

Further Education Learner Support Fund Policy 2024-2025

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Job role of author: Head of Student Services

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Approved by: Policy and Procedure Committee

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1. Introduction and Policy Statement

- 1.1 The college promotes equality, diversity, inclusion and social mobility and uses its learner support funds to remove financial barriers to participation in learning and continuation of education. We believe in inclusivity and recognise the key role education has in helping to transform society for the benefit of individuals and communities.
- 1.2 The College is committed to providing a fair and transparent policy for the distribution of publicly funded bursaries. The policy is designed to be accessible and easily understood by learners, potential learners, staff and parents.
- 1.3 The college receives allocations of funding from the Department of Education annually to provide financial support for Further Education learners.
- 1.4 In establishing the Learner Support Fund policy, the College has taken account of Department for Education policy and guidelines.
- 1.5 The funds have been developed to help learners overcome specific barriers to participation in education and all funding is subject to certain conditions including maintaining satisfactory levels of attendance, progress and behaviour.
- 1.6 This Policy sets out the arrangements for how the College administer and manage the Learner Support Fund (LSF) in 2024/25. It aims to ensure that arrangements of LSF meet the needs of students in accordance with the eligibility criteria.
- 1.7 The Student Services team will provide advice and information on the LSF and its processes to enable students to fulfil their responsibility regarding the application processes.
- 1.8 Student Services will take the required steps to ensure that management and systems of financial control are in place, funds are used for the purposes for which it is intended and it complies with College and DfE guidelines.
- 1.9 The guidance within this policy is set at the time of writing but the College reserves the right to adjust the criteria in year according to the funds available and in accordance with any changes in government policy and guidelines.
- 1.10 All funds, excluding the 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary Fund, are limited, therefore applications will only be approved if sufficient funds remain available.

1.11 The College reserves the right to apply discretion to assessments and awards to support students to overcome barriers to learning opportunities.

2. Types of Funding

2.1 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary

Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be at Least 16 and under 19 on 31 August • Student is in care of or recently left local authority care • Student receives Income Support or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves. • Student is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance in their name and either Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit. • Student receives Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in their name and either ESA or Universal credit. • Unaccompanied asylum seekers are supported as looked after children <p>The amount the student receives depends on the costs the student may have for their course. This can include travel, equipment, free meals and trips.</p>
Offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can receive up to £1,200 per year for support in relation to course related costs for Students studying 30 weeks or more, a pro rata amount is paid to students studying less than 30 weeks. • Students may receive payments to student's bank, a weekly payment of £40. • Students receiving the 16 – 19 Vulnerable Bursary can receive additional discretionary funds if they meet all the criteria.
Required Evidence	<p>Students must submit eligible evidence to support their circumstances -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligible benefits (see Eligibility) you must provide relevant evidence through an award letter and bank statement. • Students in Care or a Care Leaver, must provide written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority that provides/ed their care. The evidence could be a letter or an email but must be clearly from the local authority.

2.2 Free College Meals (FCM)

Eligibility	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2024 • Students' 19 plus are only eligible if they are continuing a study programme, they began aged 16 to 18 (19plus continues) or if they have an Education Health Care Plan. <p>Students or parents must be in receipt of the following benefits -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • income Support • income-based Jobseekers Allowance • income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) • support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 • the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit • Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)) • Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit • Universal Credit (UC) with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 for each year (after tax and not including any benefits they get)
Offer	Subsidised College meals £4.50 per day for timetabled lessons.
Required Evidence	Students must apply for Free School Meals through the Paymystudent system attaching relevant, evidence that is dated within the last 3 months.

