**STUDENT BURSARY POLICY 2025-26**

**1. Introduction**

This policy outlines the administration of financial support available to eligible students aged 16 and over The Department for Education (DfE). HLNSC operates three main schemes:

* **16-18 Bursary Fund**

The 16-18 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students aged 16-18 (or 19+ continuers) overcome specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education.

There are two types of 16-18 bursaries:

* + Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups
  + Discretionary bursaries which institutions award
* **Free College Meals (16-18 Fund)**

Free meals are targeted at disadvantaged students. For the purposes of eligibility for free meals, ‘disadvantaged’ is defined by the student being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following:

* + Income Support
  + Income-based Jobseeker's 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 (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by HMRC.
  + Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop 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 you receive.

Students who claim the ‘Free Meal’ element may still be eligible to claim the Discretionary Bursary.

* **19+ Discretionary Student Support Fund**

The DfE allocates the College an annual sum of money to provide financial assistance to individuals aged 19+ with specific financial hardship preventing them from taking part or continuing in learning.

* **Advanced Student Loan (ALL) Bursary Fund**
  + The Government has allocated to the College a bursary fund to assist students whose age, circumstances, and course of study entitle them to apply for an Advanced Student Loan.
  + The fund is available to provide financial support for students with a specific financial hardship preventing them from taking part or continuing in learning.

All funds aim to remove financial barriers that may impact a student’s participation and success in learning.

**2. Funds Usage**

Both the 16-18 Bursary Fund and the 19+ LSF can be used to financially support students with:

* Essential course related equipment and materials (including uniform)
* Essential course related field trips
* Disability related costs

Additionally, the funds can provide support for:

* Accommodation (where a student has to stay away from home) for specialist rural courses only or if a course specifically requires regular, repeated study out of normal college hours
* Transport (for 16-18 students, normally through the LEA travel scheme, unless supported by the EMA in Wales; for 19+ students, if students live at least 3 miles from campus)

For 16-18 students with entitlement to bursary support whilst on a Study Programme with County Training, they will receive regular reimbursement of travel expenses to classes based on actual attendance, and on production of receipts for travel costs incurred.

The 19+ LSF can *also* be used for:

* Childcare costs (if you are over 20 and your child-carer is Ofsted registered)
* Tuition, registration and exam fees

Please note discretionary funds will not be available for making regular payments for ad-hoc living expenses.

**2a. Purpose and Scope of the Advanced Student Loan (ALL) Bursary Fund**

The ALL Bursary assists students whose age, circumstances, and course entitle them to apply for an Advanced Student Loan. It provides financial support for students facing specific financial hardship that prevents them from participating or continuing in learning. The ALL Bursary can be used to financially support students with:

* Childcare costs (if the student is over 20 and the childcare is Ofsted registered).
* Accommodation (where a student has to stay away from home to study) for specialist rural craft courses only.
* Transport (if students live at least ten miles from campus).
* Additional Learning Support (ALS) costs deemed appropriate following College assessment.
* Professional membership fees and any fees due to external bodies related to the course.
* Disability-related costs.

The bursary may *not* be used for:

* Tuition, materials, or exam fees.
* Equipment costs where these costs are part of the fee.
* No application will be considered if household income exceeds £30,000 per annum. Outcomes for income levels below this amount will vary according to individual / household circumstances

**3. Eligibility**

**General Eligibility for funds:**

* + Individuals enrolled on a DfE funded full or part-time Further Education course.
  + Students must have been ordinarily resident in the UK for 3 years prior to the start of their course.
  + Non-UK nationals in the UK must have settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme and have lived continuously in the EEA, Gibraltar, or UK for at least 3 years (for 19+ LSF).
  + Students attending specialist rural crafts courses or certain Outdoor Adventure courses who have to live away from home or a course specifically requires regular, repeated study out of normal college hours.
  + Students in receipt of an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP).
  + Continuing students who are resident in devolved authority areas who have not completed their learning by 31 July 2024, but started their learning before the devolution date. (for 19+ LSF and ALL)
  + Students’ resident in England, including those residents in a devolved authority area undertaking a 19-24 traineeship programme. (for 19+ LSF)

**16-18 Bursary Fund Specific Eligibility:**

* + Aged between 16 and 19 years on 31st August 2025.

**19+ Discretionary Student Support Fund Specific Eligibility:**

* + Applicants for the 19+ Discretionary Student Support Fund must be aged 19 or over on 31st August 2025.

