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FE Student Bursary Policy	LS006	6	
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# FE STUDENT BURSARY POLICY

## Policy Statement

Activate Learning empowers students to participate in education and to complete their course successfully. We recognise that money issues can be a significant barrier to participation and attendance, particularly for the most vulnerable students.

We use the group's annual allocation of Bursary Funds to administer the following Activate Learning Bursary Schemes which provide financial support to students most in need:

- Travel Bursary
- Course Costs
- Bursary for Vulnerable Groups
- Meal Credits
- Childcare Bursary
- Accommodation Bursary

## Purpose

To provide clarity for staff and students about how Activate Learning uses its allocation of Bursary funds during the 2024/25 academic year and to signpost to the relevant procedures. We aim to provide bursary support for learners experiencing the greatest financial hardship where a learner can evidence a need for support.

## Scope

This policy applies to all Further Education (FE) students, who have been assessed as a 'home' student for fees purposes, aged 16 or above on the 31 August 2024 and enrolled on a funded further education course at Activate Learning or its subcontracted provision. This excludes apprenticeship students and students aged 14 and 15.

The bursary fund is not intended to provide learning support – services that you give to students, for example, counselling or mentoring – or to support extra-curricular or non-compulsory activities that are not essential to the students' study programme or to provide living costs support.

## Definitions and Acronyms

<b>ASF</b>	Adult Skills Fund (has replaced the ESFA funded adult education budget)
<b>AAT</b>	Association of Accounting Technicians
<b>Bursary</b>	A bursary is money that we can use to award to a student to enable them to study at college.
<b>Completed applications</b>	Applications which include all the required evidence for processing and are signed.

<b>DWP</b>	Department for Work and Pensions – Government department responsible for welfare, pensions, and child maintenance
<b>EHCP</b>	Education, Health, and Care Plan
<b>EMA</b>	Education Maintenance Allowance – a weekly award paid to students living in Wales and Scotland who meet the eligibility criteria
<b>ESFA</b>	Education and Skills Funding Agency – Government Department that provides bursary funds
<b>ESOL</b>	English for Speakers of Other Languages
<b>FE</b>	Further Education – education for students aged 16 and above below degree level.
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education – degree level courses
<b>HMRC</b>	His Majesty's Revenue and Customs – the tax authority for the UK
<b>Home Status</b>	'Home' status means the student has met the required residency criteria for educational funding. For more Information on fee status please follow this link <a href="#">UKCISA - international student advice and guidance - England: FE fee status</a>
<b>Net Household Income</b>	Household income after taxes and National Insurance contributions have been deducted
<b>SEN</b>	Special Education Needs

## Commitment Statement

### Activate Learning will:

1. Review and update the Activate Learning bursary schemes each year once our annual allocation is known. This review covers eligibility criteria, bursary procedures and application forms.
2. Follow Government guidance on how the funds are awarded, ensuring that they are used in the most effective way possible to support the maximum number of eligible students
3. Carry out a financial assessment for each student to establish their household income and make decisions on whether there is an actual financial need and any additional course participation costs
4. Publish clear and accurate information about the bursary schemes and actively promote these to new and continuing students across multiple platforms and throughout all stages of the learner journey:
  - Throughout the admissions process
  - Via our websites
  - Social Media
  - Prospectus
  - Leaflets
  - Open event advice sessions
  - Targeted communications via email, phone, SMS
5. Promote Government run financial support schemes, such as Care to Learn
6. Provide a user-friendly application process and form
7. Treat all bursary applications as confidential and ensure that all records are stored securely in line with the [Privacy and Data Protection Policy](#)