2.3 The 16-19 Bursary Fund (or up to 25 year old with an EHCP)

Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2024 unless <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ aged 19 or over and continuing a study programme they began aged 16 – 18 ○ Have an Education Health Care plan • Be studying a full-time course and/or substantial part-time course (5 hours per week and above including any mandatory placements). • Be in receipt of income assessed state benefits/ tax credits (including Universal Credits) or have an annual gross individual income of below £35,000.
Offer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free College Bus Pass for students living more than 1 mile from the College. • Equipment, uniform or kit • Educational visits • UCAS Support • Subsidised meals £4.50 per for days timetabled in college • Exceptional Discretionary Hardship Fund

Required Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of household income in the form of the most recent benefit award letters in parent/carers name, last/most recent 3 months • last, most recent 3 months wage slips for parents/carers, • P60, • most recent self-assessment return for self-employed parents, • letter headed annual account summary from company accountant for self-employed parents. <p>Alongside the above evidence students/parents/guardians/carers additional evidence maybe requested, such as -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three months bank statements (from the last 3 months at the point of application). This statement should include all household income. • Note - households where there are more than one parent/guardian/career/partner, both parties must provide evidence to show evidence of full household income.
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2.5 19+ Bursary Fund

Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A “home learner” who meets the residency requirements. • Studying on an approved Government Funded AEB funded course • Studying a full-time course and/or substantial part-time course (5 hours per week and above including any mandatory placements). • In receipt of income assessed state benefits/ tax credits (including Universal Credits) or have an annual gross individual income of below £25,000.
Offer	<p>Hardship funding</p> <p>Students can apply for hardship support with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course related costs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Course trips ○ Books and equipment ○ Exceptional discretionary hardship – for fees ○ Transport costs ○ Examination fees ○ Accreditation fees, professional membership fees and any fees or changes due to external bodies ○ Your registration fees <p>Child Care for students aged 20 or over</p> <p>See section 4</p>
Required Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of income in the form of most recent benefit award letters,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • last, most recent 3 months bank statement confirming benefit or wages, • last, most recent 3 months wage slips, • P60, • most recent self-assessment return for self-employed applicants, • letter headed annual account summary from company accountant for self-employed applicants • Note – assessment is on household income and evidence for the above will need to be provided for all primary earning i.e partner <p>For Childcare additional evidence must be provided</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that the childcare provider is Ofsted registered • Birth Certificate of child/children • Fees of provider as of the start date of the course (if fees change within the period of study, students must update the finance team. Fees must be on letterheaded paper. • Signed Provider Agreement form – students will receive this once the application has been assessed.
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2.6 Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund

Eligibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A “home learner” who meets the residency requirements • In receipt of an Advanced Learner Loan • Studying on an approved Government funded programme. • Studying a full-time course and/or substantial part-time course (5 hours per week and above including any mandatory placements). • In receipt of income assessed state benefits/ tax credits (including Universal Credits) or have an annual gross individual income of below £25,000.
Offer	<p>Hardship Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel - Free College Bus Pass fo students who lives more than 1 miles from the College • Travel Grant • Equipment -100% funded up to £300 for full time students only • Educational visits • Exceptional Discretionary Hardship Fund <p>20+ childcare funding</p> <p>see section 4.</p>
Required Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most recent benefit award letter or • 3 months wage slip or P60 or • Most recent self-assessment return for self-employed applicants or letter headed annual account summary from company accountant for self-employed applicants

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 months bank statement confirming benefit or wages (within the last 3 months) • Note – assessment is on household income and evidence for the above will need to be provided for all primary earning i.e partner <p>For Childcare additional evidence must be provided</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that the childcare provider is Ofsted registered • Birth Certificate of child/children • Fees of provider as of the start date of the course (if fees change within the period of study, students must update the finance team. Fees must be on letterheaded paper. • Signed Provider Agreement form – students will receive this once the application has been assessed.
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3. Exam and Tuition Fees – Discretionary

3.1 In exceptional circumstances 19+ learners can apply for help with tuition fees and exams fees. Learners can only apply for tuition fees support if they are:

- applying for a Level 1 or 2 (funded) course
- Not in receipt of a means tested benefit and earning less than £25,000 per year
- If not in employment, living in a household where income is below £25,000 per year gross
- Dependent on a spouse/partner earning less than £25,000 per year gross

3.2 Students eligible for an Advanced Learning Loan cannot receive help towards tuition costs.

3.3 Students who have successfully applied to receive discretionary funding for course fees cannot additionally apply for funding for travel and childcare.

