

Policy/Procedure/Guideline:	Financial Support and Bursary Policy 2023/2024
Senior Leader Responsible:	Chief Finance Officer Head of Finance
Prepared By:	Learner Support Team
Reviewed By:	Head of Finance, Payroll & Pensions
Approved By & Date:	
Next Review Date:	July 2024
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Changes Made:	Bursary application form updated: clear indication of studying hours required per week when enrolled to a part time course. Introduction of clear requirements when enrolled on L3+ course. (i.e. must be in receipt of advanced learner loan or loan should be government funded to be eligible for bursary) Educational visit protocol has been reviewed with clear requirements on eligibility.

Bursary Policy

Introduction

The College receives an allocation of funding each year from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) to provide exceptional support to students who have a genuine financial difficulty that might prevent them from continuing in education.

The ESFA/GLA set out guidelines which the College follows to distribute this allocation of funds. The main categories in which the money is allocated to students are Childcare Bursary, Hardship (DLS) Discretionary Bursary and Vulnerable Bursary. The eligibility requirements for financial assistance are outlined in the pages throughout this document.

Any student may apply for financial assistance and should be aware that their application will receive full consideration in accordance with the eligibility requirements. Support for childcare and/or bursary is available via an application form which has a clear guidance.

Purpose

The Purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- Bursary funds are distributed in accordance with the rules and regulations laid out by funding agencies
- The eligibility criteria are clearly explained
- Processes are in place to administer, keep track of, and monitor bursary funding, certifying that funds are used for what it is intended for
- The administration of the bursary funds helps students to overcome the specific financial barriers to participation they face so they can remain education

Legislative/Quality Framework

South Bank Colleges will adhere to the published regulations and guidelines for the appropriate age groups and funding types for the use of these funds.

- Free school meals in further education funded institutions: guide for the academic year
- 16 -19 Bursary fund guidance
- Adult Education Budget, Funding rules
- Advanced learner loans funding rules
- Care to Learn: Guide for academic year

Types of Bursary funds

ESFA 16-19 Bursary Fund

Funds are available from the (ESFA) for 16-19 students with low household incomes to help pay for the costs associated with attending College. If eligible, these funds will support with the following:

- Free College Meals
- Travel
- Books, equipment, and materials
- Educational Trips and Visits

Additional Eligibility Criteria:

- Aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31st August prior to the start of the academic year, or;
- Aged 19 or over and continuing on a study program they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuer), or;
- Aged 19 or over with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

Free College Meals (FCM)

Students will receive support towards free College meals, a daily set amount linked to timetables will be allocated to a card in the learner's name to spend in the College Canteen.

Eligibility criteria for Free College Meals:

- If the person whom you are dependent on has Universal Credit, the amount earned annually must be below £7,400 for you to be eligible for Free School meals.
- If the person whom you are dependent on is in receipt of Working tax Credit or Child tax Credit, must receive less than £16,190 for you to be eligible for Free School Meals
- 19+ students on an EHCP Plan are entitled to Free College Meals
- Aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31st August prior to start of the academic year.
- If the student is an Asylum-Seeking Child who is in care

(All documents provided must be within the last 3 months)

Support Available:

- Free meals lunch vouchers to the value of £4 for each day the student attends study or activity that is part of their course.
- A pre-paid debit card (goHenry) will be issued with a weekly allowance of £16 and a maximum spend of £5 a day. Emails are sent to students with instructions on how to operate the card and restrictions will be enforced if used inappropriately.

Vulnerable Bursary

This bursary scheme is targeted at young people in nominated groups. 'Vulnerable Students' who will be awarded an amount of £1,200 per annum (or a proportion of this if the course is less than 36 weeks), depending on your circumstances and attendance. This amount is **not** guaranteed.

The students who are designated 'Vulnerable Students' are:

- Young people in care
- Care leavers
- Young people in receipt of Income Support, Universal Credit, DLA, PIP

'In care' is defined as 'Children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (section 31 of the Children Act 1989) - Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 defines the term 'looked after child'.'

A 'care leaver' is defined as: a young person aged 16 and 17 who was formerly looked after for a time of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16; or a young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which started after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16.

The Vulnerable Bursary should be used by the learner to meet the cost related to participation, such as books/materials, transport, educational visits, University interviews and other course-related costs.

Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children that are in foster care or have a social worker who has a financial need may be eligible for bursary for Vulnerable Groups. When these young students turn 18 and become adults, the College will consider the immigration situation. If their asylum request is granted, they will still be eligible for bursary, depending on their financial circumstances.

Asylum seeking children will be eligible for FCM and transport regardless of whether or not they have applied for bursary.

Discretionary Learner Support (DLS)

Students aged 19+ on 31 August are eligible for Discretionary Learner Support (DLS), this is for students with a specific financial hardship that prevents them from taking part in learning. The award is intended to overcome general hardship. For example, transport, meals, books, equipment, and curriculum-related activities. The awards are usually more than £500 and paid in the form of a bursary. Therefore, a single bursary totaling £500 per annum is available for those students who are in a household with income no more than £27,000 per annum.

Eligibility

- Learner must be enrolled on a course of 12 or more hours per week.
- Meet the residency criteria per the Skill Funding /Education Funding Agencies guidelines.

Assessment

The forms will be checked by the Learning Development Coach (LDC) or tutor to ensure correct evidence is attached and passed to the Learner Support Funding Team who will assess for eligibility. Students must ensure documents such as proof of income are up to date. If eligible an award will be approved subject to the availability of funds at the time of application.

19+ Advanced Learner Loan Bursary

Learners starting a course on or after 1st August may qualify for an Advanced Learner Loan which pays the tuition fees charged by the college. The 19+ Advanced Learner Loan Bursary is available for learners in receipt of an Advanced Learner Loan. This bursary is not approved until the 19+ Learner Loan is confirmed.

There are no bursary funds available for a 19+ learner studying on a program at L3 and above who is either responsible for their own fees or is being sponsored by their employer. Applications can normally commence from 1st May prior to the start of the course. Bursaries will only be paid from the date the application is approved.

The Bursary will provide support with necessary costs such as travel, books, equipment, and uniforms.

Hardship

- course-related costs, including course trips, books and equipment (where these costs are not included in the tuition fee)
- transport costs for getting to and from College
- professional membership fees and any fees or charges due to external bodies related to the course (e.g. AAT membership / UCAS fees)
- exceptional support with domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation provided by others, or by providing items or services direct to the student. This can be in the form of a grant or repayable loan provided by you for course related costs.

Assessment of the level of support needed for each program of study will be carried out in conjunction with information supplied by curriculum teams regarding course related costs. Bursary funds may be able to assist with costs where equipment is required to enhance a student's access to learning or to increase levels of achievement.

Emergency Travel and Food Vouchers

The voucher system will support instances where learners need emergency food or travel support and will be accessed through the Learner Support Fund (LSF) team. Sainsbury's vouchers for food emergencies will be available & Oyster Cards will be available.

To access the vouchers:

- Complete the Hardship Fund Form, giving as much details as possible
- Head of Learner Development to sign form, in their absence, the Safeguarding and Welfare or LDC Co-coordinators to take the signed form to LSF team in exchange for the voucher.

Childcare

Eligibility

Childcare Bursary allocations are only available to Home (not International) students who are:

- aged 19+ (Under 19s should apply for assistance from the “Care to Learn” Scheme)
- Annual household income of £27,000 or less.

Priority will be given to students in the second year of a course who were in receipt of the Childcare Bursary the previous year, students and or student who has a child who are, students/child with a disability or learning difficulty and lone parents.

College Nursery

Students with children aged 2-4 years old may be offered a place at the College Nursery at the Clapham Centre. Nursery places are allocated on a sessional (morning and/or afternoon) basis. Sessions will correspond with the individual learner’s course timetable/s.

External Childcare Provision for successful applicants

Alternatively, students may find a place with a registered childcare provider (childminder, nursery, or after-school care*) and notify the details to the Childcare Bursary Team at the Clapham Centre for approval.

After-school care is available only for children under the age of 12 (Primary school age), although older children with a disability or learning difficulty may also be eligible.

Educational Visits

Bursary eligible students can receive financial support for mandatory course trips and visits. The organiser must complete an LSF Educational Visit form. Educational visits must be passed initially through the Curriculum Manager for the department in question, then course Director.

The relevant bursary fund will provide financial support to qualifying students, to a maximum of £250 per student per course.

To be eligible the following criteria must be met:

- Visits should be curriculum orientated and subject specific.
- The Learner Support Fund will support only those eligible for bursary.
- A payment plan of up to four instalments will be offered to students who are not eligible for bursary.

