

# **Bursary and Free College Meal Policy**

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Policy owned by:	Executive Finance Director

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The College receives an allocation from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in support of Free College Meals and Discretionary Bursaries for students. Additionally, the College also receives bursary funding for vulnerable students who are in care or who are care leavers.
- 1.2 The College will deploy these funds to assist students according to the following principles.

## **2. Principles and assessment criteria**

- 2.1 All awards will be made subject to affordability. Consideration will be given to the individual needs of each student

### **Free College Meals**

- 2.1.1 Free College Meals will be awarded to eligible students who complete an application and provide the relevant supporting evidence. To be eligible for Free College Meal support a student must:
  - be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August in the year in which studying starts or; be aged 19 or over but continuing on a study programme begun when aged 16 to 18 or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP);
  - be in receipt of, or have parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:
    - 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 guarantee 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 with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa
- 2.1.2 The meal allowance will be a minimum of the statutory £2.41 per college day.

## **Bursary funding for vulnerable students**

- 2.1.3 Students who are in one or more of the groups below can apply for a bursary of up to £1,200 p.a. The application process for these students will include an assessment of individual circumstances and programme of study. The full £1,200 will not be awarded unless a need is identified.
- students who are in care
  - students who are care leavers
  - students receiving Income Support (IS), or Universal Credit (UC) because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner
  - students receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right

## **Discretionary bursaries**

- 2.1.4 Discretionary bursaries may be awarded to help with the costs of:
- Transport College Coach
  - Transport Public Bus in the Bristol and West of England Areas (for students who live more than 1.5 miles from college)
  - compulsory educational trips
  - music or singing lessons
  - studio fees
  - kits for creative arts subjects students
  - Maths Calculators
  - Music Technology Headphones

Discretionary bursaries do not cover train tickets or help with fuel cost if students travel to college by car.

Discretionary bursaries may be awarded in addition to Free College Meals. Some students who do not qualify for Free Meals may be eligible for a discretionary bursary, the two awards are not interdependent.

- 2.1.5 The level of award will be determined by household earnings from employment and any unearned income such as from shares and or investments, savings and rental income. Income from welfare benefits is not taken into account.
- 2.1.6 Bursaries are awarded where the household income is less than £27,000 p.a. For households in receipt of Universal Credit an assessment will be made including earned income but excluding the Housing Benefit element of Universal Credit (this is done to remove any differential in property costs across the region).
- 2.1.7 Discretionary bursaries may be awarded to students where their transport costs to College exceed the normal costs of Public Transport. Transport supported must meet sustainability criteria. This element of funding will be subject to a higher threshold of earned income of £40,000.

- 2.1.8 Other awards may be made in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the College to support student access to their studies.
- 2.1.9 All awards are subject to adherence to the St. Brendan's Student Expectations and continued acceptable attendance. Students whose attendance falls below 90% will no longer be eligible for bursary support
- 2.1.10 Changes in recipients' financial status must be reported to the Bursary Coordinator immediately and may result in changes to the awards made with immediate effect.

### **3. Application and assessment**

- 3.1 New students are invited to complete and submit an application before the start of the academic year via the PayMyStudent online portal.
- 3.2 The College will endeavour to assess and make awards to new students during the enrolment process but this will be dependent on all supporting evidence being available.
- 3.3 Applications can be submitted throughout the Academic Year and reapplication will be accepted where there are changes to circumstances. Awards will not be backdated and can only begin once an application form and all supporting evidence has been submitted and assessed.
- 3.4 All applicants should provide evidence of household income. A list of acceptable documents is available from the Bursary Coordinator.

### **4. Appeal process**

- 4.1 Once an application is received, the Bursary Coordinator will approve or decline the application on the basis of the evidence provided.
- 4.2 Unsuccessful claimants have the right to appeal the decision. Appeals must be in writing and should be lodged with the Finance Manager within 10 working days of their notification letter. The appeal letter must state why the application should be approved and provide further evidence to support the application. The Finance Manager will review the case within 10 working days from receipt of the appeal letter and notify the student of the outcome of their appeal in writing. The Finance Manager's decision is final.

### **5. Responsibility and monitoring**

- 5.1 The responsibility for managing, assessing applications and promoting the bursary and free meal awards lies with the Bursary Coordinator, who will work closely with Head of Support Services and Head of Learning Development and Safeguarding to ensure appropriate levels of support.
- 5.2 An annual report on bursary funding will be provided to governors.