8. Process applications fairly on a first come first served basis and aim to confirm the outcome of any application within four weeks of a completed application being received
9. Keep a record of participation costs for each course
10. Take individual circumstances and financial needs to participate in their course into consideration when making decisions, including the number of children living in the household
11. Signpost students to the Student Support Team if they cannot access evidence of their financial need, or if they have extenuating circumstances and need a supporting statement for their application
12. Award bursary funds from the date the student received confirmation of their award
13. Send clear and accurate communications including the conditions of each scheme. All communications will be sent via email. Parents/Primary emergency contacts of students aged 17 and under on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024 will be sent an email notifying them when the student has been sent a bursary communication. If students do not wish emails to be sent to parents/emergency contacts, please write to the Group Designated Safeguarding lead to let them know
14. Provide support in kind where possible and by the most cost-effective means
15. Only make BACS transfer payments into student's bank accounts in the following circumstances:
  - Refunding students upon submitting receipts for membership to professional bodies, UCAS fees, university open events and interview trips
  - Buying essential protective clothing that cannot be purchased without it being fitted for safety reasons. Bursary funds do not support laptops or other IT equipment, counselling or counselling supervision or costs relating to extra-curricular activities
  - Travel if it is the most cost-effective method
  - Students aged 19 or over who are ASF funded if it is the most cost-effective method of providing bursary support
  - BACS payments will NOT be made to students aged 16-19 who are asylum seekers unless they are an unaccompanied asylum seeker in the local authority's care
16. Provide travel bursary support to students who are already in receipt of a travel bursary and relocate during the academic year. This support will only be provided if funds are still available, and students have not already received the maximum bursary award. We will only support one change of journey due to relocation in an academic year
17. In exceptional circumstances make awards for students whose course is not eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan towards their course fees. These are considered on an individual basis and will be at a value of 50% of the total fees initially but could be more depending on the students' financial need
18. Award bursary funds to as many eligible students as possible, however funds are limited and cannot be guaranteed
19. Process fully complete bursary applications received by 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024 within our four-week standard period, if fully complete bursary applications are received by 12<sup>th</sup> August 2024 the bursary support will be in place for 6<sup>th</sup> September 2024
20. Set funds aside for eligible online students that need a travel bursary to attend exams if they have applied by 29<sup>th</sup> November 2024

21. Close bursary applications by 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024 or sooner if most funds have been allocated. We close the fund to reconcile against our allocated budget and recycle any unused funds. Fully completed applications received after 27<sup>th</sup> September 2024 will be added to a waiting list. If additional funds are identified, we will reopen for applications on the waiting list and process in the order in which they were received. Bursary awards for students on a waiting list are awarded from the date the fund reopens and not back dated
22. Prioritise awarding travel bursaries when discretionary funds are limited
23. Not make awards more than £3,500 for Travel and Course Costs bursaries combined, and travel bursary applications will be prioritised over course costs. Further awards may be made over and above £3,500 if funds are remaining in the second and third terms
24. Award funds for course costs detailed on the participation record when approving the bursary application, pay the funds as the cost is incurred. Return any unspent course costs funds to the main bursary fund if the course cost has not been needed by end of January 2025
25. Provide an opportunity for students to appeal a decision within seven days of receipt of the application decision. Once the appeal has been considered by the panel of senior managers and a decision has been communicated, there is no further right of appeal
26. Provide an opportunity for applicants to feedback on our service. Students are also signposted to our Comments, Suggestions and Complaints Policy if they are dissatisfied with our service
27. Award students studying in our Online Faculty who need to travel to a campus to sit exams 10% of their travel costs up to a maximum of £300. A higher award will be considered if there are extenuating circumstances

## General Eligibility

Students must be enrolled on a funded further education course and:

1. Have the right to study
2. Be fee assessed as a home student for the purposes of further education funding. This is the same as it is for enrolment fee eligibility
3. Adhere to the residency criteria below:
  - Residents of Wales – students who live in Wales and travel to study at an English institution should approach their home local authority to make an application for Welsh Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Students may also apply to their English institution for help from the 16-19 bursary fund discretionary bursary but are not eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups
  - Residents of Scotland – students who live in Scotland and travel to study at an English institution should approach their home authority in Scotland to make an application for Scottish EMA. These students are not eligible to apply for support from the 16-19 bursary fund
4. **For the 16-18 bursary**, students must be:
  - aged 16-18 on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024
  - or aged 19 and continuing with the same course they began when aged 16-18
  - or aged 19-25 with an EHCP

with a net household income of £30,000 or less for a single child household plus £1700 for each additional dependent child aged 18 and under living at the same address. This excludes asylum seekers who do not have to evidence household income

