

## **Learner Support Procedures and Guidelines 2025/26**

- 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary
- 16-19 Discretionary Bursary
- 19+ Discretionary Learner Support
- 19+ Advanced Learner Loan Bursary
- Further Education Free Meals
- Care to Learn

# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>16-19 Bursary Fund.....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Background.....	4
2.2	Allocation and Priorities .....	4
2.3	Administration Procedures.....	5
2.4	16-19 Bursary Application .....	6
2.5	Vulnerable Bursary Overview and Eligibility.....	7
2.6	Discretionary Bursary Overview .....	7
2.7	Eligibility for 16-19 Discretionary Bursary .....	8
2.8	Emergency Meal Support and Payments .....	10
2.9	The Financial Framework.....	10
<b>3</b>	<b>Further Education Free Meals.....</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1	Background.....	10
3.2	Eligibility .....	11
3.3	Transitional Protection Arrangements .....	11
3.4	Allocation and Provision .....	12
3.5	Administration .....	12
<b>4</b>	<b>Care to Learn .....</b>	<b>13</b>
4.1	Background, Applications and Eligibility.....	13
<b>5</b>	<b>Free Childcare Support .....</b>	<b>14</b>
5.1	Background.....	14
<b>6</b>	<b>19+ Discretionary Learner Support .....</b>	<b>14</b>
6.1	Background.....	14
6.2	Allocation and Priorities .....	14
6.3	Administration .....	15
6.4	DLS Application.....	15
6.5	Eligibility for DLS .....	16
6.6	Emergency Payments .....	17
6.7	The Financial Framework.....	17
<b>7</b>	<b>19+ Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund (LBF) .....</b>	<b>18</b>
7.1	Background.....	18
7.2	Allocation and Priorities .....	18
7.3	Administration .....	19
7.4	Learning Support Funding .....	20
7.5	Discretionary LBF Application.....	20
7.6	Eligibility for LBF .....	20
7.7	Emergency Payments .....	21

7.8	The Financial Framework.....	21
8	Categories of Financial Support .....	22
9	Administrative Procedures .....	24
10	Student Finance Committee .....	25
11	Equality and Diversity.....	25
12	Audit .....	25
13	Confidentiality and Data Protection.....	26
14	Fraud Declaration .....	26
15	Invoicing Students – Return of Funds or Items .....	26
16	Underspend .....	26
17	Policy Review .....	27
18	Complaints .....	27
19	Appendix A - 16-19 Bursary Allocation Summary Staff Guide .....	28
20	Appendix B - 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Staff Guide.....	29
21	Appendix C - Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Staff Guide .....	30

## 1 Introduction

Finance is an important consideration when coming to College. To ensure that finance is not a barrier to enrolment and attendance, the College will publish a statement and promote these funds and any other sources of financial assistance at its Open Events, Welcome Days and on the website. Students will have the opportunity to discuss individual circumstances at interview or enrolment to ensure that the student can consider these funds when making choices about post 16 education.

The College will work with the local authorities, youth groups and schools to find ways to raise awareness of the bursary and ensure that young people are aware of the financial help available at Halesowen College.

Grants and loans from these funds are only eligible to students enrolled on an agency funded course who are in financial need. Repayment may be required from students whose attendance or effort is unsatisfactory or who fail to complete the course.

## 2 16-19 Bursary Fund

### 2.1 Background

The DfE has allocated funds for Colleges to distribute to students who require financial support in overcoming specific barriers to participation so that they can remain in education or training. This is called the 16-19 Bursary Fund. This fund is available to students aged 16-18 as at 31 August. Students aged 19+ are only eligible if they are continuing on a study programme they started aged 16-18 or have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The fund is made up of two parts:

- Vulnerable bursary of up to £1,200 per year to the most vulnerable young people;
- Discretionary bursary to meet individual needs of those who cannot stay in education without financial help, for example for meals, uniform and equipment.

The College adheres to DfE guidelines regarding eligibility for and distribution of the fund. The College has an allocation for the discretionary element. All vulnerable bursary funding is held centrally and the College claims for this on a case by case basis.

The College will make clear to all learners in receipt of support that it is their responsibility to contact the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) if necessary, as support may affect eligibility for some benefits.

### 2.2 Allocation and Priorities

The funds are to provide support for learners aged 16-19 who need financial support to meet the costs associated with learning and attending College.

To be eligible for either type of bursary the student must meet the age and residency criteria and be participating in provision that is subject to Ofsted inspection and is funded by the DfE.

The College is responsible for identifying students defined in the relevant groups and will proactively link with the Local Authority, local care teams and local agencies working with vulnerable students, to help and encourage students to apply for a vulnerable bursary. The College acknowledges that students may be reticent to apply for fear of being stigmatised. The College will inform bursary students how their information will be used and shared to build trust.

Types of support available may include:

- Course related costs not included in the course fee (e.g. contributions to trips. Equipment and uniform).
- Transport (including free travel on college coaches)
- Professional membership fees and registration fees
- Meals
- Digital Grant
- UCAS Fees
- Funds for travel to visit a university.

The College will prioritise vulnerable groups such as:

- Parents who need help with childcare
- Young carers
- Learners who are economically or socially disadvantaged and are facing financial difficulty.
- Learners who are disabled, physically or mentally and/or have learning difficulties.
- Ex military personnel

The College aims to distribute all available resources to students on a needs basis and this policy is designed to ensure that funding reaches those most in need and will not pay weekly attendance allowances or achievement/attendance bonuses. The fund may provide financial support by giving items, services or cash direct to the learner. This may be in the form of a grant or repayable loan.

The College will base all decisions about which students receive help from the bursary and how much bursary they receive on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need. Evidence will be held to demonstrate how the level of support was determined.

No student should automatically be awarded a set amount of funding without an assessment of the level of actual financial need they have. Flat rate/fixed rate payments should not be made to students without considering students actual financial needs.

The bursary fund will not be used to support costs not related to education (e.g. living costs, extra-curricular activities or to provide learning support.

Appendix A sets out the College's processes and methodology for allocation and prioritisation for the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary fund.

## 2.3 Administration Procedures

The College will use 5% of the allocation to contribute to administrative costs.

The College will submit in-year management information and a final claim to the DfE as required.

The College will complete the DfE checklist for each learner (see Appendix).

Although the guide states that "institutions must ensure that students are eligible for the discretionary bursary in each year they require support" the college will take advantage of the bureaucracy reduction measure for returning students. The DfE have recognised the administrative burden of handling large numbers of bursary applications in a short space of time, and they desire to maximise retention of students facing financial disadvantage, so have relaxed this requirement so that the bursary fund rule is consistent with that for free meals in further education. The rule has been retained in academic year 2024 to 2025. As such, for returning students, the College will issue a self-declaration form to each student asking them to confirm that their household circumstances have not changed. Vulnerable students though, have to be re-assessed.

The vulnerable bursary allowance will be held by the College and funding can be drawn down three times a year. Records must be kept to evidence the claim and payment to the student.

The College must ensure they have fully verified the student's eligibility and assessed their participation needs before submitting any funding claim. The claim can be for up to £1,200 again based on student need.

Claims can be submitted in September, February and May. Claims submitted after this date will not be paid. The College will retain a copy of the funding claims submitted and records of funding paid through the claims process. The DfE advises that the portal is not a filing system for claims and as such the College should ensure we keep our own records outside the portal for future audit.

