



Wiltshire College
& University Centre

Further Education
Bursary and Financial
Support Policy
2024-25

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1. Purpose

- 1.1 Wiltshire College and University Centre receives funds from the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to provide financial support to those facing specific barriers to participation attending college. The college sets the criteria for financial support in line with the 16-19 Bursary Fund Guide, Free meals in further education funded institutions guide, Residential Bursary Fund Guide, Adult Skills Fund: funding rules, Advanced Learner Loans: funding rules and any other relevant guidance set by the ESFA.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the financial support available for Wiltshire College and University Centre Further Education students studying in 2024-25, the eligibility criteria and the conditions for continuous receipt of support.
- 1.3 The college receives funding for several types of Further Education bursaries for 16–19-year-olds and 19+ adults.
 - **16-19 Discretionary Bursary**
 - **16-19 Vulnerable Bursary**
 - **16-19 Residential Bursary**
 - **19+ Hardship Fund**
 - **19+ Residential Access Funding**
 - **20+ Childcare**
 - **19+ Advanced Learner Loans Bursary**

2. Eligibility

16-19 Bursary Funds

- 2.1 Students must provide evidence of how they meet the eligibility for financial support to include age, residency and household income, as well as be studying on a programme that is subject to inspection by a public body such as Ofsted.
- 2.2 The study programme must also be either:
 - Funded directly by the ESFA or by the ESFA via a local authority, or
 - Otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3) accredited by Ofqual or on the ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19
- 2.3 Non-employed students aged 16-19 who are participating in the Princes Trust Team Programme are eligible to receive the bursary in the same way as any other student participating in an eligible publicly funded course.
- 2.4 Eligibility for all **16-19 Bursary Funds** require that a student:
 - Be aged 16 or over but under the 19 on 31st August 2024, or
 - Be aged 19 or over on 31st August 2021 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
 - Be aged 19 or over on 31st August 2024 and continuing a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers)
 - Meet the residency criteria in ESFA funding regulations for post 16 provisions before the start of the course.
- 2.5 Eligibility for the **16-19 Discretionary Funds** requires that a student:

- Meets the maximum household income threshold of £40,000 gross per year.
- 2.6** Eligibility for the **16-19 Vulnerable Funds**, students must be in one of the following groups:
- In care (including a young person in foster care arranged by the local authority),
 - Care leavers,
 - Receiving Income Support or Universal Credit 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,
 - Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right, as well as Employment Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit in their own right.
- 2.7** Eligibility for the **16-19 Residential Bursary**:
- Studying a substantial course in Agriculture, Animal Care, Countryside, Equine or Horticulture at Lackham.
 - Must not be able to access the same course within a reasonable travelling distance from where you live.
 - Must live outside a reasonable travelling distance to the Lackham or Chippenham campus.
 - Meet the maximum household income threshold of £65,000 per year.
- 2.8** The following categories are not eligible for 16-19 bursaries:
- Students aged 19 over on 31st August unless they have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) or are continuing a study programme they began aged 16 to 18.
 - Students participating through partnership arrangements.
 - Students on apprenticeship programme or any other waged training.
 - Students on Higher Education programmes.
- 2.9** Students may make more than one application to the fund in an academic year as a result of a change in their circumstances, or to request further support on a secondary course.
- 2.10** The Chair of the Bursary Panel has the right to vary the College's discretionary eligibility criteria in cases of extreme hardship providing the ESFA requirements are met.

3. Assessment Criteria

- 3.1** All other ESFA funded bursaries are means tested and based on household income:
- 3.2** A household income up to £40,000 gross per year for the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary, up to £45,000 gross per year for 19+ Hardship and 19+ Loans Bursaries and up to £65,000 gross per year for Residential bursaries may apply. Applicants are expected to provide evidence to support declared household incomes as detailed in **Annex A**.
- 3.3** All income and means-tested benefits (including Housing Benefits, Council Tax Benefits, Working Tax Credits, Child Tax Credits, etc.) are considered. The College does not take into account Child Benefit, Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments when calculating total household income.
- 3.4** For Universal Credit we will ask for the three most recent monthly award statements. The take-home pay figure in addition to the amount of Universal Credit after all deductions,

will give a total monthly income. The three-monthly statements will act as a guide to the household income for a quarter of the year and will be multiplied by four to estimate annual income.

For parents/guardians or students who are self-employed, the college will assess income based on gross profit, taking into account any business expenditure. For example, household items, mortgage and food will not be deducted from gross profit but servicing of farm machinery, stationary, etc. would be deducted.

- 3.5** An assessment is made based on a completed and signed application from the learner or parent(s)/guardian(s) (depending upon age and circumstances of the learner) declaring and detailing income from employment and/or benefits along with supporting evidence of declared income.
- 3.6** In order for the bursary to be awarded, the College expects that certain standards of behaviour and attendance will be met. Learners are expected to adhere to the Terms and Conditions as published in **Annex B** at all times. In circumstances where a learner is involved in disciplinary proceedings or has poor attendance, funding may be withheld or reclaimed at the College's discretion.

