

## 19+ Further Education Bursary Policy

<b>Author:</b>	Admissions and Bursary Manager
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This policy and procedure is subject to The Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following categories of individual as Protected Characteristics: Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex (gender), Sexual orientation, Disability.

# 19+ Bursary Fund Policy

## Introduction and Overview

1. This policy sets out the financial support available in 2023/24; the eligibility criteria and the conditions for continuous receipt of Bursary support for 19+ year old students (who are not in receipt of an Advanced learner Loan) attending Milton Keynes College.
2. Milton Keynes College recognises that the 19+ Fund has an important role to play in removing barriers for some learners accessing and completing further education courses. It is the aim of the College to optimise the impact of support linked to this funding on recruitment, attendance, retention, student progress and achievement rates.
3. The fund will be distributed in a consistent and transparent way and in accordance with the guidance issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Learner eligibility will be determined through assessments of student social and economic disadvantage and level of study.
4. It is the policy of the College to optimise the Adult Education Bursary Fund to provide support to those people facing the greatest financial barriers to continuing in education. To ensure the funding has a positive impact, priority will be given to those defined as vulnerable learners, those eligible for free meals and to those from low-income households whose income could prevent them from participation and achieving their qualifications. Once enrolment has finished and all priority costs have been met, any surplus funding may be used to award discretionary bursaries.
5. Eligible applications are considered on a first come first served basis. The College monitors actual expenditure linked to this allocation and reserves the right to close the application process for students at any stage, with immediate effect, to ensure that spending does not exceed the allocation. With this in mind, students are advised to apply at the earliest opportunity and ensure that all relevant supporting evidence linked to an application is provided in a timely way in order to access this funding. The Bursary Team is on hand at both Chaffron Way and Bletchley sites to provide advice and guidance linked to bursary applications.
6. 19+ Bursary funding is available to students who are studying on a qualifying funded full or part time course and who are aged 19 and over as of the 31st August 2023. Students aged 19+ are normally assessed as independent students and household income is assessed on their own income, together with that of their spouse/partner/parents if applicable. However, if a student has no income, household income will be based on the income of the person(s) on whom the student is dependent.

7. Students aged 19 and over in receipt of the Advanced Learner Loan should apply for the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary.

## **Eligibility**

Students must provide evidence of how they meet each of the following strands of eligibility for financial support:

- Age – Students must be aged 19+ as of 31st August 2023.
- Residency – Students must have resided legally in the UK/EU/EEA for at least the past three years before the start of the course.
- Household Income – Total household income must be below £35,000, evidence of all household income must be declared and provided for inspection at time of application.
- Enrolment – Students must be enrolled on a qualifying funded full or part time course.
- Vulnerability – student must be identified as a ‘vulnerable’ student, i.e. learning difficulties, health issues, disabilities, ex-military personnel.

## **Bursary Payments**

1. Students that have been mandated to training (full- or part-time) by Jobcentre Plus will have their travel and childcare costs met by Jobcentre Plus where required.

The Discretionary Bursary will be offered in the following strands:

- Meals
- Travel
- Essential Course Cost
- Childcare (Students aged 20+ years)

## **Meals**

2. Meals Bursaries are awarded to students who are in direct receipt of one of more of the following benefits:
  - Income Support
  - Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
  - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
  - The guaranteed element of Pension Credit
  - Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £20, 319, 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 with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa

The above list may be subject to change dependent on benefit changes by the Government.

3. The meals bursary will be awarded for each day of timetabled attendance at College. This fund will be loaded onto the student's ID card to be spent at the College's food outlets. Any funds unspent at the end of each day will be cleared and new funds added for the next timetabled day that the student is in learning.

## **Travel**

4. Students who live less than 3 miles away are not eligible for travel support unless they are able to provide medical evidence to support their need for help with travel to and from College.
5. Students attending extended work placements can apply for a travel bursary if not already covered by their travel bursary or bus pass.
6. Payments for the travel bursary will be made on the following basis:
  - Termly – Bus Travel - Paid directly to Arriva for bus travel
  - Monthly – Train Travel – Paid directly to the student's bank account
  - Weekly – Exceptional Travel Arrangements – Paid directly to the student's bank account
7. For adult students travelling by car, the travel support will be limited to a maximum amount as awarded to those travelling by bus.

## **Essential Course Costs**

8. Some courses have essential costs including books, materials, equipment, uniform, trips exam fees or professional body memberships. A discretionary course cost bursary may be awarded, subject to household income and the availability of funds.
9. If your course tuition fee is fully funded then you are not eligible to receive Bursary support for essential course costs. These costs will be absorbed into the fully funded tuition fees where possible. If this is not the case then applicants will be considered for support from the Hardship Fund towards course essential costs depending upon individual circumstances.
10. Essential course cost items must (wherever possible) be purchased through Milton Keynes College. All funds will be transferred internally from Bursary to the supplier.