The College is expected recycle vulnerable bursary claims that have been paid if they are no longer required. For example, if a student leaves and a new student applies then the College should only claim for the difference. If funds were claimed in error, we will try to recycle them. If this is not possible they will be returned. Any unspent funds can be transferred to the Discretionary Bursary.

Unspent Discretionary Bursary funds may be carried over to the next academic year, up to the value of the Bursary contract allocation. The College must fully utilise any unspent funds for either free meals or discretionary bursary before using the new academic year allocation. Funding cannot be carried forward for more than one academic year. The College must report unspent funding using the DfE online enquiry form by 31st March each year to allow those funds to be recovered.

Data fields in the ILR must be populated, as failure to do so may jeopardise future allocations, and is mandatory.

16 to 19 Bursary Funds are subject to normal assurance arrangements for 16 to 19 education and training. College processes will ensure that there are records of bursary applications and expenditure at student level (including a breakdown of the value, purpose, whether awarded or not, and a brief justification for the decision). Records must be able to demonstrate a student's eligibility, financial need, receipts (as required) and support of evidence in kind.

Journey shall be used to process all applications and store appropriate evidence. The application process will cover all elements of the DfE application checklist.

[16 to 19 Bursary checklist.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612121/16_to_19_Bursary_checklist.pdf)

## **2.4 16-19 Bursary Application**

Students must complete an application giving personal information, financial circumstances and bank details. This can be completed prior to enrolment. However, no award will be made until the student has enrolled and provided evidence of income/benefits to support their application. Where a learner is under 18, the College will get the learner to sign to approve that the application and the information provided is complete and factual.

The College must make the student aware of the terms and conditions of the fund and retain evidence that they have read and understood them.

Students should apply for support from the fund as soon as possible and usually in advance of the start of teaching. Awards will be made against the criteria and once all funds are committed no further applications can be considered.

Incomplete applications and applications with no evidence of income attached cannot be processed. Students will be followed up and encouraged to complete the application in a timely manner.

## 2.5 Vulnerable Bursary Overview and Eligibility

The 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary Fund is a bursary of up to £1,200<sup>1</sup> per year to the following students:

- In care
- Care leavers
- In receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves and/or a dependant.
- Students in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right.
- Universal Credit has been fully rolled out and so young people aged 16 to 18 will no longer be in receipt of the other benefits. However, students aged 19 to 25 and funded from the 16 to 19 budget (19+ continuers and those with an EHCP) may still be in receipt of those other legacy benefits.

Appropriate evidence includes:

- Income Support or Universal Credit award notice plus additional evidence to confirm independence e.g. tenancy agreement
- Written confirmation of the student's current or previous looked after statement issued by the Local Authority (email is acceptable).
- DLA/PIP Letter and UC/ESA Letter.

No other evidence is acceptable and the College will only submit a claim once evidence has been verified.

The College must obtain proof that the student is eligible and retain copies of documents for audit purposes. The General Data Protection Regulation Principles (GDPR) must be adhered to in recording, processing and retaining data.

Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for vulnerable groups.

The College may pay a vulnerable student more than £1,200 if they are assessed as requiring additional help to remain in education. This would be paid from the discretionary bursary allocation.

The bursary will be paid from the date that the College became aware of their application. The College may use its discretion to back date payments depending on their financial circumstance. Payments will cease immediately should a student withdraw.

Receipt of the bursary may affect entitlement to DWP income related benefits. Although means tested benefits should be unaffected if a student is themselves in receipt of benefit, certain household/family benefits may be impacted. The learner is responsible for making themselves aware of the impact of receiving funding.

## 2.6 Discretionary Bursary Overview

The College makes discretionary bursaries to young people in ways that best fit the needs and circumstances of the learner. Bursaries are targeted towards those who face financial barriers to participation. In setting the criteria for the Discretionary Bursary the College complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

---

<sup>1</sup> Pro rata for courses less than 30 weeks per year. Low weekly study hours may also require a pro-rata amount.

Discretionary bursaries are designed to be sufficient to help students meet the costs related to participation but are subject to funding being available. Once the allocation is fully committed, no further awards can be made. A small emergency fund will be ring-fenced to support students who face exceptional circumstances such as homelessness. Information will be provided to students regarding other forms of financial support as appropriate.

Payments to students, if not in kind, will be made by BACs to the student's own bank account.

Funds for all beneficiaries will be allocated to ensure payments can be processed promptly throughout the year.

The College aims to distribute all available resources to students on a needs basis. Those most in need, such as those in care, care leavers or those claiming defined benefits in their own right will be prioritised.

## **2.7 Eligibility for 16-19 Discretionary Bursary**

The household income thresholds for support are as follows:

- Band 1 Up to £30,458 and/or in receipt of income-based benefits
- Band 2 £30,459 - £37,227
- Band 3 £37,228 - £45,121

These thresholds are updated annually in accordance with any increase/decrease in the national living wage.

Students assessed as being in Band 1 will be eligible to claim up to 100% of the maximum award subject to resource availability and need. Band 2 – 60%, Band 3 – 30%,

Examples of acceptable evidence to support eligibility includes:

- P60 or Payslips showing Employment.
- All pages of an up-to-date letter showing a benefit or income
- The 3 most recent Universal Credit Award Statements
- All pages of the current Tax Credits Award

Benefits designed to help with the extra costs caused by a disability will not be included in any assessment of income. These include:

- Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- Access to Work
- Attendance Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

The above evidence shall be retained for audit purposes as per the funding rules.

Where there is evidence of income-based benefits then the student will automatically be allocated to Band 1. These include Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Universal Credit, JSA, ESA and pension credits.

Students who are in receipt of a FEM eligible benefit will also be automatically allocated to Band 1.

Where the household has more than two dependants, the application (should it be approved as band 2 or 3) will be moved to the next band i.e. a band 3 assessment would be moved to band 2 and a band 2 to band 1 with band 1 being the highest level of support.

For students under 19, P60/salary/income-based benefits evidence relates to parents/legal guardians where the student is living at home and not independently. Students living independently



of parents will be treated as independent adults and evidence of parental income will not be required.

Subject to funding being available, students with a household income in excess of £45,121 may, in exceptional circumstances, be eligible for support subject to the recommendation of their Student Support Manager and approved by the Director of Learner Services.

All awards made are subject to satisfactory attendance<sup>2</sup>, progress, and behaviour<sup>3</sup>. Level of attendance and conduct are checked before any payment (or follow on payment) is made and allocation of funds may be withheld should satisfactory levels not be achieved. On the recommendation of a personal coach, a Curriculum Manager (CM) may approve the payment of an award where attendance is below the 90% minimum standard i.e. where financial support would aid attendance and/or where there are extenuating circumstances. These standards are clear and should be communicated to all students.

All awards are based on financial need and evidence of household income will be required to support all claims. The College will retain evidence that the student is eligible for a bursary and has agreed to the terms and conditions.

Learners who are eligible for support are not automatically entitled to the maximum allocation.

Students may have received an award in previous years; this is no guarantee of future awards. Students must make an application each academic year or confirm their circumstances haven't changed.

