

Adult Skills Fund Education Bursary Policy 26/27

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Alternative Format

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Version Control

Version Number	Author	Approver	Date approved	Next review date
1	MIS Compliance Manager	Policy Scrutiny Group	10/06/26	July 27

Change log

Version Number	Summary of changes
1	Annual Childcare payment threshold added to cap payments at £5000 per year per student

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Introduction and Overview

This policy sets out the financial support available in 2026/27; 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 or have an active EHCP) attending Milton Keynes College.

Milton Keynes College recognises that the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) 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.

The fund will be distributed in a consistent and transparent way and in accordance with the guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE). Learner eligibility will be determined through assessments of student social and economic disadvantage and level of study.

It is the policy of the College to optimise the ASF 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.

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.

ASF bursary 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 2026 and do not hold an active EHCP. 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.

Students who are studying a Tailored Learning course are unable to access support through the ASF bursary. A Tailored Learning bursary is available to learners on these courses. An application can be made through the bursary team. These funds are limited and meeting the criteria does not guarantee funding. Funds are allocated and assessed on a first come, first served basis.

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 criteria of eligibility for financial support:

- Age – Students must be aged 19+ as of 31st August 2026 and not have an active EHCP.
- 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.
- Learners on waged Apprenticeships are not eligible for the ASF Bursary Fund.

Bursary Payments

The Discretionary Bursary will be offered in the following strands:

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

Meals

No meal bursary given

Free School Meals available for those students that have an active educational health care plan (EHC Plan). The guidance for this is outlined in the 16-18 Further Education Bursary 2026-27.

Students aged over 19 who are continuing the same study programme (19+ continuers) they started before they turned 19 or who have an EHC plan are eligible for a free meal where they meet the criteria.

Travel

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. Payments are only available where Milton Keynes College is the closest learning provider offering the chosen course.

Students attending extended work placements can apply for a travel bursary if not already covered by their travel bursary or bus pass.

Payments will be capped at £1,200 per year. Petrol will be paid at a rate of 30p per mile.

Payments for the travel bursary will be made on the following basis:

- Termly – Bus Travel - Paid directly to travel provider for bus travel.

- Full Time Courses Termly – Train Travel – Paid directly to travel provider for train
- Part Time courses Weekly - Paid directly to the student's bank account.
- Weekly – Exceptional Travel Arrangements – Paid directly to the student's bank account.

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

Some courses have essential costs including books, materials, equipment, uniform, or trips. A discretionary course cost bursary may be awarded, subject to household income and the availability of funds.

Bursary support may be awarded to contribute to the costs of attending industry placements, university interviews/open days and UCAS registration cost

Essential course cost items must (wherever possible) be purchased through Milton Keynes College. All funds will be transferred internally from Bursary to the supplier.

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.

Bursary funding can only be used to support the mandatory costs of field trips that are a compulsory part of the student's curriculum – in other words; the student cannot achieve their qualification without it.

Childcare (Students aged 19)

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 £180 per week per child.

Students aged under 20 years must apply to C2L scheme through their education provider

Childcare (Students aged 20+)

All students over the age of 20 who meet the eligibility criteria for the ASF Bursary can apply for the Childcare Bursary (where appropriate).

Where the students' childcare provider is Ofsted-registered your child attends compulsory education, you may select an OFSTED registered childcare or breakfast/afterschool club provider of your choice.

The ASF Bursary fund may be available to contribute to exceptional further help with childcare costs for those young parents in receipt of C2L whose costs exceed the scheme's weekly maximum rate.

Childcare bursary funding may only be used towards the cost of an Ofsted registered childminder, nursery or pre/after-school club

ASF Bursary funding will be calculated (after Government Funding has been exhausted) to a maximum of up to £5000 per year per student – this also includes travelling time.

Enrolment and attendance checks will be made before the first payment is sent.

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.

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 other Childcare providers before payment is made.

Support for childcare is given only for timetabled teaching hours plus any travel time as applicable.

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.

If you withdraw from your course or finish early, Childcare funding will cess at the point of withdrawal/completion. You may be expected to pay back any overpayments.

Exam Resits

For learners on a course where they are required to pay an exam resit fee, bursary will cover the cost of one exam resit fee. All resit fees after this will need to be covered by the learner.

Conditions and Procedures

The College awards means- tested ASF bursaries for those based on a household income up to £35,000- including all benefit and income evidence.

Bursary Category	Award
Travel Bursary	Contribution towards public transport costs (cheapest option)
Essential Course Costs	Contribution towards associated essential costs
Childcare Bursary	Contribution towards childcare for timetabled days in college

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.

Applicants will be notified in writing if their application has been successful 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 DfE guidelines. The amount awarded will be specific to each application.

Applicants are required to sign a Bursary agreement to show that they agree to the terms and conditions and to notify the DWP of the bursary payments. Applicants who do not sign this may have their payments suspended.

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.

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.

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.

The majority of bursary transactions now focus on providing smart services to students (e.g. meals via ID cards, bus travel via a travel 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.

Students will be required to disclose any change of circumstances during the year, which may affect their eligibility for assistance. If a student award or 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.

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 DfE guidelines. The amount awarded will be specific to each application. The student will be required to sign an agreement agreeing to the terms of the allocated bursary. If this agreement is not returned the College has the right to withdraw the offer of financial support.

Learners who apply for the ASF 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.

If a student is unhappy with their award decision, they can appeal by contacting the Bursary Team.

Payments begin from the date the applicants start their course and 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.

If your bursary application is successful, it is the responsibility of the student to tell the Department for Working Pension that you are now receiving financial support from the College as this will change to your income as this may affect your eligibility to state benefits.

Organisation and Responsibility

This Policy reflects the Milton Keynes College Structure in June 2026. The policy is the responsibility of the Strategic Leadership Team.

The Bursary team are responsible for the administration of the fund.

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.

Related Policies and Legislation

Refer to the following documentation in conjunction with this policy:

- Bursary Appeal Policy
- Childcare Guidance 26/27
- Tailored Learning Guidance 26/27