 1.5 miles or more from the college campus where they study. Distance is calculated with Google Maps using the shortest walking distance from home to the student's campus. The college will only fund travel for students who live under 1.5 miles from their campus if there are exceptional or medical circumstances, which will be considered on an individual basis.
- 3.19. Students are expected to use the most cost-effective form of transport and take advantage of student concessions and discounts on trains and buses, e.g. railcards and Unizone tickets.
- 3.20. Bus and train travel will be calculated at the lowest cost, weekly or daily, based on the student's timetable and taking into account available discounts and based on cost of travel at the beginning of the academic year. Please note that the college does not pay for taxis except in exceptional circumstances where all other transport options have been exhausted
- 3.21. Travel support may only be provided from the term in which students apply to the bursary.
- 3.22. Bursary funding can only be used to support the cost of trips in England that are a

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compulsory part of the student's curriculum, i.e. the student cannot achieve their qualification without it.

- 3.23. Compulsory university interviews, assessment days and auditions: If students incur travel costs as a result of attending a university interview, admissions test or audition in the UK then the bursary may be able to help with this expense. Students will need to cover the upfront costs and a refund may be made (dependent on funds available) on production of public transport tickets and/ or an invitation letter or email from the university. If travelling by car the college will pay towards travel costs (45.50p per mile) or will base the award on the cost of public transport, whichever is cheapest. Mileage will be calculated using Google Maps. The college will not pay for overnight accommodation costs associated with university visits, except in exceptional circumstances; the college will only fund the student and not anybody travelling with them.
- 3.24. Optional university open days and applicant days: the college may be able to help if students incur travel costs as a result of attending a non-compulsory university event such as an open day or applicant day in the UK. If funds are available, the bursary may be able to help with two non-compulsory visits per academic year. The same rules regarding refunds apply as in point 3.23.

4. Priority Bursary for students aged 16-18 years

- 4.1. Students who meet the eligibility criteria and have a financial need will be eligible for a bursary from the 16-19 Bursary Fund of up to a maximum of £1,200 per year if their course lasts 30 weeks or more.
- 4.2. Students who are on courses lasting under 30 weeks or on part time programmes will receive pro rata payments dependent on the number of days/hours in college and the duration of their course subject to the conditions below.
- 4.3. Students will be eligible if they:
 - 4.3.1. Are aged 16 or over and under 19 years of age on 31 August 2023 and can demonstrate a financial need
 - 4.3.2. Study on a course funded by the ESFA or otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including Level 3) that is accredited by Ofqual or on the ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding
 - 4.3.3. Meet the residency criteria in the ESFA 2024/25 funding regulations
- 4.4. **AND** they are in one of the following categories:
 - 4.4.1. In care or care leavers, including unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
 - 4.4.2. In receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit in their own name 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
 - 4.4.3. In receipt of both Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (UC) **AND** Disability Living Allowance (DLA) **OR** Personal Independent Payment (PIP) in their own name
- 4.5. Students who are eligible for the Priority Bursary are not automatically entitled to it if their financial needs have already been met or they have no relevant costs. Students will not automatically be awarded £1,200.
- 4.6. In some cases, no bursary or a reduced bursary will be paid - an assessment of individual needs will be made to determine the level of award.
- 4.7. Students are also not automatically eligible for a free meal unless they meet the eligibility criteria for free meals.
- 4.8. The Priority Bursary will be paid to full-time students monthly, over a 10-month period.

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Payments will be made direct into the student’s bank account.

- 4.9. In exceptional circumstances, if students need extra support to remain in education they may apply for an award from the 16 – 18 Discretionary Learner Support Fund.

5. Eligibility evidence for the Priority Bursary

About the students	Evidence required
In care or care leaver.	A letter or email from the local authority to confirm current or previous ‘looked after’ status, dated within last 3 months.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In receipt of Income Support/Universal Credit in place of Income Support in their own name. • Receiving Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves and anyone who is dependent on them and living with them (e.g., child or partner). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most recent Income Support/Universal Credit award letter dated within the last 3 months. • Must show the claim is in student’s name/confirm they are eligible in their own right. • Must not have any conditions that prevent them from studying. <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenancy agreement in the student’s name OR • Child benefit receipt OR • Birth certificate OR • Utility bill
In receipt of both ESA/UC AND DLA/ PIP in their own name.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most recent Universal Credit/ESA award letter AND • Evidence of receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment. • Must show the claims are in student’s name/ confirm they are eligible in their own right. • Evidence or letters to be dated within the last 3 months.