The following students are not eligible for this support:

- Apprentices
- Higher Education students
- Students under 16 attending College as part of Key Stage 4
- Students 19+ (on 31 August 2025 except those funded as 19+ continuers and/or those with an EHCP).
- Privately fostered children (excluded from vulnerable bursary only)
- Young offenders serving a custodial sentence, on temporary licence or remanded to a secure institution.

Previous eligibility in school for free meals does not automatically entitle the learner to a bursary. However, free meals are available, and students may apply for support as part of the bursary application. Students in receipt of free meals may also be eligible for support from the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

It is the responsibility of the College to determine eligibility. Students must meet the residency criteria in DfE funding regulations for post 16 provision. Students who are with an adult relative/partner and seeking asylum but have not had their application for asylum refused, are not entitled to public funds and may only receive in-kind support for books, equipment and/or a travel pass. Cash/cash equivalents cannot be provided. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children however are the responsibility of the Local Authority and are treated as a looked after child and hence eligible for a vulnerable bursary. Should asylum be refused and the appeals process exhausted then there is no further entitlement to public funds.

---

<sup>2</sup> The College target is 100%. Students attending less than 90% may have payments withheld unless their HoSS authorises payment.

<sup>3</sup> Students with a Level 3+ disciplinary sanction may have payments withheld unless their HoSS authorises payment.

## 2.8 Emergency Meal Support and Payments

In individual cases of severe hardship, the College will provide meal support on the days a student attends their study programme, without undertaking the checks on household income or gathering other evidence that would normally be required.

For audit purposes, we will retain a copy of:

- a record of the number of students supported in this way.
- the number of days this support is given.
- the value of support given to each student along with the rationale for the meal support
- the signed confirmation by the student of receipt of funding to be spent on food that day, if actual spend receipts are not obtained.

Such arrangements will not continue on an ongoing basis for any individual student.

Emergency payments are excluded from the income threshold eligibility assessment. Funds for all beneficiaries will be allocated to ensure emergency payments can be processed promptly throughout the year. Such emergency payments are designed to address the immediate needs of a student who may find themselves homeless or in severe financial hardship in order that they can continue with their learning. Emergency payments must not take the form of regular payments for living costs but may be made to cover initial costs to ensure students remain in learning when they have a domestic emergency including homelessness. The fund is not a replacement for welfare benefits and must be authorised by College Leadership Team or Head of Safeguarding and Wellbeing.

## 2.9 The Financial Framework

The maximum discretionary bursary is £3,030 per full time student (pro rata for part time and as per the income bands). All discretionary awards are subject to resource availability. This £3,030 is not an automatic entitlement but a ceiling for awards – all of which are dependent on affordability. The £3,030 limit can be increased in exceptional circumstances by the Student Finance Committee.

Funds are given to support the costs of attending College and associated study. It is not an income based welfare benefit to contribute to overall household income. Any awards may be repayable if the student fails to complete the course, their attendance is at an unacceptable level or effort is considered to be below a satisfactory level. If the student fails to meet these conditions they must be aware that they may be asked to repay funds and invoiced accordingly.

Support will be granted to students in line with the broad categories in the table listed in Categories of Financial Support (section 7).

Students in receipt of a vulnerable bursary will also be eligible for discretionary awards.

## 3 Further Education Free Meals

### 3.1 Background

The Funding Agreement places a legal duty on the College to provide free meals to disadvantaged students. Institutions must provide a free meal to eligible students for each day that they attend their study programme, where this is appropriate.

Free meals are available for eligible students enrolled in further education and aged 16, 17 or 18 on 31 August of the current academic year. Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a free meal if they are continuing on a study programme, they began aged 16 to 18 or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The College will ensure that all eligible students are provided with a meal in line with government directives.

Institutions receive funding at a rate equivalent to £2.61 per student per meal. The funding for the free meals and 16 to 19 Discretionary Bursary Fund may be treated as a single allocation. The DfE allows the College to use its discretion to manage the single allocation as appropriate to best provide support to eligible students for both schemes. Free meals in further education remains an entitlement and the College must manage the single allocation appropriately to ensure that all students entitled to a free meal are provided with one.

### **3.2 Eligibility**

Free meals are targeted at financially disadvantaged students. Students must be aged 16 to 18 on 31 August. Students aged 19 or over are only eligible if they are continuing on a study programme, they began aged 16 to 18 or have an EHCP. To qualify students must submit an application to the College (this is actioned as part of the 16-19 Bursary application) and be in receipt of one or more of the benefits defined below:

- Income Support
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit when the recipient is not entitled to Working Tax Credit and has an annual gross income of less than £16,190.
- Working Tax Credit run on
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum (after tax and not including any benefits)

The College must see evidence of these benefits and retain a copy for audit purposes whilst also ensuring compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

Working Tax Credit alone is not a qualifying benefit. However, if a learner or their parent(s)/guardians are in receipt of a qualifying benefit and Working Tax Credit they are eligible for free FE meals.

Students must also meet the residency criteria as specified in the DfE funding regulations.

The following groups of students are ineligible for free meals in FE:

- Students aged under 16.
- Students aged 19+ unless they have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or are a continuer.
- Apprentices.

### **3.3 Transitional Protection Arrangements**

The DfE has put transitional protection arrangements in place to provide certainty for families and ensure they do not experience a sudden loss of free meals. All students already receiving free meals at 1 April 2018 and onwards will continue to receive free meals whilst Universal Credit is rolled out until March 2025 and then until the end of the course. This will apply even if their

household earnings rise above the new threshold during that time. This applies until Universal Credit is fully rolled out.

Institutions do not need to carry out any further eligibility checks for these protected families during this period.

The College may note on the students record that their free meals entitlement is 'protected'.

The College should seek to identify students who are eligible to receive free meals under the transitional protection. This information might be obtained by speaking to the student's previous school or their local authority or previous years applications. Where the College is unable to verify previous eligibility the student /parent may be asked to provide evidence.

Once universal credit is fully rolled out, any students receiving free meals who no longer meet the eligibility criteria at that point (because they are earning above the threshold) will continue to receive protection until they complete their 16 to 19 funded education. 19+ continuers and students aged 19 and over with EHCPs will continue to receive protection until the end of their current programme of study.

### **3.4 Allocation and Provision**

The College will make available to each eligible student an allowance of £2.61 minimum for each day of their study programme including work placement.

The College will offer healthy options and hot food options within physical constraints. All reasonable steps will be made to accommodate special dietary needs, for example allergies/tolerances and cultural/faith requirements. When students are in College the meal allowance will be in the form of a cashless system. Where students are off-site the College may provide a cash allowance in the form of a BACS payment.

Students in receipt of FE free meals may also benefit from the 16-19 Bursary Fund. However, this source of funding will be a consideration in the assessment for a bursary. The College will ensure that enhancement of the meal allowance from £2.61 per day will not be detrimental to the other needs of the student. The DfE allows the £2.61 allowance to be enhanced but this must be justified at audit. The enhanced allowance the College provides is based on the significant cost of living rises and price rises faced by our retail outlets sourcing quality food. Students do better in their studies when they have access to proper, regular, nutritional meals.

### **3.5 Administration**

Receipt of free meals must be recorded in the ILR and this data will inform future allocations. The College will receive its free meals allocations in 2 parts. Approximately two-thirds will be paid in August and one third in April.

