



**BRIDGWATER
& TAUNTON
COLLEGE**

16-19 BURSARIES AND DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUNDS POLICY 2024/2025

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1 Introduction

1.1 These notes set out Bridgwater and Taunton College's 2024/2025 16-19 Bursaries and Discretionary Learner Support Fund Policy for:

- Students aged 16 to 18 attending Bridgwater and Taunton College; and,
- Students aged 19 and over attending Bridgwater and Taunton College.

1.2 The College will:

- Take positive action to ensure that all students know and understand what they are able to apply for through the 16-19 Bursaries and 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) through information given at open evenings and in publications.
- Handle applications quickly and fairly.
- Monitor and review the use of 16-19 Bursaries and DLSF.
- Ensure the 16-19 Bursaries and DLSF are distributed according to clear policy.
- Assist with completion of application forms for students with additional support needs.

2 Policy Statement

2.1. The 16-19 Bursaries is provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) is provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

2.2 All funds are awarded to assist students with the costs associated with coming to college therefore helping to breakdown any financial barriers that may discourage participation.

2.3 All funds are limited, with the exception of the Vulnerable Groups Bursary; and with all bursaries, eligibility does not indicate entitlement to it. **Early application is advised.**

3 Scope

Students studying full or part time ESFA funded programmes who are, or their parents/carers are on a low income or in receipt of income related benefits, can apply for help from these funds.

4 Types of Financial Support

- A contribution towards travelling to and from the college based on the cheapest travel option. Generally, this is bus or train travel for the 16-19 bursary.
- Special exceptions may exist for help towards fuel where bus or rail travel is not available. This will be considered on an individual basis by committee.
- Where funds are available, eligible students may be able to claim a contribution towards the cost of travel to and from an Extended Industry Placement if studying at T Level, and work experience for other courses.
- Help towards compulsory materials, equipment and other course related costs. As detailed by the curriculum area at the beginning of the year.
- Help towards the cost of compulsory field trips and residentials, which are essential to attend to achieve the desired learning aim. As detailed by the

curriculum area at the beginning of the year. Funds must be applied for by a member of the curriculum area through the Student Support Team as soon as funding is required.

- Help towards the cost of registered childcare during the academic year (DLSF students only who are aged 20 or over).
- Students aged 19 and under will be eligible to get full funding for childcare through the Care to Learn Scheme (not income assessed, however maximum limits apply) where the maximum is reached students can apply to the 16-19 Bursary to help pay the remainder if they qualify.
- Help towards tuition fees for specific courses, (where fee remission is not applicable, or where students are not eligible for Advanced Learning Loans) - this applies only to DLSF students where courses are co funded.
- Examination fees – DLSF students only.
- Help towards the cost of college accommodation (Residential Bursary and Residential Access Funds).
- A contribution towards the cost of progression on to higher education (UCAS fees, travel to university interviews etc) where funds are available.
- Free College Meals for qualifying students who are aged 16 to 18 years old and students aged 19 to 24 who are subject to a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) or Education Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan). Proof of eligibility will be required on application.
- A contribution towards the cost of meals where students are not eligible for Free College Meals where the household income is below £30,000 net (after deductions). 16-19 Bursary students only.
- In exceptional circumstances and where funding allows, a contribution may be made towards non-compulsory trips.
- A contribution towards additional top up materials where funding allows.

4.1 Emergency Meals

The government allows use of the bursary fund in individual cases of severe hardship, to provide meal support on the days a student attends their study programme, for a student they consider to be in real need, without undertaking the checks on household income or gathering other evidence that would normally be required.

BTC will publicise the Emergency Meals allowance:

- To staff, who may identify households with short term hardship needs affecting a student's ability to pay for meals

The Student Support team will assess the need and award £5 a day to eligible students be spent in college outlets. They will also assess an appropriate duration of the award and advise where a 16-19 bursary provides a more suitable option (this is up to a maximum of a week).

4.2 Technology

- In addition to the above types of financial support, all bursaries can also support the supply of essential technology needed to assist learning. This will be in the form of loaned devices that will remain the property of the bursary funds to allow future learners to benefit.