**Advanced Student Loan (ALL) Bursary Fund Specific Eligibility:**

* + Use of the ALL Bursary is restricted SOLELY to students who have had an Advanced Student Loan application approved by the Student Loans Company.
  + Applicants must be aged 19 or over on 31 August 2025 and meet the DfE’s residency criteria.
  + Information on loan eligibility is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan/eligibility>

**Ineligibility (for funds unless otherwise stated):**

* + Under 16, or over 19 on 31st August 2025 unless they are continuing on a course started aged 16 -18 (known as being a ‘19+ continuer’) (16-18 Bursary Fund).
  + An overseas or EEA student who is eligible for tuition fee support (19+ LSF and ALL).
  + On an Adult and Community learning course.
  + On an apprenticeship programme.
  + On ANY courses not funded by the DfE.
  + A student on a distance learning programme as they would not be expected to incur the cost the bursary covers (16-18 Bursary Fund).

**4. Bursary for Vulnerable Groups (16-18 Fund)**

Under the rules of the Bursary scheme, some young people are entitled to a Bursary for Vulnerable Groups of up to £1,200.

Students wishing to claim this award must first satisfy the eligibility criteria for discretionary awards (above) and be resident in the UK. Students who meet the criteria for bursaries for vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to a bursary if they do not have the financial needs and/or their financial needs are covered from other sources.

Further to this, they must also be in one of the following groups:

* Aged 16 or 17 and in care (either residential or foster or special guardianship) OR care leavers aged 18 and over and previously a looked after child for 13 weeks after the age of 14. *NB: care leavers can be aged 16,17 or 18 refer to the “16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide: 2025 to 2026 Section 3.1 defining in care and care leavers.*
* Aged 16, 17 or 18 and PERSONALLY in receipt of income support – award notice required OR Universal Credit – award notice required AND further evidence (such as tenancy agreement in student’s name, child benefit receipt or own child’s birth certificate).
* Aged 16, 17 or 18 and PERSONALLY in receipt of both Personal Independence Payment AND Employment and Support Allowance OR Universal Credit.

Qualifying students may be entitled to funding of up to £1,200 towards college costs. In the first instance, unless a third party (e.g., Social Services) agrees to make such payments on the student’s behalf, the award will pay for:

* Essential course materials for the student’s own use
* Essential field trips
* Travel costs (where required)
* Essential course equipment

Students in receipt of this bursary may also apply for a residential bursary annually (see above) but only if studying a specialist rural course. Any such payment will be over and above the bursary for vulnerable groups.

**5. Discretionary Awards**

All applications not meeting the Bursary for Vulnerable Groups criteria, will be dealt with through the Discretionary Awards process (16-18 Fund). Applicants should note that these funds (both 16-18 and 19+) are limited, and applications will be considered on a first come, first served basis. Applicants may not receive all monies requested, and maximum grant amounts are set for each category of support.

Applicants should note that all requests for LSF assistance are assessed on the basis of ‘relative financial need’ and that not all applications will be successful (19+ Fund).

No application will be considered if household income exceeds £30,000 per annum. Outcomes for income levels below this amount will vary according to individual / household circumstances.

It is a student’s responsibility to ensure that they have adequate financial arrangements in place before enrolling on a course.

**6. Application Procedure and Supporting Documentation**

The 16-18 Bursary Fund and the 19+ Discretionary Student Support Fund are allocated to the college by the ESFA in June for the forthcoming academic year. All applications are considered on an annual basis – continuing students must re-apply to request support for second or subsequent years of their course.

Application forms for all prospective and enrolled students will be available from main reception. Guidance in completing the form is available through the College Student Services and Student Finance departments.

Applications received from students who qualify for the bursary for vulnerable groups will be given priority, in line with government direction (16-18 Fund).

Funds are strictly limited and therefore awards are subject to availability of sufficient funds. Should insufficient funds be available, applications which would otherwise be successful will be rejected.

All application forms requesting support from either fund are means tested, and proof of income is required before an application form can be processed. No application will be accepted if the applicant does not disclose any income source. **Bank statements cannot be accepted as evidence.**

Where any required supporting documentation has not been submitted, the application form will be returned unprocessed and will only be considered once the form is re-submitted with the full supporting documentation.

If you are applying for assistance with childcare costs (19+ Fund), evidence of cost from your childcare provider, and proof of the Ofsted registration is required.

* **Additional ALL Bursary Fund Application Requirements:**
  + Applications must include a copy of the letter from the student loans company confirming the applicant’s loan entitlement.
  + All loans must be approved and processed before a bursary can be granted.
  + Disability benefits are excluded from household income for assessment purposes.
  + All pages of any tax credit award notices or benefits notifications must be included.
  + Information that cannot be clearly understood will be rejected and will delay the application assessment process.
  + Applications must be handed in within 4 weeks of the start date. If the Application Form and evidence is presented later than that date, payments can only be backdated up to 4 weeks.