5% of the funding will be used to contribute to administrative costs.

Any underspend will be carried forward to the next academic year. We must fully utilise any unspent funds for either free meals or discretionary bursary before using the new academic year allocation. Funding cannot be carried forward for more than one academic year. The College must report unspent funding using the DfE online enquiry form by 31<sup>st</sup> March each year to allow those funds to be recovered.

Free meals in further education is subject to normal assurance arrangements for 16 to 19 education and training.

The College will maintain accurate and up to date records that evidence which students receive free meals funding; confirm student eligibility for funding, transitional protections, and demonstrate appropriate use of funds, including the rationale for any enhancement to the £2.61 free meals rate.

The College must complete the free meal field in the ILR to provide information on the number of young people eligible for free meals in further education using code FME2.

## **4 Care to Learn**

### **4.1 Background, Applications and Eligibility**

Care to Learn (C2L) provides funding for childcare to help young parents (defined as those aged under 20) continue in education after the birth of a child. The scheme provides funding for childcare whilst the young parent is engaged in a study programme and is not able to provide care for their child. It can also help the young parent with any additional travel costs involved in taking the child to the childcare provider.

The College is committed to the promotion of Care to Learn and provides web links to students under 20 years old who require childcare support.

Care to Learn can provide up to £180 per child per week to students studying full or part time at College who commence a course before their 20th birthday.

Young parents must complete and submit a new application each academic year even if their study programme runs for more than one year. Students should apply directly through the College, giving evidence that confirms receipt of Child Benefit for their child or a copy of their child's birth certificate.

Childcare payments are made directly to childcare providers. The award is a maximum of £180 per child per week.

College can pay for travel costs, where appropriate, if these are necessary for the student to take their child(ren) between childcare and home. Travel costs are only paid if they are additional to the student's normal travel costs from home to the education institution. Travel costs must not be paid where the childcare takes place on the same site as the study programme.

Travel should be by the cheapest means of transport available; this is normally public transport. If the cheapest means is by car, institutions must calculate the amount using a rate of 25p per mile.

Summer retainers can be paid to childcare providers, if required, to hold the childcare place over the summer holiday period. This only applies if a student is finishing study in one year and continuing their study in the next academic year. The young parent and their study programme must continue to meet the eligibility criteria for a summer retainer to be payable.

To be eligible for a summer retainer for summer 2026, the student must:

- have received C2L funding in academic year 2025 to 2026 and be intending to return to the study programme in academic year 2026 to 2027
- be on a study programme that has lasted for 6 weeks or more in academic year 2025 to 2026
- be on a study programme that finishes no earlier than 26 May 2026
- be intending to continue with the same childcare provider they used during academic year 2025 to 2026
- have been using the childcare provider for a minimum of 6 weeks

We can pay deposits of up to a maximum of £250 per child if the childcare provider requires this.

We will also pay any registration fees that are charged by the childcare provider, up to a maximum of £80 per child. This is a one-off payment that does not form part of the weekly maximum rate and will not be paid for subsequent academic years if the student uses the same childcare provision.

The College must complete a monthly attendance monitoring return.

## **5 Free Childcare Support**

### **5.1 Background**

All 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds can access 15 hours a week of government funded early education for 38 weeks of the year. Working parents of 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to 30 hours a week childcare for 38 weeks of the year. More information about childcare support is provided on childcare choices website <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk>.

The College is not involved in the administration or distribution of these funds.

## **6 19+ Discretionary Learner Support**

### **6.1 Background**

The College has an allocation of funds from the DfE in respect of the adult skills budget. The College may allocate a proportion of this to support eligible students, on further education courses funded by the Agency who have a specific financial hardship that prevents them from taking part in learning. This is referred to a Discretionary Learner Support (DLS).

The College adheres to DfE guidelines regarding eligibility for and distribution of the fund. The College is not allowed to move funds between Discretionary Learner Support 19+ (DLS) and the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund (LBF). All awards are based on need and evidence/assessment of income/benefits will be required to support all claims.

DLS comprises:

- 19+ hardship fund (ESFA and WMCA)
- 20+ childcare

The College will make clear to all learners in receipt of support that it is their responsibility to contact the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) if necessary, as support may affect eligibility for some benefits.

### **6.2 Allocation and Priorities**

The funds are to provide support for learners aged 19+ in financial hardship and those aged 20+ with childcare needs. Learners in receipt of a 19+ Advanced Learning Loan must seek support via the LBF.

All awards are subject to funding being available. Once the DLS allocation is fully committed, no further awards can be made. Information will be provided to students regarding other forms of financial support as appropriate. The College will be mindful of other types of support e.g. travel costs provided by Job Centre Plus when making awards.

Types of support available may include:

- Course related costs not included in the course fee (e.g. contributions to essential trips, essential equipment and uniform)
- Transport
- Professional membership fees and registration fees



- Meals
- Childcare
- Digital Grant
- UCAS Fees
- Funds for travel to visit a university or to a job interview.

The College will prioritise vulnerable groups such as:

- Parents who need help with childcare Learners who are economically or socially disadvantaged and are facing financial difficulty.
- Learners who are disabled, physically or mentally and/or have learning difficulties.

Learners who are financially disadvantaged, who are not eligible for such support from other government sources, are a key group. For example, those mandated to training by DWP would be expected to receive support from DWP funds in order to protect the discretionary pot. From August, all who have been 'mandated' to training (whether on a full or part-time basis) by Job Centre Plus have their travel and childcare costs met by Jobcentre Plus where required.

The College aims to distribute all available resources to students on a needs basis and this policy is designed to ensure that funding reaches those most in need and will not pay weekly attendance allowances or achievement/attendance bonuses. The fund may provide financial support by giving items, services or cash direct to the learner. This may be in the form of a grant or repayable loan.

The DLS will only be used to pay for childcare for learners aged 20 or older on the first day of learning who are at risk of not starting or continuing learning because of childcare costs. Childcare costs are only eligible if they are from a childminder or childcare provider registered with Ofsted. Informal childcare e.g. by a relative will not be funded. Learners aged under 20 must use the Care to Learn programme to fund their childcare costs. The DLS cannot be used to top up care to learn payments.

Appendix B sets out the College's processes and methodology for allocation and prioritisation for 19+ hardship and 20+ childcare.

### **6.3 Administration**

The College will claim 5% of its total learner support expenditure as administration expenditure.

The appropriate Learner Support Reason codes will be recorded in the ILR.

A mid-year funding forecast will be submitted in February, a year-end forecast submitted in June and a final claim made in October to the DfE.

Journey shall be used to process all applications and store appropriate evidence.

### **6.4 DLS Application**

Students must complete an application form giving personal information, financial circumstances and Bank Details. This can be completed prior to enrolment. However, no award will be made until the student has enrolled, eligibility checked and evidence of income/benefits to support their application provided.

Students should apply for support from the fund as soon as possible and usually in advance of the start of teaching. Awards will be made against the criteria and once all funds are committed no further applications can be considered.

Incomplete forms and forms with no evidence of income attached cannot be processed. Students will be followed up and encouraged to complete the application.