11. The College will require the return of any equipment where a student withdraws from their course early. This equipment will then be available for reuse with consideration being given to hygiene and reasonable wear and tear.

#### **Childcare (Students aged 19)**

12. Childcare support for young students (up to the age of 20 years) who have children is provided through Care to Learn (C2L). It is only available if the students' childcare provider is Ofsted-registered and offers up to £170 per week per child.
13. Students aged under 20 years must apply to C2L directly for assistance with childcare costs by completing an online application form via [studentbursary.education.gov.uk/w/webpage/student-bursary](http://studentbursary.education.gov.uk/w/webpage/student-bursary)

#### **Childcare (Students aged 20+)**

14. All students over the age of 20 who meet the eligibility criteria for the 19+ Bursary can apply, in addition to 19+ Bursary, for the Childcare Bursary (where appropriate).
15. Where places at our preferred provider are unavailable (Little Explorers Nursery) or your child attends compulsory education, you may select an OFSTED registered childcare or breakfast/after-school club provider of your choice.
16. Childcare Bursary funding may only be used towards the cost of an Ofsted registered childminder, nursery or pre/after-school club.
17. Enrolment and attendance checks will be made before the first payment is sent.
18. The availability of free childcare and education for all 3 and 4 year olds (and some 2 year olds) is verified with each student, and also with their nursery. If they are eligible for 2, 3 and 4 year old funding, childcare is only supported where the student's timetable exceeds the number of government funded sessions. Government funding for free childcare and education must always be claimed by a student if their child is eligible before any additional payments are made by the College.
19. Confirmation of support for childcare is subject to the student supplying a copy of their childcare contract, and proof of childcare registration with Ofsted. Invoices will also be requested for any non-preferred providers before payment is made.
20. Support for childcare is given only for timetabled teaching hours plus any travel time as applicable.
21. Bursary does not cover nursery deposits, late fees or childcare retainers payable during college holidays. This is communicated to students and childcare providers along with the initial award letter.

22. Bursary funding will be calculated (after Government Funding has been exhausted) to a maximum of up to £165 per week per child – this also includes travelling time.
23. If you withdraw from your course or finish early, you may be expected to pay back any overpayments.

### **Conditions and Procedures**

24. The College awards bursaries based on a household income up to £35,000.
25. Learners who apply for the Bursary will be required to supply evidence of all household income and information about their actual need for support. This should be in the form of benefit or other official documents or verification from statutory or other agencies.
26. Payments are subject to satisfactory attendance, conduct and progress at College. The College reserves the right to suspend, delay or reduce payments where a student's attendance or conduct is giving cause for concern, in consultation with their curriculum area.
27. Staff administering the fund will examine attendance, disciplinary records and the timely submission of assessments for all bursary recipients on a weekly basis. Should the attendance of a student currently receiving bursary drop below 90% across a given four-week period, their award will be reviewed and may be either withdrawn or adjusted. This decision will be taken in consultation with relevant curriculum teams and will be informed by an understanding of the context of the issues linked to the performance of the student in question.
28. Should an applicant withdraw from their chosen course of study and decide to leave college, they may be required to repay monies or return equipment supplied/bought by the support fund.
29. The majority of bursary transactions now focus on providing smart services to students (e.g. meals via ID cards, bus travel via the Arriva card) rather than making direct payments to students for these services. Only where exceptionally necessary will any payments to students will be made by BACS into the student's own bank account.
30. Students will be required to disclose any change of circumstances during the year, which may affect their eligibility for assistance. If a student in receipt of assistance withdraws or transfers before the completion of the course, they may be required to repay all or part of their award, or return any equipment purchased with their award.
31. Applicants will be notified in writing how much has been allotted to the categories they have applied for help with, including how payment will be made. Awards will be made to a third party or paid by internal budget transfer where possible. In all cases the application will be judged on its individual needs as outlined in the ESFA guidelines. The amount awarded will be specific to each application.

32. Learners who apply for the 19+ Bursary will be required to supply evidence of household income and information about their actual need for support. This should be in the form of benefit or other official documents or verification from statutory or other agencies.
33. If a student is unhappy with their award decision, the procedure for appeal is outlined in the letter informing them that the application has been unsuccessful.
34. Payments begin when an application has been approved. The amount of bursary provided will depend upon individual circumstances and may be subject to change due to the availability of funds.
35. Applicants will receive written confirmation confirming the outcome of their application together with a payment schedule. Payments will be made by to providers directly wherever possible. Only in exceptional circumstances will BACS transfer directly into the student's bank account be made.

#### **Quality Assurance and Monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Activity and budgets are reviewed on a monthly basis through the College Financial Review process.