**7. Submitting an Application**

The preferred method of receiving applications is via email. Please complete the application and email it with your supporting evidence to [bursaries@hlcollege.ac.uk](mailto:bursaries@hlcollege.ac.uk). Every application form will be dealt with chronologically, at the following campuses of the Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College including County Training. If you cannot email your application, please contact the email address above to discuss your options or telephone your campus.

The College aims to process applications within 6 weeks of receipt of the completed form with the correct supporting evidence. Decisions may be delayed if all necessary documentation has not been provided with the application.

**8. Payment Method**

For the majority of recipients, payments will be made ‘in-kind’ rather than in cash to cover costs owed to the College (e.g., to cover additional costs such as materials, equipment, etc) that the College purchases on the student’s behalf. Third parties may also receive direct payment (e.g., landlords, childcare providers, LEA for bus passes) wherever possible, and not through the student. Any payments due to applicants will be paid directly into the student’s bank account and only in exceptional circumstances will be considered for payment to parent/guardian. Any payments to cover ongoing expenses will be paid in termly instalments, though are subject to continued satisfactory attendance (at least 90%), behaviour and progress. Where students receive financial support and withdraw from their course, or their attendance/progress falls below minimum requirements, steps may be taken to recover monies paid.

**9. Appeals Procedure**

Students who disagree with the decision regarding their application can appeal against it. The appeal must be made in writing within 7 working days of being notified of the decision. Applicants should clearly state their reasons for disagreeing with the decision.

The appeal will be handled as follows:

* The application will be reviewed by the Head of Student Services, who will consider whether the initial assessment was correct.
* The applicant will be notified of the outcome within 10 working days of receipt of appeal.
* If the applicant disagrees with the decision made by the Head of Student Services, the applicant will be referred to the College Finance Director, who will review the decision further.
* The applicant will be notified of the outcome of this review within 10 working days.
* Should the dispute remain unresolved, the Principal will make the final decision as soon as is practicable.

**10. Publicity**

Information leaflets on the Bursary Fund, and other advice on alternative forms of funding are available from Student Services. The Student Support Fund is promoted through the college website, social media, college app and written materials.

All information provided by students will be treated in confidence and will be handled in accordance with current Data Protection law.

**11. Student Declaration and Conditions**

* The student must declare that the information provided in their application is true and accurate.
* Any false statements or the withholding of relevant information may lead to the withdrawal or refusal of support and may lead to prosecution.
* Monies are paid on the condition of attendance and behaviour.
* Holidays will be unpaid (excluding the allocation of FSM).
* Students must notify the provider of any changes in their financial circumstances or bank details.
* Financial support will cease if the student leaves their learning program.
* Payments are not automatic and are based on the information provided in the application.
* Payments are intended for items such as books, equipment, travel, and childcare where applicable.
* Students have the right to appeal any decision and may also use the College’s Complaints Procedure.
* By submitting the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Application form, students confirm that they have read the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund Policy. <https://www.gov.uk/advanced-student-loan/eligibility>

This document was written in-line with the following guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-education-financial-support-for-students#free-meals-in-further-education>

**Appendix 1 – Bursary Appeal Form**

Use this form if you wish to appeal a decision made about your Bursary or Free Meals application. Your appeal must be submitted within 10 working days of receiving your outcome.

Please complete this form in full and return it to: **bursaries@hlcollege.ac.uk** or hand in at **Reception** at your college campus.

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| **Section A – Student Details** | |
| Student ID Number:  *(if known)* |  |
| Full Name: |  |
| Date of Birth: |  |
| Campus: |  |
| Course: |  |

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| **Section B – Reason for Appeal** |
| Please clearly explain the reason for your appeal. This might include:   * Additional evidence you wish to provide * A change in your personal or household circumstances * Why do you believe the decision made was incorrect or unfair   *(Continue on a separate sheet if necessary)* |
| Your explanation: |

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| **Section C – Supporting Documents** |
| Please list any additional evidence you are submitting with your appeal  (e.g. benefit letters, income statements, tenancy agreement, etc.) |
| 1. |
| 2. |
| 3. |

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| **Section D – Declaration** | |
| I confirm that the information I have provided in this appeal is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. | |
| Student Signature: | Date: |
| Parent/Guardian Signature:  (if applicable) | Date: |

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| **COLLEGE USE ONLY – Appeal Outcome** | |
|  Appeal upheld | |
|  Appeal not upheld | |
| **Comments:** | |
| **Reviewed by -** | |
| **Staff Name:** | **Role:** |
| **Signed:** | **Date:** |