## 6.5 Eligibility for DLS

The household income thresholds for support are as follows:

- Band 1 Up to £30,458 and/or in receipt of income-based benefits
- Band 2 £30,459 - £37,227
- Band 3 £37,228 - £45,121

These thresholds are updated annually in accordance with any increase/decrease in the national living wage.

Students assessed as being in Band 1 will be eligible to claim up to 100% of the maximum award subject to resource availability and need. Band 2 – 60%, Band 3 – 30%,

Examples of acceptable evidence to support eligibility include:

- P60 or Payslips showing Employment.
- All pages of an up-to-date letter showing a benefit or income
- The 3 most recent Universal Credit Award Statements
- All pages of the current Tax Credits Award

Benefits designed to help with the extra costs caused by a disability will not be included in any assessment of income. These include:

- Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- Access to Work
- Attendance Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Students 19+ living independently of parents will be treated as an independent adults and evidence of parental income will not be required.

Where there is evidence of income-based benefits then the student will automatically be allocated to Band 1. These include Working Tax Credit and Housing Benefit.

The Eligibility criteria for FEM shall be used to automatically allocate students aged 19+ into Band 1 (note 19+ students are not eligible for FEM).

Where the household has more than two dependants, the application (should it be approved as band 2 or 3) will be moved to the next band i.e. a band 3 assessment would be moved to band 2 and a band 2 to band 1 with band 1 being the highest level of support.

Subject to funding being available, students with a household income in excess of £45,121 may, in exceptional circumstances, be eligible for support subject to the recommendation of their CM and approved by the Chief Finance Officer & Vice Principal.

All awards made are subject to satisfactory attendance<sup>4</sup>, progress, and behaviour<sup>5</sup>. Level of attendance and conduct are checked before any payment (or follow on payment) is made and allocation of funds may be withheld should satisfactory levels not be achieved. On the recommendation of a Personal Coach/CM may approve the payment of an award where

---

<sup>4</sup> The College target is 100%. Students attending less than 90% may have payments withheld unless their HoSS authorises payment.

<sup>5</sup> Students with a Level 3+ disciplinary sanction may have payments withheld unless their HoSS authorises payment.



attendance is below the 90% minimum standard i.e. where financial support would aid attendance and/or where there are extenuating circumstances. These standards are clear and communicated to all students.

All awards are based on financial need and evidence/assessment of household income/benefits will be required to support all claims. The College will retain evidence that the student is eligible for a bursary and has agreed to the terms and conditions.

Learners who are eligible for support are not automatically entitled to the maximum allocation.

Students may have received an award in previous years; this is no guarantee of future awards. Students must make an application each academic year.

To be eligible for DLS, students must be studying a course funded by the DfE. The eligibility of students for funding is determined by Funding Rules. This will be checked before any awards are given.

The following students are not eligible for this support:

- Higher Education students (unless course funded by DfE)
- Students aged under 19 for hardship and aged under 20 for childcare support and supported by 16-19 Bursary Fund.
- Students ineligible for DfE funding
- Prisoners and those on temporary license for example day release
- Students funded by a 19+ learning loan.
- Those who are receiving an income and have no financial need.
- Learners who are already receiving financial assistance with travel or childcare costs from Job Centre Plus or a work programme provider in connection with pre-employment training.

Students seeking asylum may be eligible for support but may only receive support in the form of books, equipment or a travel pass. Support in the form of cash is prohibited.

The fund will not be used to pay weekly attendance allowances or achievement/attendance bonuses. However, conditions such as attendance may be attached to grant payments or repayable loans.

## **6.6 Emergency Payments**

Emergency payments are excluded from the income threshold eligibility assessment. Funds for all beneficiaries will be allocated to ensure emergency payments can be processed promptly throughout the year. Such emergency payments are designed to address the immediate needs of a student who may find themselves homeless or in severe financial hardship in order that they can continue with their learning. The fund is not a replacement for welfare benefits and must be authorised by College Leadership Team or Head of Safeguarding and Wellbeing.

## **6.7 The Financial Framework**

The maximum discretionary award (excluding childcare) is £3,030 per full time student (pro rata for part time and as per the income bands). This can be increased on the authority of the Student Finance Committee to ensure that students are fully supported. All discretionary awards are subject to resource availability. This £3,030 is not an automatic entitlement but a ceiling for awards – all of which are dependent on affordability.

Funds are given to support the costs of attending College and associated study. It is not an income-based welfare benefit to contribute to overall household income. Any awards may be repayable if the student fails to complete the course, their attendance is at an unacceptable level,

they are in receipt of level 3+ disciplinary or effort is considered to be below a satisfactory level. If the student fails to meet these conditions, they must be aware that they may be asked to repay funds and invoiced accordingly.

Any loans issued to learners from the fund should be repaid in full by 31 July of the current academic year. No loan issued via the fund will be subject to interest.

Support will be granted to students in line with the broad categories in the table listed in Categories of Financial Support (section 7).

Payments to students, if not in kind, will be made by BACs to the student's own bank account. Cash payments cannot be made to any learner who is seeking asylum in the UK. Non-cash support may be given to eligible students in the form of course related books, equipment or a travel pass.

## **7 19+ Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund (LBF)**

### **7.1 Background**

The College has an allocation of funds from the DfE called the Loans Bursary Fund (LBF). This is aimed at helping vulnerable and disadvantaged learners who are funding their learning with a loan, such as those with learning difficulties or disabilities, parents who need help with childcare and ex-military personnel.

The College adheres to DfE guidelines regarding eligibility for and distribution of the fund. The College is not allowed to move funds between Discretionary Learner Support 19+ (DLS) and the Loans Bursary Fund (LBF).

LBF comprises of:

- Discretionary LBF for hardship and 20+ childcare
- Learning support, for example teaching assistants or any reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010.

Students must be eligible for a loan, have had this loan approved by the Student Loan Company, and enrolled on an approved course to receive LBF. The eligibility of students for funding is determined by the DfE funding Rules. All awards are based on need and evidence/assessment of income/benefits will be required to support all claims.

The College will make clear to all learners in receipt of support that it is their responsibility to contact the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) if necessary, as support may affect eligibility for some benefits.

### **7.2 Allocation and Priorities**

The funds are to provide support for learners in receipt of a loan<sup>6</sup> who need financial support to meet the costs associated with learning and attending College.

All awards are subject to funding being available. The College will allocate as its first priority a sufficient percentage of the overall allocation to cover the costs of learning support. The residual will be allocated to the discretionary element. Once the LBF allocation is fully committed, no further awards can be made from the discretionary element unless funds can be vired from the learning support element. Information will be provided to students regarding other forms of financial support as appropriate.

---

<sup>6</sup> Loan throughout this policy refers to 19+ advanced learner loans only and excludes HE loans. This bursary is solely for learners who have had a loan approved by the Student Loan Company, and who have an assessed need.

The fund will not be used for course fees. It cannot be used for any item which is a mandatory element of the course as this will be included in the course fee. Types of support available include:

- Course related costs not included in the fee (e.g. contributions to trips, equipment and uniform)
- Transport
- Professional membership fees and registration fees
- Meals
- Childcare (for learners aged 20 or older on their first day of learning)
- Digital Grant
- UCAS Fees
- Funds for travel to visit a university.

Learning support or any necessary adjustments under the Equality Act must be funded from the LBF. The College will carry out a robust assessment to identify students' learning support needs. Evidence of assessment and individual needs must be retained for audit purposes.