6. Discretionary Bursary for students aged 16-18 years

- 6.1. This fund is allocated at the discretion of the college from the 16-19 Bursary Fund and is targeted at students to overcome the individual barriers to participation that they face.
- 6.2. It is intended to help with the essential costs of participating in learning, for example help with the cost of essential travel including to work placements (including for T Level placements), books, equipment, specialist clothing, uniforms, materials and compulsory visits in England, without which the qualification cannot be achieved.
- 6.3. A contribution towards university interviews/open days and to top up Care to Learn funding will also be considered where necessary and appropriate.
- 6.4. An assessment of individual needs will be made to determine the level of award subject to the maximum award amounts – see Appendix 2.
- 6.5. For further information about Care to Learn see section 21.
- 6.6. Students will be eligible if they are:
- 6.6.1. Aged 16 or over and under 19 years of age on 31 August 2024
 - 6.6.2. Aged 19–24 on 31 August 2024 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
 - 6.6.3. Aged 19 on 31 August 2024 and continuing on a study programme they began aged 16-18 (19+ continuers)
 - 6.6.4. Studying on a course funded by the ESFA or otherwise publicly funded, and lead to a

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- qualification (up to and including Level 3) that is accredited by Ofqual or on the ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding
- 6.6.5. Meet the residency criteria in ESFA 2024/25 funding regulations
- 6.7. **AND** they are in one of the following categories (students will be assessed for funding if they or their parents/ spouse/ partner residing at the same address are in receipt of any of the following benefits/categories AND can demonstrate financial need):
- 6.7.1. Income Support
 - 6.7.2. Income-Based Jobseekers Allowance
 - 6.7.3. Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
 - 6.7.4. Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - 6.7.5. The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
 - 6.7.6. Child Tax Credit (provided that there is no entitlement to working tax credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 as assessed by HMRC.
 - 6.7.7. Working Tax Credit run-on – paid 4 weeks after the student stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - 6.7.8. Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum (after tax and not including any other benefits)
 - 6.7.9. Have a household income of £38,500 or less (as stated at time of application). (Earned Income & Income-Related Benefits)

7. Eligibility evidence for the Discretionary Bursary

- 7.1. Students will be required to produce documentary benefit evidence, e.g.
 - 7.1.1. Benefit award letters
 - 7.1.2. HMRC Tax Credit Award Letter for 2024/25 which shows income from 2023/24. The **FULL** award letter must be provided (Pages 1 – 6)
 - 7.1.3. Universal Credit – last 3 months **FULL** statements from the student's online universal credit account
 - 7.1.4. Any letter provided should be dated within the **last 3 months** and must confirm the name and address of the person receiving the benefit(s).
- 7.2. **Income:** students applying based on low income will need to provide evidence for the college to assess income and demonstrate a financial need. Evidence would include:
 - 7.2.1. The last 3 months pay slips for all adults in the household
 - 7.2.2. Previous year's tax return for those who are self-employed, or certified accounts
 - 7.2.3. Private pension statement
 - 7.2.4. Evidence of all income from income-related benefits
- 7.3. **Self-employed:** for those students or their parents who are self-employed and in receipt of Universal Credit, they will need to provide evidence that:
 - 7.3.1. They are in receipt of Universal Credit by providing the appropriate award letter(s)
 - 7.3.2. They are self-employed by providing a copy of their company registration or tax return form
 - 7.3.3. Their monthly net earnings do not exceed the threshold as set out above
 - 7.3.4. Provide the self-declaration form
- 7.4. **Universal Credit:** In receipt of Universal Credit, students should provide:
 - 7.4.1. A copy of the **FULL** Universal Credit award notice which includes details of monthly earnings. The students will need to provide evidence for the most recent complete assessment period and where possible going back a maximum of three assessment periods.

- 7.4.2. The three relevant Universal Credit assessment periods would be the three complete assessment periods which would immediately precede the date on which the applicant applies for the bursary.