5 Eligibility 16-19 Bursary Fund and maximums

5.1 Students must meet the following criteria set by the Education and Skills Funding Agency – this criteria applies to all funding for students aged under 19:

- Must be aged under 19 at the start of the 2023-2024 academic year (with the exception of 'continuing' students who were under 19 at the start of their 2-year course)
- Must meet the residency criteria
- Must not be studying an Apprenticeship or undertaking any waged training
- Must be studying a programme funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

5.2 Students must also meet the following eligibility criteria set by the College:

- Parental (net household) income must be below £40,000 to receive help towards materials, trips, meals
- Parental (net household) income must be below £38,000 to receive help towards onsite accommodation costs
- Parental (net household) income must be below £50,000 to receive help towards bus travel
- Proof of income and/or benefit entitlements will be requested on application.
- **Net income is your salary after deductions**

5.3 Students may be awarded:

- Up to 100% towards compulsory materials and trips
- Up to 100% towards the maximum cost of bus travel to and from college on their timetabled days.

6 Eligibility for Vulnerable Groups Bursary

6.1 Students under 19 and who are considered to be vulnerable young students may be eligible to access up to £1,200 depending on the individual need of the student (essential course fees will be deducted from this where applicable) this award is based on students studying a programme of at least 30-week duration, students studying less than this may be eligible for a proportional award. The following criteria apply for this bursary:

- Young Person currently in Care
- Young Person Leaving Care
- Young Person in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit
- Young Person in receipt of Universal Credit (restrictions apply)
- Young Person in receipt of **both** Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment
- Young Person in receipt of **both** Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment
- Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (under 18) who are under Local Authority care.

6.2 The College will require written evidence of the above status from the relevant agency working with the young person and/or written evidence of benefit entitlements.

6.3 Access for additional resources from the Vulnerable Groups Bursary award needs to be requested by the eligible student stating what they wish to use the money for and explaining how the payment/purchase will remove obstacles to their education. Request forms will be sent with the award letter and will also be available on request throughout the year from Student Support. Once the request is agreed by the awarding panel* the item will either be purchased by Student Support or payment released to the student to enable them to purchase themselves, receipts for audit purposes will be required. The College will only claim the amount required each year per student. Where no need is identified the student may not receive any funds and no claims will be made by the College.

* The awarding panel consists of a member of Student Support, Wellbeing and Curriculum

7 Eligibility for 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF)

7.1 Students must meet the following criteria set by the Education and Skills Funding Agency – this criteria applies to all funding for students aged 19 or over:

- Must be aged 19 or over at the start of the 2024-2025 academic year
- Must meet the residency criteria
- Must not be studying an Apprenticeship or undertaking any waged training
- Must be studying a programme funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency
- Must not be studying a Community Learning funded programme
- Must not be funded for their programme through a Student Loan (Advanced Learner Loan or Higher Education Loan).

7.2 The following income thresholds apply for students requiring help towards the costs laid out in section 4 of this policy.

- Student and partner joint net income up to £38,000 (salary after deductions)
- Single student net income up to £26,500 (salary after deductions)

7.3 Students may receive up to 90% towards tuition fees, up to £800 towards travel, exams and other essential course costs, dependant on their income.

7.4 Advanced Learner Loan funded students may apply to the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary (ALLB) for help with the cost of Travel, Childcare or other course related costs not included in the loan value. (See ALLB policy)

7.5 Higher Education Loan funded students may apply to the HE Bursaries for specific assistance. (See Higher Education Student Support Funding Policy)

8 Eligibility for 20+ Childcare Fund

- Help towards childcare costs may be provided to students aged 20 and over up to a guided maximum limit of 90% of the total cost, providing that this cost does not exceed £5,000 per child per academic year.
- The guided maximum award which can be made in order to retain the childcare provision over the holiday periods (with the exception of the summer holiday) is 50% of the weekly award to the student.
- Childcare support is awarded only for the days the student is required to attend College or a required placement.

- Childcare providers must be registered with Ofsted which will be checked.
- Childcare funds are paid directly to the student in arrears once a receipt has been submitted to the Student Support Team.
- The student remains liable for any payment to the provider in circumstances where payments are stopped due to lack of attendance or withdrawal from the course.
- Students aged 19 and under will be eligible to get full funding for childcare through the Care to Learn Scheme (not income assessed, however maximum limits apply).