The College will prioritise vulnerable groups such as:

- Parents who need help with childcare who are at risk of not starting or continuing because of childcare costs.
- Learners who are economically or socially disadvantaged and are facing financial difficulty.
- Learners who are disabled, physically or mentally and/or have learning difficulties.

Learners who are financially disadvantaged, who are not eligible for such support from other government sources, are a key group. For example, those mandated to training by DWP would be expected to receive support from DWP funds in order to protect the discretionary pot. From August, all who have been 'mandated' to training (whether on a full- or part-time basis) by Job Centre Plus have their travel and childcare costs met by Jobcentre Plus where required.

The College aims to distribute all available resources to students on a needs basis and will not pay weekly attendance allowances or achievement/attendance bonuses. The fund will not be used to pay learners' fees relating to learning.

The LBF will only be used to pay for childcare for learners aged 20 or older on the first day of learning who are at risk of not starting or continuing learning because of childcare costs. Childcare costs are only eligible if they are from a childminder or childcare provider registered with Ofsted. Informal childcare e.g. by a relative will not be funded. Learners aged under 20 must use the Care to Learn programme to fund their childcare costs. The LBF cannot be used to top up care to learn payments.

Appendix C sets out the College's processes and methodology for allocation and prioritisation for hardship and childcare.

### **7.3 Administration**

The College will claim 5% of its total learner support expenditure as administration expenditure.

Completion of the relevant ILR fields is mandatory and failure to do so will affect future allocations.

LBF is paid to the College based on a profile (50% in August, 25% January and 25% April).

A mid-year funding forecast will be submitted in February, a year-end forecast submitted in June and a final claim made in October to the DfE.

Journey shall be used to process all applications and store appropriate evidence.

## **7.4 Learning Support Funding**

The LBF provides support for all learners funded by a 19+ learning loan who require 'in learning' support such as a learning assistant or any necessary adjustment under the Equality Act. To qualify, learners must have undergone a robust assessment which identified learning needs. Learners in receipt of support will be recorded using rate 2 (£150 monthly) within the learning delivery funding and monitoring fields of the ILR.

Any excess provided must be recorded using the Earnings Adjustment Statement and any excess will be set against the LBF.

Should support exceed £19,000 per annum any top-up may be claimed from DfE.

## **7.5 Discretionary LBF Application**

Students must complete an application form giving personal information, financial circumstances and Bank Details. This can be completed prior to enrolment. However, no award will be made until the student has enrolled, eligibility checked and evidence of income/benefits to support their application provided.

Students should apply for support from the fund as soon as possible and usually in advance of the start of teaching. Awards will be made against the criteria and once all funds are committed no further applications can be considered.

Incomplete applications and applications with no evidence of income attached cannot be processed. Students will be followed up and encouraged to complete the application.

## **7.6 Eligibility for LBF**

The household income thresholds for support are as follows:

- Band 1 Up to £30,458 and/or in receipt of income-based benefits
- Band 2 £30,459 - £37,227
- Band 3 £37,228 - £45,121

These thresholds are updated annually in accordance with any increase/decrease in the national living wage.

Students assessed as being in Band 1 will be eligible to claim up to 100% of the maximum award subject to resource availability and need. Band 2 – 60%, Band 3 – 30%

Examples of acceptable evidence to support eligibility include:

- P60 or Payslips showing Employment.
- All pages of an up-to-date letter showing a benefit or income
- The 3 most recent Universal Credit Award Statements
- All pages of the current Tax Credits Award

Benefits designed to help with the extra costs caused by a disability will not be included in any assessment of income. These include:

- Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- Access to Work
- Attendance Allowance

- Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

Students 19+ living independently of parents will be treated as an independent adults and evidence of parental income will not be required.

Where there is evidence of income-based benefits then the student will automatically be allocated to Band 1. These include Working Tax Credit and Housing Benefit.

The Eligibility criteria for FEM shall be used to automatically allocate students aged 19+ into Band 1 (note 19+ students are not eligible for FEM).

Where the household has more than two dependants, the application (should it be approved as band 2 or 3) will be moved to the next band i.e. a band 3 assessment would be moved to band 2 and a band 2 to band 1 with band 1 being the highest level of support.

Subject to funding being available, students with a household income in excess of £45,121 may, in exceptional circumstances, be eligible for support subject to the recommendation of their Curriculum Manager and approved by the Director of Learner Services.

All awards made are subject to satisfactory attendance<sup>7</sup>, progress, and behaviour<sup>8</sup>. Level of attendance and conduct are checked before any payment (or follow on payment) is made and allocation of funds may be withheld should satisfactory levels not be achieved. On the recommendation of a Personal Coach/ CM may approve the payment of an award where attendance is below the 90% minimum standard i.e. where financial support would aid attendance and/or where there are extenuating circumstances. These standards are clear and communicated to all students.

All awards are based on financial need and evidence/assessment of income/benefits will be required to support all claims. The College will retain evidence that the student is eligible for a bursary and has agreed to the terms and conditions.

Learners who are eligible for support are not automatically entitled to the maximum allocation.

Students may have received an award in previous years; this is no guarantee of future awards. Students must make an application each academic year.

## 7.7 Emergency Payments

Emergency payments are excluded from the income threshold eligibility assessment. Funds for all beneficiaries will be allocated to ensure emergency payments can be processed promptly throughout the year. Such emergency payments are designed to address the immediate needs of a student who may find themselves homeless or in severe financial hardship in order that they can continue with their learning. The fund is not a replacement for welfare benefits and must be authorised by College Leadership Team or Head of Safeguarding and Wellbeing.

## 7.8 The Financial Framework

The maximum discretionary award (excluding childcare) is £3,030 per full time student (pro rata for part time and as per the income bands). This can be increased on the authority of the Student Finance Committee in exceptional circumstances to ensure that students are fully supported. All discretionary awards are subject to resource availability. This £3,030 is not an automatic entitlement but a ceiling for awards – all of which are dependent on affordability.

<sup>7</sup> The College target is 100%. Students attending less than 90% may have payments withheld unless their Senior Tutor authorises payment.

<sup>8</sup> Students with a Level 3+ disciplinary sanction may have payments withheld unless their Senior Tutor authorises payment.

Funds are given to support the costs of attending College and associated study. It is not an income-based welfare benefit to contribute to overall household income. Any awards may be repayable if the student fails to complete the course, their attendance is at an unacceptable level, they are in receipt of level 2+ disciplinary or effort is considered to be below a satisfactory level. If the student fails to meet these conditions, they must be aware that they may be asked to repay funds and will be invoiced accordingly.

Any loans issued to learners from the fund should be repaid in full by 31 July of the current academic year. No loan issued via the fund will be subject to interest.

Support will be granted to students in line with the broad categories in the table listed in Categories of Financial Support.

Payments to students, if not in kind, will be made by BACs to the student's own bank account. Cash payments cannot be made to any learner who is seeking asylum in the UK. Non-cash support may be given to eligible students in the form of course related books, equipment or a travel pass.