8. Free further education meals for students

- 8.1. Free meals are targeted at disadvantaged students.
- 8.2. Free meals in further education defines disadvantaged as students being in receipt of or parents in receipt of one or more of the listed benefits.
- 8.3. A student is only eligible to receive a free meal when they, or a parent/ guardian on their behalf, has made a successful application to the college and are enrolled.
- 8.4. Students will be eligible if they are:
- 8.4.1. Aged 16 or over and under 19 years of age on 31 August 2024
 - 8.4.2. Aged 19–24 on 31 August 2024 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
 - 8.4.3. Aged 19 on 31 August 2024 and continuing on a study programme they began aged 16-18 (19+ continuers)
 - 8.4.4. Studying on a course funded by the ESFA or otherwise publicly funded, and lead to a qualification (up to and including Level 3) that is accredited by Ofqual or on the ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding
 - 8.4.5. Meet the residency criteria in ESFA 2024/25 funding regulations
- 8.5. **AND** they are in one of the following categories (students will be assessed for funding if they or their parents/ spouse/ partner residing at the same address are in receipt of any of the following benefits):
- 8.5.1. Income Support
 - 8.5.2. Income–Based Jobseekers Allowance
 - 8.5.3. Income–Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
 - 8.5.4. Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - 8.5.5. The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
 - 8.5.6. Child Tax Credit (provided that the student is not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by HMRC
 - 8.5.7. Working Tax Credit run–on – paid 4 weeks after the student stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - 8.5.8. Universal Credits with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum (after tax and not including any benefits - see item 9.3 for self-employment)

9. Eligibility evidence for free further education meals

- 9.1. Students will be required to produce documentary benefit evidence, e.g.
- 9.1.1. Benefit award letters
 - 9.1.2. HMRC Tax credit Award Letter for 2024/25 which shows income from 2023/24. The **FULL** award letter must be provided (Pages 1 – 6).
 - 9.1.3. Universal credit – last 3 months **FULL** statements from the student’s online universal credit account
 - 9.1.4. Any letter provided should be dated within the **last 3 months** and must confirm the name and address of the person receiving the benefit(s)

N.B. Working Tax Credits is not a qualifying benefit for free meals, and a parent or student who is in receipt of only Working Tax Credits is not entitled to a free meal.

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- 9.2. If a parent or student is in receipt of one of the other qualifying benefits (with the exception of Child Tax Credit) as well as Working Tax Credit, then they are eligible for free meals. In other words, the other benefit takes precedence over Working Tax Credit.
- 9.3. **Self-employed:** For those students or their parents who are self-employed and in receipt of Universal Credit, they will need to provide evidence that:
 - 9.3.1. They are in receipt of Universal credit by providing the appropriate award letter(s)
 - 9.3.2. They are self-employed by providing a copy of their company registration or tax return form
 - 9.3.3. Their monthly net earnings do not exceed the threshold as set out above
 - 9.3.4. Provide the self-declaration form
- 9.4. **Universal Credit:** For students that might be eligible for free further education meals under Universal Credit, students should provide:
 - 9.4.1. A copy of the **FULL** Universal Credit award notice which includes details of their monthly earnings. The student will need to provide evidence for the most recent complete assessment period and where possible going back a maximum of three assessment periods.
 - 9.4.2. The three relevant Universal Credit assessment periods would be the three complete assessment periods which would immediately precede the date on which the applicant applies for the free further education meal.
- 9.5. Students will be able to purchase food for each day they attend college to the value of £3.10, from certain college catering outlets.
- 9.6. At other remote centres students will be able to place an order for food.
- 9.7. Access to meals is via student ID cards.
- 9.8. Vouchers may be issued in exceptional circumstances.
- 9.9. Students on educational visits or work placements will receive an award of the value of £3.10 per day.
 - 9.9.1. This will be paid into the student's bank accounts in arrears and based on attendance.

10. Students who are not eligible for 16-18 Priority/ Discretionary Bursaries or free meals

- 10.1. Students under 16 except in exceptional circumstance, if they are following a programme of accelerated study.
- 10.2. Students excluded for eligibility of funding as set out in the ESFA funding regulations 2024/25.
- 10.3. Those that are not on fully funded provision.
- 10.4. Young people serving a custodial sentence, or remanded to a secure institution. or who have been released on temporary licence, e.g. day release.
- 10.5. Young people on waged apprenticeships or any learning or training undertaken whilst a wage is being drawn.
- 10.6. Students on higher education courses or other courses with learning aims funded from sources other than the ESFA.
- 10.7. Students who apply for travel help who are in receipt of a benefit or pension designed to help with travel costs.

11. Asylum-seeking children

- 11.1. Accompanied asylum-seeking children (under 18 with an adult relative or partner)
 - 11.1.1. Generally, asylum seekers are not entitled to public funds. Accompanied asylum-seeking children and those aged 18 and above are entitled to education, but not to public funds. If they are destitute, they can apply to the Home Office for suitable housing and cash for essentials, but they are not eligible for other income.
 - 11.1.2. Provided an asylum seeker has not had their application for asylum refused, in-kind support such as books, equipment or travel pass may be provided if appropriate. No cash payments can be given.
- 11.2. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children
 - 11.2.1. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children do not receive cash support from the Home Office and are the responsibility of the local authority. They are considered as 'looked after' children and would be eligible for the Priority Bursary where they have a financial need.