The income thresholds for this support are the same as in section 7.

9 Eligibility for Residential Bursary and Residential Access Fund

- The Residential Bursary is available for full time FE students studying specialist programmes not widely available at other colleges i.e., Agriculture, Motor Sport, International Baccalaureate. The Fund may be able to help towards the total cost of college managed accommodation (excluding meal plans).
- Students may not be eligible if they live under 3 miles from a public service or college operated transport route.
- Eligibility will be means tested using the same criteria as 16-19 Bursary and eligible students may be entitled to an award of up to the full cost of accommodation excluding meal plans.
- Students aged 16-18 studying non land-based but other specific courses that are not available at a more local institution to their home that they are able to travel by public transport to access, or where public transport is not available or feasible, or where daily travel time is excessive, may also be eligible to apply for help towards accommodation fees through the Residential Bursary.
- The Residential Access Fund is available for full time students aged 19 and over where public transport is not available or feasible, or where daily travel time is excessive, and the course they are studying is not available at a more local institution to their home address.

All students under 25 years of age who are living with parents/carers will be assessed on parent/carer income.

10 Emergency Fund Provision

In addition to our standard bursary allocations, we are introducing an Emergency Fund to support students who may not meet the traditional bursary criteria based on household income but are facing significant challenges that impact their ability to continue their education. This fund is designed to assist students who are experiencing critical circumstances, such as homelessness or redundancy. The aim of the Emergency Fund is to provide timely financial assistance to ensure that all students have the opportunity to succeed, regardless of their personal situations. Applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that appropriate support is directed to those in the most need.

11 Application Process

- Complete the relevant application form fully via the Pay My Student portal
- Provide evidence of the benefits/income of the household

Once we have received the application form along with the required evidence, we will assess the student in respect of the compulsory costs related to their course. If they have been successful, we shall notify them by email of the amount they have been awarded and how these funds will be paid. The majority of awards made from the 16-19 Bursaries and Discretionary Learner Support Funds are transferred internally to the relevant department. If the student has been awarded funds that are paid directly to them, they shall be informed of when and how this money will be paid.

12 General Attendance Requirements and Monitoring

- 12.1 Students who receive support from any of the aforementioned schemes, will be required to attend timetabled lessons at a minimum level of 90%. Any student who falls below this level may have their support suspended or withdrawn. Students who may find this level of attendance difficult due to disability or caring responsibilities should notify Student Support as soon as possible to allow us to make necessary adjustments.

13 Appeals Procedure

- 13.1 If a student has been refused payment from the 16-19 Bursary (including Vulnerable Groups) or Discretionary Learner Support Fund and they believe our decision is wrong, or if they believe that the level of support they have been offered is wrong, they can make an appeal against our decision.

13.2 Grounds for appeal

Eligibility – The student will have been refused assistance if we do not believe that they meet the eligibility criteria. Our letter explains why we believe they do not qualify for any support. If the student decides to make an appeal against our decision to refuse support because they believe that they do in fact meet the eligibility criteria, **they will be required to explain in writing why they feel they qualify and may have to provide us with additional documentary evidence to support their appeal**

Level of support - If the student is considering making an appeal against the level of support they have been offered, **they will be required to explain in writing why they feel that they may be entitled to additional support and may have to provide us with additional documentary evidence to support their appeal (for example, a bank statement).**

Their application will already have received careful consideration, and an appeal is not likely to be successful unless they can provide relevant new information that was not considered in their original assessment.

13.3 Procedure

If the student decides that they have grounds to make an appeal, they must write to the Assistant Principal of Student Experience within 14 days of receipt of the allocation or letter of decline.

The original application, appeal and any other information the student supplies to us will be given fresh consideration. The appeal will be dealt with within 15 working days by a panel consisting of a member of the Student Support Team, the student's

tutor (who will represent their interests) and the Assistant Principal of Student Experience. The student will be advised of the outcome in writing.

14 Review of Policy

14.1 This policy will be reviewed annually.