## 8 Categories of Financial Support

Support will be granted to students in line with the broad categories in the table below:

<b>Childcare</b>	<p>20+ childcare provides targeted childcare support for learners who are at risk of not starting learning or not continuing learning as a result of difficulty getting childcare.</p> <p>Students under 20 years old on the date their learning programme begins may be eligible for the 'Care to Learn' scheme. Students should apply for the 'Care to Learn' scheme for childcare and associated transport. Further details can be obtained from <a href="http://www.direct.gov.uk/caretolearn">www.direct.gov.uk/caretolearn</a>. Discretionary awards cannot be made for 16-19 childcare.</p> <p>Students older than 20 years may be given an award towards childcare based on the number of course hours attended and essential private study. Retainers are paid during holidays under our discretion.</p> <p>Funding is only available for Ofsted registered childcare. Funding cannot be used to contribute to the overall costs of running a crèche.</p> <p>Students entitled to any Government Funded Childcare hours should utilize these before any College funding is used. The college will only fund where there are remaining fees to be paid.</p> <p>The College will not enter into a contract with a nursery. The student is responsible for the payment to the nursery and must abide by the terms and conditions of that provider. However, the bursary fund will make payment direct to a nursery on behalf of an eligible student.</p>
<b>Course related costs</b>	<p>Course related costs include equipment, uniform and kit. Awards are based on the requirements of the course as defined by the Curriculum Director and agreed with the Head of Student Services.</p> <p>If learner support funds are used by the College to purchase equipment for individuals, then this remains the property of the College and should be reused unless wear and tear, health and safety, and/or hygiene deem this inappropriate.</p> <p>Students should not incur cost for items without which they could not complete their course (refer to Policy on Charging Students).</p>



	For 19+ students course costs can be paid directly to the student before purchase.
<b>Meals</b>	<p>Meals at College may be provided via a cashless retail scheme redeemable at College outlets (excludes non-food items). Eligible students will be entitled to an allocation of up to £5.00 per day (banded). Pro rata for part-time.</p> <p>Students in receipt of free FE meals (FEM) are entitled to £2.61 per day with a top up of £2.39. The £2.39 is based on the relevant cost of students affording a meal deal within the college outlets. Note the agency have removed the ring-fence between the 16 to 19 discretionary bursary and free FE meals.</p> <p>All full-time students will receive £25.00 (banded) per week loaded on their ID card to cover meals.</p> <p>Where FEM students are off-site as part of their study programme (such as at work placement) the College may provide a supermarket voucher, equivalent to £5.00 per day (banded). For non-FEM students the college has the discretion to offer the same, but this must be agreed by 2 members of the Student Finance Committee.</p>
<b>Emergency Payments</b>	<p>Emergency payments are excluded from the income threshold eligibility assessment. Funds for all beneficiaries will be allocated to ensure emergency payments can be processed promptly throughout the year. Such emergency payments are designed to address the immediate needs of a student who may find themselves homeless or in severe financial hardship in order that they can continue with their learning. The fund is not a replacement for welfare benefits and must be authorised by College Leadership Team or Head of Safeguarding.</p> <p>These are considered to be one off awards and are in excess of the maximum overall allowance. Usually, an emergency payment will not exceed £100. Ongoing support will be discussed on an individual basis involving any external agencies as required.</p>
<b>Student Visits</b>	<p>Students may apply for support towards the costs of a student visit(s) up to a maximum of £500 per annum. The fund cannot support the costs of foreign/overseas field trips where the content can be found within England at a much cheaper cost and/or to support the costs of fields trips that are not an essential part of a student's study programme goals/qualification/s or course objectives. Curriculum Directors can make a case for their student visit to the student finance committee who will either approve or not.</p> <p>The fund can also not support trips which are classed as rewards and not an essential part of a student's study programme goals/qualification/s or course objectives.</p>
<b>DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service)</b>	<p>Students may apply for funding to cover other costs such as Disclosure and Barring Service checks etc. as appropriate. Awards shall be made within the overall funding limit.</p> <p>Fully funded learners who require a DBS check to take part in learning must be funded by the College.</p>

<b>Grants and Loans</b>	Digital provision to help students access IT equipment to support their learning will be in form of a loaned device
<b>Tuition Fees and Registration Fees</b>	The College is unable to use its allocation to support the costs of tuition fees but may use the fund to support the College registration fees, costs of professional body memberships and UCAS fees (to support progression).
<b>Transport</b>	<p>All students can access the Express Coach Service during term time.</p> <p>For any student who is unable to use the College service due to their geographical location, they may apply for support with transport costs. This is determined using <a href="http://www.router.halesowen.ac.uk">www.router.halesowen.ac.uk</a> to calculate when a student lives more than 30 minutes walk from a College stop. There may also be extenuating circumstances such as health as to why a student cannot use the Coach Service; this will be considered on an individual basis when reviewing their funding for travel but will need agreeing by a Curriculum Director. The maximum award should be equivalent to an annual bus pass (approximately £130 per term). This may be funded in kind using the Network West Midlands app.</p> <p>Petrol costs will not normally be paid in accordance with the College's Green Travel plan. Reasonable commuter walking distances to a bus stop will be considered when deeming if an express route is unsuitable (ref Institute of Highways and Transportation Guidance).</p> <p>The fund may support the costs of attending UCAS interviews etc. linked with progression but the maximum award is £200 per year.</p> <p>The fund may support the costs of attending work placements etc.</p> <p>The College will adhere to the transport plan of the Local Authority and not routinely pay for transport which they have a statutory responsibility to provide.</p> <p>Transport costs can be covered but block contributions are not allowed nor is funding of transport costs that are covered in the Local Authority's statutory duty.</p>
<b>Work Placement</b>	<p>Students undertaking an extended work placement may seek support for the increased costs of travel and/or equipment and clothing. The maximum award is £200 per year.</p> <p>The fund will support the cost of public transport to and from work placement. This will usually be in the form of pre-purchased day savers rather than cash payments.</p> <p>Please see the meals section regarding meals.</p>

## 9 Administrative Procedures

The College has procedures that:

- record the details of all applications.
- account for the funds distributed to students.
- identify unspent funds at the year end.
- ensure the correct information is included in the ILR.



- retain evidence for audit purposes.

All students are provided with information about alternative forms of financial support on request. It is clear to students which bursary they are being supported from.

## **10 Student Finance Committee**

The management of the fund is via the Student Finance Committee. All meetings are minuted and minutes reported to the College Leadership Team. The Committee meet at least every half term and comprise:

- Head of Student Services
- Chief Finance Officer and Vice Principal (Chair)
- Assistant Principal – Safeguarding & Students
- Head of Inclusion
- Head of Pastoral
- A curriculum representative

Student and parental input is established by focus groups. The College observes its commitment to Green Travel, its Fitness to Travel Policy and the transport plan of the Local Authority in terms of supporting costs of travel.

The terms of reference of the Student Finance Committee are:

- To oversee the allocation of the various strands of 16-18 bursary, 19+ learning loans (hardship and childcare) in accordance with the policy approved by the Corporation.
- To monitor equal opportunity trends and liaise with senior managers to ensure remedial action is taken as necessary.
- Seek input from students and parents.
- To ensure that the fund(s) are advertised to students.
- To ensure that the policy which reflects the DfE rules is applied.
- To consider operational matters which require Committee input.
- To contribute to the annual policy review.
- Ensure that appeals are referred to and complaints dealt with in accordance with college procedures via the Principal's office.
- To ensure that eligibility and levels of award are determined by the policy.
- To oversee the management and delivery meals (FEM) for students entitled to this mode of support.