12. 19+ Adult Education Bursary Fund for students aged 19 and over

- 12.1. For students studying courses eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan, see separate section on Advanced Learner Loans Bursary.
- 12.2. Awards are allocated at the discretion of the college and are targeted at students who are facing financial barriers to participation such as the cost of travel to and from college, childcare, and other essential course costs such as, books, equipment, specialist clothing, uniforms, materials, and compulsory visits in England, without which the qualification cannot be achieved.
- 12.3. A contribution towards university interviews/open days and support with domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation in exceptional circumstance will also be considered where necessary and appropriate.
- 12.4. There is a limited fund to assist with tuition and examination fees for those who are not eligible for a fee waiver/ entitlement.
- 12.5. An assessment of individual needs will be made to determine the level of award subject to the maximum award amounts – see Appendix 3.
- 12.6. Students will be eligible if they are:
 - 12.6.1. Aged 19 or over as at 31 August 2024
 - 12.6.2. Meet the residency criteria in ESFA 2024/25 funding regulations
 - 12.6.3. Be enrolled to an Adult Skills Fund (ASF) funded course (classroom-based). For Level 3 courses, assistance from this fund is only available if student is:
 - 12.6.3.1. 19-23 studying their first full Level 3 qualification that is on the list of entitlements
 - 12.6.3.2. 19 and over studying their first full Level 3 qualification which is part of the Free Courses for Jobs offer
 - 12.6.3.3. 19 and over, has already achieved a full Level 3 and studying another Level 3 course which is part of the Free Courses for Jobs offer AND they are on a low wage or unemployed and in receipt of eligible benefits
 - 12.6.3.4. Can demonstrate a financial need
 - 12.7. **AND** they are in one of the following categories:
 - 12.7.1. In receipt of:
 - 12.7.1.1. Income Support

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- 12.7.1.2. Income-Based Job Seekers Allowance
- 12.7.1.3. Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- 12.7.1.4. Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- 12.7.1.5. The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- 12.7.1.6. Child Tax Credit (provided that they are not entitled to working tax credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by HMRC
- 12.7.1.7. Working Tax Credit run-on – paid 4 weeks after the student stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- 12.7.1.8. Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum (after tax and not including any benefits)
- 12.7.2. Have a household income of £38,500 or less (or as stated at time of application) in line with the income bands - see Appendix 3.

13. Eligibility evidence for 19+ Adult Education Bursary Fund

- 13.1. Students will be required to produce documentary benefit evidence:
 - 13.1.1. Benefit award letters
 - 13.1.2. HMRC Tax Credit Award Letter for 2024/25 which shows income from 2023/24. The **FULL** award letter must be provided (Pages 1 – 6)
 - 13.1.3. Universal credit – last 3 months **FULL** statements from the student’s online universal credit account
 - 13.1.4. Any letter provided should be dated within the **last 3 months** and must confirm the name and address of the person receiving the benefit(s)
- 13.2. **Income:** students applying based on low income will need to provide evidence for the college to assess income and demonstrate a financial need. Evidence would include:
 - 13.2.1. The last 3 months pay slips for all adults in the household
 - 13.2.2. Previous year’s tax return for those who are self-employed or certified accounts
 - 13.2.3. Private pension statement
 - 13.2.4. Evidence of all income from income related benefits
- 13.3. **Universal Credit:** In receipt of Universal Credit, students should provide:
 - 13.3.1. A copy of the **FULL** Universal Credit award notice which includes details of monthly earnings. Evidence will need to be provided for the most recent complete assessment period and where possible going back a maximum of three assessment periods.
 - 13.3.2. The three relevant Universal Credit assessment periods would be the three complete assessment periods which would immediately precede the date on which the applicant applies for the bursary.

14. Childcare for students aged 20 and over

- 14.1. For students funded through Advanced Learner Loans, please see Section 16.
- 14.2. Students who are aged 20 or over on the first day of learning and meet the remaining criteria in Section 14 can apply for assistance with childcare.
- 14.3. Students aged under 20 at the start of their course may apply to Care to Learn for assistance with childcare costs. Students aged 19 in receipt of Care to Learn may apply for further help with childcare where costs exceed the weekly maximum for that scheme. The top-up may only be applied to childcare provision eligible under the Care to Learn scheme.
- 14.4. Students may apply for assistance with the cost of childcare for the hours that they are timetabled to be in college. Awards will be made, up to a maximum of £180 per week, for each child (£6,480 per year per child). This value includes the retainer costs.