5. Students who meet the specific eligibility criteria to receive a bursary for young people defined in vulnerable groups will need to evidence that they are either in Care, a Care Leaver or receive the qualifying Benefits in their own right
6. **For the 19+ Bursary**, students must be aged 19+ with a net household income of £35,000 or less plus £1700 for each dependent child aged 18 and under living at the same address. This excludes asylum seekers who do not have to evidence household income
7. If students are aged 19+ and are enrolling onto a course that is eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan, they must have their loan fully approved before applying for a bursary. Evidence of their approved loan is required to support their application. Students with an Advanced Learner Loan that leave their course before the two-week liability point must repay all funds that they have received through the Advanced Learner Loan bursary

There is specific eligibility relating to each Bursary - please see Student Bursary Procedure for details.

## Responsibilities

### Group Student Finance Team are responsible for:

1. Administering the bursary applications and awarding process
2. Assessing applications against the eligibility criteria for each bursary applied for
3. Communicating awards and payment schedules by email to students and parents of students aged 16-17
4. Processing bursary award payments
5. Sending communications to students/parents who have provided an incomplete application, telling them what additional evidence is required
6. Monitoring attendance and withdrawals and adjusting bursary payments as required
7. Placing a stop on smart travel cards if students withdraw
8. Withdrawing incomplete bursary applications if the evidence required has not been provided within four weeks of receipt of an email requesting the additional documents

### The student is responsible for:

1. Ensuring they have applied for all other government sources of financial support before applying to our bursary. Students can check this here: <https://www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators>
2. Providing accurate information and all evidence required to support their application
3. Signing a physical form in writing, or electronically if completing the form online, to confirm they understand and agree to the conditions of their award as detailed in each award confirmation email
4. Providing all additional evidence within four weeks of receiving an email detailing any further documents required to assess their application
5. Meeting a minimum attendance of 90%
6. Adhering to the Student Behaviour Policy

7. Attending the nearest college providing their course
8. Repaying funds paid to them if they have not spent them for the reasons they were awarded
9. Informing DWP about any financial support payments they receive, as these payments may affect their eligibility to receive some benefits
10. Providing details of their own bank account if awarded a BACS payment
11. Providing receipts for travel expenses, membership to professional bodies AAT, UCAS fees, university open events and interviews, if awarded
12. Paying their residential accommodation fees if they transfer from a specialist subject to a non-specialist subject mid-year and wish to stay in their accommodation or if they withdraw. Bursary funds will only be used to pay for accommodation up to the date of the transfer or withdrawal
13. Returning their travel pass if they withdraw from college
14. Covering the cost of attending college until they have provided a fully complete bursary application and received confirmation that their bursary application has been successful as bursary funds are not backdated
15. Notifying Group Student Finance if their learning continues past the planned end date and they still need bursary support to complete the course
16. Notifying Group Student Finance of any changes of circumstances that effect their eligibility for a bursary, such as:
  - Change of address
  - Change of contact details
  - Change of timetable
  - Withdrawal from course
  - Any exceptional circumstances that cause you to be absent from college

## Procedure and Forms

- [FE Student Bursary Procedure](#)
- [Student Bursary Scheme and Application Form \(16-18\)](#)
- [Student Bursary Scheme and Application Form \(19+\)](#)

## Government Guidance

- [16-19 Bursary Fund](#)
- [Free Meals in further education](#)
- [Residential Bursary Fund](#)
- [Care to Learn](#)
- [Adult Skills fund](#)
- [Advanced Learner Loans Bursary](#)

## Linked policies

- [Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy](#)
- [Admissions Policy](#)
- [Privacy and Data Protection](#)
- [Attendance, Punctuality and Absence Management Policy](#)