Care to Learn

Students requiring childcare assistance must complete a Care to learn application form. Online form is available via the Learner Support Portal: (<https://learnerbursarysupport.education.gov.uk/OnlineApplication/Introduction.asp>).

Once the form has been submitted through the portal the Student Funding Coordinator/Bursary Administrator will complete several important checks prior to approving the learner's application.

Every learner must provide a copy of their child's birth certificate before being approved by the College.

Additional Eligibility Criteria:

- Students aged under 20 on the first day of the course can apply for support with childcare costs via the Care to Learn scheme.
- Young parent must be the main carer and in receipt of child benefit for the child(ren)

Kit, Equipment and Uniform

Students who qualify for bursary can get free supplies, gear, and uniforms (subject to bursary assessment and available funds). Also, in accordance with ESFA funding rules, students who are fully funded and are aged 19 years old and above have a right to free supplies and uniforms if their learning objective cannot be met without them.

Please be aware that where clothes or equipment is required for the student's health and safety, retaining the clothing or equipment may incur a fee. However, the student will always have the option to borrow the clothing or equipment for free.

The College will buy and hand out supplies, gear, and uniforms. If the student has already acquired a kit, equipment or uniform then a payment will be made into the student's bank account by BACS, once evidence of purchase inc. the receipt has been received by Student Services.

Students **must** fill out a hardship form so we can keep a record of the equipment/kits that has been given out. All items purchased using Bursary funds remains College property and will be retained by the College.

Application & Eligibility Criteria

Application for bursary assistance will be made available at the bursary office. Applications are paper based. All new full-time students can make their application during enrolment or by with their course leaders.

ESOL learners will be provided with assistance in the Bursary office by an LDC.

Applications must be signed by the student or their guardian/family member to reassure evidence provided are true and accurate to the best of their knowledge.

Awards are based on the circumstances of each learner. Payments are made each month in arrears and based on the College's attendance benchmark of 90% and using the College's attendance policy.

An assessment is made based on a completed application detailing income from employment and/or benefits along with supporting evidence of all declared income. It may be necessary for students to discuss their circumstances with a member of the Student Services team or Safeguarding and Prevent team.

The College may withhold or retrieve money paid from a bursary fund where a student:

- has not satisfied the attendance requirements.
- has been absent for a period of 4 continuous weeks or more (excluding holidays),
- has decided to withdraw from their study program.
- is involved in disciplinary proceedings.

Appendix 1

Students will need to fully complete and return the bursary form with all the necessary evidence.

To be eligible to receive Bursary the learner will have to show:

1. Gross household income **NOT** exceeding £27,000.
2. Three months of your most recent pay slips OR 3 months bank statements OR their P60.

OR

3. A current letter from DWP (3-6 months old) proving receipt of benefits (housing and council tax benefit not accepted). If the letter is older than the time requested, we will need to see bank statements to confirm that the learner /Parent is in receipt of benefit.

OR

4. Universal Credit award if the universal credit is replacing a DWP benefit.

OR

5. Most recent Working tax credit award letter if in receipt.
6. Must meet the residency criteria, usually been a UK or EU resident for more than 3 years prior to the start of the course, or have been granted refugee status, humanitarian protection, or discretionary leave to remain in the UK.
7. Proof of residency status: birth certificate, passport, or alternative proof of residence status in the UK.
8. If in care OR a carer leaver a letter from the council or your social worker to confirm.
9. To be eligible for free lunch a current benefit letter of full child tax credit award letter, Universal Credit, Income Support, Employment Support Allowance, Personal Independent Payment (PIP), Disability Living Allowance(DLA) must be presented.

BURSARY PAYMENTS

How the bursary will be paid

The bursary will need to be paid into a bank account in the student's own name and proof of the bank account, e.g. a bank statement, will need to be provided.

Behaviour, attendance, and punctuality will be monitored fortnightly. Upon meeting the college's expectations, payments will be made every two weeks, throughout the college year and into the bank account.

Deductions will be made where the minimum requirements have not been met regarding behaviour, attendance, and punctuality.

Bursary will be paid fortnightly.

Fortnightly payments commence in May 2024

Abbreviations

LSF	Learner Support Funds
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency
EHCP	Education and Health Care Plan
FCM	Free College Meals
GLA	Greater London Authority