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- 14.5. Students must use an Ofsted-registered childcare provider.
- 14.6. The college will not pay for extras such as meals, taster sessions or administration charges.
- 14.7. Students with three or more children will be reviewed by the college's Financial Support & Eligibility Lead and will be made awards where demand for the limited budget allows.
- 14.8. Childcare costs will not be met where the child is eligible for a local authority school place. Payment will only be made for after-school provision in these circumstances.
- 14.9. If required the college will pay a 100% retainer for the Christmas and Easter breaks and half term breaks. No retainer is paid for the summer holiday period.
- 14.10. If payments are stopped because of poor behaviour/conduct, attendance (i.e. below 85%) or withdrawal from the course, the student will be responsible for the payment of all outstanding fees to the childcare provider.
- 14.11. Payments are made directly to the childcare provider.
- 14.12. The college will pay notice periods to a maximum of one calendar month.

15. Students who are not eligible for 19+ Bursary/childcare

- 15.1. Students excluded for eligibility of funding set out in the ESFA Funding Rules 2024/25.
- 15.2. Students on community learning or full cost courses.
- 15.3. Students serving a custodial sentence, or remanded to a secure institution, or who have been released on temporary licence e.g., day release.
- 15.4. Students participating in a waged apprenticeship.
- 15.5. Students on higher education courses or other courses with learning aims funded from sources other than the ESFA.
- 15.6. Students under the age of 19.
- 15.7. Students eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan.

16. Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund

- 16.1. The loans bursary is provided to support vulnerable and disadvantaged loan students who are facing financial barriers to participation or continuing in learning.
- 16.2. There are two elements to the fund as follows:
 - 16.2.1. Learner Support Bursary – to provide assistance towards hardship/ travel and childcare
 - 16.2.2. Learning Support Bursary – such as in-class support or reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010

17. Learner Support Bursary

- 17.1. Awards are allocated at the discretion of the college and are targeted at students who are facing financial barriers to participation such as the cost of travel to and from college, childcare, and other essential course costs such as, books, equipment, specialist clothing, uniforms, materials, and compulsory visits in England without which the qualification could not be achieved.
- 17.2. A contribution towards university interviews/open days and support with domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation in exceptional circumstance will also be considered where necessary and appropriate.
- 17.3. An assessment of individual needs will be made to determine the level of award subject to the maximum award amounts – see Appendix 4.
- 17.4. Students will be eligible if they are:
 - 17.4.1. Aged 19 or over at the start of the learning aim

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- 17.4.2. The named person on the Advanced Learner Loan documentation confirming the loan approval and have passed the initial liability point (2 week)
- 17.4.3. Can demonstrate a financial need
- 17.5. **AND** they are in one of the following categories:
 - 17.5.1. In receipt of:
 - 17.5.1.1. Income Support
 - 17.5.1.2. Income-Based Job Seekers Allowance
 - 17.5.1.3. Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
 - 17.5.1.4. Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - 17.5.1.5. The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
 - 17.5.1.6. Child Tax Credit (provided that they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 as assessed by HMRC
 - 17.5.1.7. Working Tax Credit run-on – paid 4 weeks after the student stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - 17.5.1.8. Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum (after tax and not including any benefits)
- 17.6. Have a household income of £38,500 or less (multiple income or with dependents) (or as stated at time of application) in line with the income bands - see Appendix 4.

18. Eligibility evidence for Learner Support Bursary

- 18.1. Students will be required to produce documentary benefit evidence, e.g.
 - 18.1.1. Benefit award letters
 - 18.1.2. HMRC Tax Credit Award Letter for 2024/25 which shows income from 2023/24. The **FULL** award letter must be provided (Pages 1 – 6)
 - 18.1.3. Universal credit – last 3 months **FULL** statements from the student’s online universal credit account
 - 18.1.4. Any letter provided should be dated within the **last 3 months** and must confirm the name and address of the person receiving the benefit(s)
- 18.2. **Income:** students applying based on low income will need to provide evidence for the college to assess income and demonstrate a financial need. Evidence would include:
 - 18.2.1. The last 3 months pay slips for all adults in the household
 - 18.2.2. Previous year’s tax return for those who are self-employed or certified accounts
 - 18.2.3. Private pension statement
 - 18.2.4. Evidence of all income from income related benefits
- 18.3. **Universal Credit:** In receipt of Universal Credit, students should provide:
 - 18.3.1. A copy of the **FULL** Universal Credit award notice which includes details of monthly earnings. Evidence will need to be provided for the most recent complete assessment period and where possible going back a maximum of three assessment periods.
 - 18.3.2. The three relevant Universal Credit assessment periods would be the three complete assessment periods which would immediately precede the date on which the applicant applies for the bursary.