4. Childcare

4.1 Students aged 20+ can apply for support with childcare payments. the childcare provider must be Ofsted registered. Any student receiving an Advanced Learner Loan must have their loan approved before funding is released.

4.2 All evidence must be supplied before an application will be assessed. The Childcare Provider Agreement must be signed before an award will be confirmed or payments realised.

4.3 Childcare funding is capped at £180 /week (first child), £300 per learner (for those with more than one child). Anything over this amount, is the sole responsibility of the student.

4.4 Students who receive free Government Childcare Funding, (including vouchers), must use this funding first to cover their timetabled hours. For example, if a student is studying a 15 hour course and receives 15 hours free, then no funding will be awarded.

4.4 Childcare is paid one month in arrears directly to the student.

Students may be required to provide evidence from the childcare provider of payments.

4.5 The fund can only cover the costs for time spent in college lectures, and not private study time. The fund does not cover retainers or holiday periods.

4.6 The contract for fees is between the student and their childcare provider. Ultimate responsibility for fees is the students.

4.6 Continued support is subject to satisfactory conduct, progress and attendance, at least 90% per term, for all subjects. All learner attendance is monitored for continued receipt of the bursary. If funding is withdrawn, the student is liable to cover their childcare costs.

5. Equipment, Educational Visits, Books and DBS

5.1 Equipment (including core textbooks), kit or uniforms will be purchased on the student's behalf by the College curriculum team, if it is beneficial to their course. Any equipment that is purchased by the fund for the students (uniform etc.) will be returned to the College at the end of the academic year.

5.2 Approved educational visits can be funded at the discretion of the Head of Student Services.

5.3 Where a DBS is mandatory for studying a course, students can apply for support.

6. Travel

6.1 16-18 students living more than 1 mile away from college or placement may receive a bus or train pass. Any student not living on a bus or train route that is covered by the College will be considered for a travel grant. In these circumstances, a contribution towards the cost of travel may be made.

6.2 Travel passes will only be replaced once within the academic year. Students who lose their travel pass will be required to pay a £10.00 replacement fee. Students who lose a second travel pass following a replacement, will be responsible for funding travel costs from that point forward.

6.3 19+ students living more than 1 mile from the College, studying for more than 5 hours per week, who meet the funding criteria, can apply for a travel pass or grant.

6.4 Students whose attendance drops below 90% may have their bus pass or travel grant revoked.

6.5 Students who are attending a work placement as part of their study programme can apply for travel support. Learners and lecturers are encouraged where practicable to arrange a placement that is convenient for the learner to attend.

7. Hardship Awards

7.1 Hardship awards are available to help support all students who experience unexpected

financial difficulties or a change of circumstances during their programme of study. All awards are assessed on an individual basis.

7.2 Students make a hardship request via speaking with a member of the Student Services team. Each case will be considered on an individual basis and must be approved by the Head of Student Services.

7.3 All support for eligible students who are asylum seekers will be provided in kind. No cash payments will be supplied. Instead, students will receive support through course-related books, equipment or a travel pass for example. Asylum seekers can apply for discretionary funding to cover the cost of their course fees.

8. Funding Approval

8.1 Application forms will only be assessed when the form has been completed fully and submitted with all the required evidence.

8.2 All funding is subject to maintaining satisfactory levels of behaviour, attendance above 90% and positive progress and maybe withdrawn if a students' conduct falls below the expected standards set by the College

8.3 Applicants will normally be notified within 15 working days on the outcome of their application.

9. Appeals and Complaints

9.1 A learner who is refused support under this policy may be able to ask for a review of the outcome decision of their application. Reviews must be submitted in writing. The learner must set out the grounds for review providing appropriate documentary supporting evidence. The review will be considered, by a member of the College's management team and a written outcome provided within 15 working days.

9.2 Complaints should be made through the college complaints process.

Hugh Baird College

Balliol Road
Bootle
Liverpool
L20 7EW

Telephone

0151 353 4444

Email enquiries@hughbaird.ac.uk

www.hughbaird.ac.uk