## **11 Equality and Diversity**

The College is compliant with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and supports the principles of equality and diversity in the disbursement of the fund. Regular reports monitor the distribution of the fund across various student cohort groups including ethnicity, gender, disability and level of programme. The impact of the fund on students' attendance, retention and achievement especially in relation to minority groups is reported via the Student Finance Committee. The College will not discriminate against students on the basis of their protected characteristics. This policy will be impact assessed by the Head of Inclusion.

## **12 Audit**

Bursary funds are subject to audit as part of the usual assurance arrangements. Evidence provided to support applications must be retained for audit purposes for a period of six years plus the current year.

The College will maintain accurate and up to date records that evidence which students receive support; confirm student eligibility for funding and demonstrate appropriate use of funds.

### **13 Confidentiality and Data Protection**

Students may have privacy or confidentiality concerns because of fear of stigma. The College has an approved data protection policy which adheres to all data principles and is compliant with GDPR.

Students can speak to Student Services confidentially about bursary matters and the College will inform the student how their information will be used and shared to avoid embarrassment.

The requirements of GDPR must be adhered to for all data collection, processing and storage.

### **14 Fraud Declaration**

The Fund is public money and fraudulent claims are serious. A student's failure to declare income that is subsequently discovered will mean withdrawal of commitment of future funds and billing for the return of funds already provided. In such circumstances the student may be subject to disciplinary action.

The College is responsible for investigating and reporting any incidences of fraud in accordance with financial regulations and the anti-fraud suite of policies.

The College will make students and their families aware that the submission of false information regarding income/benefits may be referred to the Department for Education or the police as necessary.

If the College finds evidence that misleading or fraudulent information has been knowingly submitted by a student or parent, resulting in the student receiving a bursary they were not entitled to, the College will attempt to recover the overpayment from the student. Significant fraud must be reported to the DfE. The DfE defines significant fraud as over £1,200; the particulars are novel, unusual, systematic or complex, or there is likely to be great public interest.

### **15 Invoicing Students – Return of Funds or Items**

Any awards may be repayable if the student fails to complete the course, their attendance is at an unacceptable level or effort is considered to be below a satisfactory level. If the student fails to meet these conditions, they must be aware that they may be asked to repay funds and will be invoiced accordingly.

When deciding to invoice students the College via the Student Finance Committee should balance the need to protect public funds with the ability of students to repay the funds given their financial hardship which made them eligible for the funds. Fraudulent claims should always be invoiced.

An alternative to invoicing the student may be the return of the equipment, uniform etc. unless wear and tear, health and safety, and/or hygiene deem this inappropriate.

### **16 Underspends**

In accordance with agency guidelines any underspent bursary funds will be ring fenced for student support and carried forward (for one year only) to the new academic year. These funds must be used first before using the new academic years allocation.

In the case of the LBF the DfE will use the mid-year funding claim/forecast to determine remaining payments and may adjust future payments down. There is no automatic payment for delivery above our allocation. All loan bursary funding not spent must be paid back and this will be identified in the reconciliation statement. Only delivery below 90% is recovered e.g. delivery of 85% will result in 5% being recovered. The DfE will seek recoveries in December.

## **17 Policy Review**

This policy is subject to annual review and as required by DfE updates.

## **18 Complaints**

Appeals against decisions relating to learner support should be directed in the first instance to the Assistant Principal – Students and Safeguarding. The appeal will be considered, and a response issued within 14 days. Complaints should be directed to the Principal in accordance with the complaints policy of Halesowen College which can be found on the website.

## 19 Appendix A - 16-19 Bursary Allocation Summary Staff Guide

This is based on a student assessed into Band 1. Band 2 and 3 students will be eligible for 60% and 30% of these amounts respectively. Vulnerable students are included in this.

<b>Childcare</b>	Care to Learn only (max <b>£180 per child per week</b> )
<b>Course Related Costs (Equipment/Uniform etc)</b>	Equipment/Uniform confirmed by the Curriculum Director    Maximum <b>£500</b>
<b>Meals</b>	Maximum approximately <b>£900</b> (based on 36 weeks)
<b>Digital Support</b>	Max <b>£250</b> digital provision to help students access IT equipment to support their learning will be in form of a loaned device
<b>Transport</b>	Approx. £160 per term max ( <b>£480</b> ) if an express coach is not suitable – plus work placement (max <b>£200</b> ) and interview costs (max <b>£200</b> ).
<b>Student Visits</b>	Maximum <b>£500</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>Maximum £3,030</b>
<b>+</b>	Emergency payment £100
<b>+</b>	Care to Learn (max <b>£180 per child per week</b> )

The figures show maximum awards for a full-time student studying a minimum of 450 hours per academic year. For part time students the awards would be pro rata based on the number of course hours.

## 20 Appendix B - 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Staff Guide

This is based on a student assessed into Band 1. Band 2 and 3 students will be eligible for 60% and 30% of these amounts respectively.

<b>DLS Childcare</b>	20+ students only Up to £120 per week
<b>Total</b>	Maximum <b>£4000 per household</b>
<b>Course Related Costs (Equipment/Uniform etc)</b>	Maximum <b>£500</b> Claims will be made for any Equipment/Uniform needed. Under £100, we require a receipt.
<b>Digital Support</b>	Digital provision to help students access IT equipment to support their learning will be in form of a loaned device
<b>Meals</b>	Maximum <b>£900</b> (based on 36 weeks)
<b>Transport</b>	Approx. £160 per term max ( <b>£480</b> ) if an express coach is not suitable – plus work placement (max <b>£200</b> ) and interview costs (max <b>£200</b> ).
<b>DBS</b>	Cost of check for co-funded learners only
<b>Student Visits</b>	<b>Maximum £500</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>Maximum £3,030</b> (excluding childcare)
<b>+</b>	Emergency payment £100

The figures show maximum awards for a full time student studying a minimum of 450 hours per academic year. For part time students the awards would be pro rata based on the number of course hours.

## 21 Appendix C - Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Staff Guide

This is based on a student assessed into Band 1. Band 2 and 3 students will be eligible for 60% and 30% of these amounts respectively.

<b>LBF Childcare</b>	20+ students only Up to £120 per week
<b>Total</b>	<b>£4,000 per household</b>
<b>Course Related Costs (Equipment/Uniform etc)</b>	Maximum <b>£500</b> Claims will be made for any Equipment/Uniform needed. Under £100, we require a receipt.
<b>Digital Support</b>	Max <b>£250</b> digital provision to help students access IT equipment to support their learning will be in form of a loaned device
<b>Meals</b>	Maximum <b>£900</b> (based on 36 weeks)
<b>Transport</b>	Approx. £160 per term max ( <b>£480</b> ) if an express coach is not suitable – plus work placement (max <b>£200</b> ) and interview costs (max <b>£200</b> ).
<b>Student Visits</b>	<b>Maximum £500</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>Maximum £3,030</b> (excluding childcare)
<b>+</b>	Emergency payment £100

The figures show maximum awards for a full time student studying a minimum of 450 hours per academic year. For part time students the awards would be pro rata based on the number of course hours.