19. Childcare for students aged 20 and over

- 19.1. Students who are aged 20 or over on the first day of learning and meet the criteria in Section 18 can apply for assistance with childcare.
- 19.2. Students aged under 20 at the start of their course may apply to Care to Learn for

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- assistance with childcare costs.
- 19.3. Students may apply for assistance with the cost of childcare for the hours that they are timetabled to be in college. Awards will be made, up to a maximum of £180 per week, for each child (£6,480 per year per child). This value includes the retainer costs.
 - 19.4. Students must use an Ofsted-registered childcare provider.
 - 19.5. The college will not pay for extras such as meals, taster sessions or administration charges.
 - 19.6. Students with three or more children will be reviewed by the Student Services Manager and will be made awards where demand for the limited budget allows.
 - 19.7. Childcare costs will not be met where the child is eligible for a local authority school place. Payment will only be made for after school provision in these circumstances.
 - 19.8. If required the college will pay a 100% retainer for the Christmas and Easter breaks and half term breaks. No retainer is paid for the summer holiday period.
 - 19.9. If payments are stopped because of poor behaviour/conduct, attendance (i.e. below 85%) or withdrawal from the course, the student will be responsible for the payment of all outstanding fees to the childcare provider.
 - 19.10. Payments are made directly to the childcare provider.
 - 19.11. The college will pay notice periods to a maximum of one calendar month.

20. Learning Support

- 20.1. This bursary is for the payment of staff and resources to support any learning support.
- 20.2. Charges for learning support will be made on a needs-assessed basis.
- 20.3. This assessment will be made by the Head of Learning Support based on the student declaration, independent evidence such as a Statement of Need and any assessment tools the college feels are fit for purpose.
- 20.4. The rate of charges for learning support will be set by those agreed for use in the college's main Learning Support claim which will be recorded on the Individualised Learner Record (ILR).
- 20.5. These charges will be offset by the use of the Learning Support Bursary and no payments will be made directly to the student.

21. Care to Learn

- 21.1. Students aged under 20 at the start of their course may apply to the Care to Learn scheme for assistance with childcare costs.
- 21.2. Students can get up to £180 per child per week if they live outside London, £195 per child per week if the student lives in London.
- 21.3. The childcare provider must be registered with Ofsted.
- 21.4. Care to Learn can help with the cost of:
 - 21.4.1. Childcare (including deposit up to £250 per child and registration fee up to £80 per child)
 - 21.4.2. A childcare taster session for up to 5 days
 - 21.4.3. Keeping the childcare place over the summer holidays
 - 21.4.4. Additional travel costs in taking the child to their childcare provider
- 21.5. Payments are made directly to the childcare provider once they confirm the child is attending and the college confirms that the student is attending their course.
- 21.6. Find out more about Care to Learn, including the full terms and conditions, by calling 0800 121 8989 or by visiting the government's webpage for [Care to Learn](#).

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- 21.7. Students can apply to the 16-18 discretionary bursary fund for exceptional help with childcare costs where their costs exceed the scheme's weekly maximum rates. Only childcare provision eligible under the Care to Learn scheme rules can be used and the college will need evidence that the maximum amount is being paid under Care to Learn. Any top up will be made in line with the Care to Learn guidance.

22. Financial support appeals procedure

- 22.1. Students have the right to appeal if they believe that their application has been assessed incorrectly, if there is a subsequent withdrawal of support at a later stage, or if they are unhappy with the award made.
- 22.2. In the first instance, the student should contact Student Services at their college campus who will investigate any concern.
- 22.3. If the student is unhappy about the decision made following the initial investigation they may appeal within 15 working days of being informed of the decision (this may include obtaining information about attendance and behaviour on the college course). Students will be advised of the outcome and any action to be taken.
- 22.4. Appeals should be made in writing to the Student Services Financial Support team at their usual campus. The appeal should be signed by the student.
- 22.5. The student will be sent an acknowledgement of receipt of the letter of appeal.
- 22.6. A meeting will be convened of the next Appeals Panel (see section 22.10).
- 22.7. The Appeals Panel will consider the appeal and rule on the appropriateness of the decision, confirming or amending it as appropriate.
- 22.8. Students will be advised of the decision and any action taken
- 22.9. If the decision of the Appeals Panel remains unsatisfactory, they will retain the right to a final appeal in writing to the college's complaints department.
- 22.10. **Appeals Panel**
- 22.10.1. Membership will be staff impartial to the original bursary assessment.
- 22.11. **Appeals Panel Terms of Reference:**
- 22.11.1. Review any appeals and to rule on the appropriateness of the original award decision, confirming or amending it as appropriate;
- 22.11.2. Communicate the outcome of the appeal to the appellant through the Student Services Financial Support team.

23. Fraudulent claims

- 23.1. The college takes fraud seriously and will take action if it is found that a claim for assistance has been made fraudulently.
- 23.2. Giving false or incomplete information that leads to incorrect/overpayment may result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered using debt collection agencies if needed, and result in a referral to the police with the possibility of the student and/or their family facing prosecution.

24. Monitoring

- 24.1. Monitoring of the bursaries spend is conducted through monthly/ quarterly reconciliations.
- 24.2. At the end of the year, a return is completed and returned to the ESFA.

Appendix 1: 2024/25 Student Support Fund & free further education meals procedures

- Students are informed about discretionary student support funds through pre-entry information, induction, and guidance. Students can apply online from the East Sussex College website.
- Students can make an application for funding at any time during their course, but early application is recommended as the funds are finite.
- Students who are eligible for the discretionary element of the student support funds are not automatically entitled to it.
- Students are required to complete an application and provide the required evidence with their form. Students requiring support to complete their application should contact the college.
- Staff will assess the application against the eligibility criteria; check the evidence and assess the need for funding. Staff may discuss the application with the student if required. Other potential sources of funding will be considered before an award is agreed.
- Completed applications are assessed individually and against the policy by trained members of staff.
- If the student is eligible for an award, the application will be processed. Where supplied, copies of proof of income are retained with the application form.
- Normally, awards will be based on the financial needs of the student and the maximum awards as published in this policy.
- Applications for bursaries that require special consideration will be referred to the Financial Support & Eligibility Lead
- Students will be notified in writing, which could be email or letter, of the outcome of their application. Applicants may be given an indication of a likely award before starting a course, but this will only be confirmed after enrolment.
- If an application has been declined reasons to this will be stated in the notification.
- The award will be paid in the most appropriate manner:
 - Transfer to student's college account where there is an outstanding debt to the college
 - Payment direct to student's bank account
 - Payment to 'equipment' or childcare provider
 - Transfer to college department
- Awards are normally made as follows:
 - Any cash award must be paid into a bank account in the student's name except in exceptional circumstances. As banks are unlikely to accept payments into a third party account, students will need to open their own account
 - Priority Bursaries are paid monthly direct to student bank account
 - Travel awards are made half termly direct to the student bank account
 - 16 – 18 Discretionary Bursaries, Adult Skills Fund Bursaries and Advanced Learner Loans are made to the student bank account/college account as required
 - Childcare payments are made direct to the childcare provider monthly on receipt of invoices
- Free further education meals:
 - Students eligible for free meals will be able to purchase food in certain college catering outlets to the value of £3.10 per day for each day that they are in college

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- Meals can only be purchased in the College catering outlets
- Meals are not restricted to lunch times
- Students are encouraged to make healthy food choices and where possible opt for hot meal options
- Students will not be able to purchase fizzy drinks or confectionary
- Access to meals will be through student ID cards. Vouchers will only be issued in exceptional circumstances
- If a student spends less than £3.10, no change will be given. Students can choose to spend more than £3.10, but they will need to pay the difference themselves
- The allowance is daily and cannot be carried over to another day. This also applies if the student is absent
- No cash alternatives are available except for work placement/visits
- If students are on work placement/ trips and unable to come into college for their meal, they will need to see the Student Services Financial Support Advisers to discuss an alternative arrangement. This may be a food outlet/ supermarket voucher/ BACS payment into their bank account. This will be paid in arrears to enable the college to check that the student has attended the work placement/trip
- The outcome of each application will be recorded on the relevant college database. This is for the purpose of the end of year returns and for monitoring how monies have been distributed.
- Financial records of all awards made will be kept for a minimum period of six years.

Appendix 2: Support level banding 2024/25 - discretionary student support fund for students aged 16-18

- The below table is to be used as a guide to award levels.
- Students in receipt of eligible benefits as detailed in Section 6 will be in Band A.
- Students who are not on a means-tested benefit but are on a low income may also be eligible for financial assistance.

Discretionary support bands	Lunch card	Transport Capped at £2,500 per annum	Trips Capped at £500 per annum	Essential kit/equip/books/art materials/laptop Capped at £650 per annum per student	HE/Open day/interviews	UCAS fee
					Additional request if funds allow - capped at £100 per annum	Additional request if funds allow
Band A In receipt of eligible benefits or if household income is £16,190 or under	£3.10/day (if in receipt of eligible benefit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If applicant lives more than 1.5 miles from the site of study, they may be eligible for an award towards the cost of travel. • Students will receive awards based on how far they live from college and how many days they attend up to the max per annum 	100% towards trips that are essential and compulsory to studies up to the max per annum	Essential kit/equip/books/Art materials/laptop for subject/course authorised by a Head of Curriculum (HoC) 100% contribution up to max per annum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% contribution up to max per annum • Up to a maximum of 2 per year 	100% contribution
Band B If household income is between £16,191-£38,500	N/A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If applicant lives more than 1.5 miles from the site of study, they may be eligible for an award towards the cost of travel. • Students will receive awards based on how far they live from College and how many days they attend up to the max per annum* 	100% towards trips in England that are essential and compulsory to studies up to the max per annum	Essential kit/equip/books/Art materials/laptop for subject/course authorised by a Head of Curriculum (HoC) 100% contribution up to max per annum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% contribution up to max per annum • Up to a maximum of 2 per year 	100% contribution
If household income is over £38,500	Not eligible					

Appendix 3: Support level banding 2024/25 - discretionary hardship fund for students aged 19 & over

- The below table is to be used as a guide to award levels.
- Students in receipt of eligible benefits as detailed in section 12 will be in Band A.
- Students who are not on a means-tested benefit but are on a low income may also be eligible for financial assistance.

Discretionary support bands	Transport Capped at £2,500 per annum	Trips Capped at £500 per annum	Essential kit/ equipment/ books/art materials/laptop Capped at £650 per annum per student	Childcare Capped at £180 per week/£6,480 per annum per child (max 2 children)	Tuition fees	Exam fees	HE open days/ interviews	UCAS fees
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional request if funds allow • Not applications for courses at Level 3 and above or non-funded courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional request if funds allow • Not applications for courses at Level 3 and above 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional request if funds allow • Capped at £100 per annum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional request if funds allow
<p>Band A</p> <p>In receipt of eligible benefits or if household income is £36,000 or under</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If applicant lives more than 1.5 miles from the site of study, they may be eligible for an award towards the cost of travel. • Students will receive awards based on how far they live from college and how many days they attend up to the max per annum 	<p>100% towards trips that are essential and compulsory to studies up to the max per annum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Essential kit/ equipment/ books/art materials/laptop for subject/course authorised by a Head of Curriculum (HoC) • 100% contribution up to max per annum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For timetabled hours • 100% contribution up to max per week/annum per child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% towards tuition fees • Maximum £1000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% towards exam fees • Maximum £200 • 100% contribution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% contribution up to max per annum • Up to a maximum of 2 per year 	<p>100% contribution</p>
<p>If household income is over £38,500</p>	<p>Not eligible</p>							

Appendix 4: Support level banding 2024/25 - discretionary hardship fund for Advanced Learner Loan-funded students

- The below table is to be used as a guide to award levels.
- Students in receipt of eligible benefits as detailed in section 16 will be in Band A.
- Students who are not on a means-tested benefit but are on a low income may also be eligible for financial assistance.

Discretionary support bands	Transport Capped at £2,500 per annum	Trips Capped at £500 per annum	Essential kit/equip/books/art materials/ laptop Capped at £650 per annum per student	Childcare Capped at £180 per week/£6,480 per annum per child (max 2 children)	HE open days/ interviews	UCAS fees
					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional request if funds allow • Capped at £100 per annum 	Additional request if funds allow
<p>Band A</p> <p>In receipt of eligible benefits or if household income is £38,500 or under (Band A)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If applicant lives more than 1.5 miles from the site of study, they may be eligible for an award towards the cost of travel. • Students will receive awards based on how far they live from college and how many days they attend up to the max per annum 	100% towards trips in England that are essential and compulsory to studies up to the max per annum	<p>Essential kit/equip/books/Art materials/laptop for subject/course authorised by a Head of Curriculum (HoC)</p> <p>100% contribution up to max per annum</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For timetabled hours • 100% contribution up to max per child 	100% contribution up to max per annum (up to a maximum of 2 per year)	100% contribution
If household income is over £38,500	Not eligible					