4. Bursary Fund awards

- 4.1** Each student is assessed on their individual circumstances, the costs of attending their chosen course, their actual financial need and the amount of funds available.
- 4.2** Some applicants may receive no bursary funds because there are no costs relating to attendance on their course.
- 4.3** Bursary funds may be awarded for:
- Travel to college,
 - Meals on timetabled days (including work experience/T Level placement),
 - Educational trips,
 - PPE or Uniform,
 - Kit, essential equipment, course materials,
 - Childcare (students aged 20 and above only. Students aged below 20 who require help with childcare costs should apply to Care to Learn).
- 4.4** Travel – Bursary funds for students aged 16-19 will be administered in conjunction with Local Authority Transport Scheme's and Policies. In most cases, Bursary funds will be used to provide additional financial support where transport costs are not met in full or present a barrier to learning.
- 4.5** Support through bursary funds with the cost of travel is available to students who travel more than three miles to their site of study or work placement. Distance will be calculated using the shortest safe walking distance. Exceptional circumstances and Special Educational Needs that do not meet the Local Authority Transport Policy will be considered during assessment and through the appeals procedure where necessary.
- 4.6** The amount and type of travel support provided to an eligible learner varies depending upon where the student lives, the campus on which they choose to study and their financial circumstances.
- 4.7** The college will support transport costs during term time only.
- 4.8** Students attending extended work placements as part of a T-Level programme can apply

for a travel bursary if this is not already covered by the discretionary bursary or they do not have a bus pass.

- 4.9** Course Specific Costs – Assessment of the level of support needed for each programme of study will be carried out in conjunction with information supplied by the Heads of Department regarding course related costs.
- 4.10** The amount and type of support provided to eligible learners varies and will be assessed on the students' financial need.
- 4.11** Meals – Eligible students (see section 2.4) who live in a household in receipt of one of the benefits below will be entitled to free college meals on days they attend study or activity that is part of their course (i.e. industry placement).
- Income Support
 - Income-base 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 Credits (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 (after tax and not including any benefits you get).
- 4.12** In most cases, free meals will be supplied through the College's catering outlets. Where this arrangement is not possible, alternative arrangements will be made.
- 4.13** **Discretionary (Emergency) Hardship** – The college acknowledges that a student may face exceptional hardship during the course of the academic year due to a change in circumstances domestically or financially.
- 4.14** Discretionary hardship bursaries may be awarded where a student demonstrates exceptional hardship has become a barrier to learning and participation.
- 4.15** **Vulnerable Learner Bursary** – Students in the defined vulnerable groups (section 2.6) will be eligible for bursary up to £1,200 per academic year, dependent of the financial need of the student.
- 4.16** Where a student is enrolled on a course of less than 30 weeks, the vulnerable learner bursary will be adjusted to a pro-rata amount e.g. a 15-week course = £600.
- 4.17** Where the student's circumstances change in-year and puts them in one of the defined vulnerable groups, they will receive a pro-rata amount if the vulnerable learner bursary, which will be from the date the student becomes eligible to the end of the academic year.
- 4.18** Funding for each vulnerable learner will be claimed via the online Student Bursary Support Service (SBSS) portal. If the college accrues any unused vulnerable funds e.g. where a student leaves their course early, funding will be recycled for future vulnerable learners.
- 4.19** Learners in receipt of the vulnerable learner bursary may be awarded funds from the discretionary bursary, where they are able to demonstrate a need of additional support that exceeds £1,200.
- 4.20** **Residential** – Support towards the cost of accommodation at Lackham can be provided

to eligible students.

- 4.21 Priority will be given to students who live the furthest from the Lackham campus with limited or no transport links.
- 4.22 Students who qualify for the Residential Bursary may also receive other bursary funds, (e.g. for essential course costs). Assessments will be made for each eligible fund.
- 4.23 **Payments** – Where possible, payments will be made for trips, kit and uniform directly to the relevant curriculum department by internal transfers.
- 4.24 Awards will be made either by BACS or internal transfers as indicated on the award letter.
- 4.25 Awards made via BACS will be paid into the student bank account (if you do not have a bank account, you will need to open one) and will only be paid into a parent/guardian bank account in exceptional circumstances.
- 4.26 Bursary payments are made with an expectation of regular attendance and adherence to the Student Code of Contact.
- 4.27 The Head of Department or Bursary and Student Funding Officers may consider any mitigating circumstances that prevent a student from attending College regularly.
- 4.28 Other sources of financial support include:
 - **Care to Learn** – If the student is a parent aged 16-19 the Government Care to Leave Scheme could pay up to £180 per child per week towards the learners' childcare and travel costs whilst studying. If the learners require help with childcare costs, an application will need to be submitted through Care to Learn – <https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn> or contact the helpline 0800 121 8989.

5. Administration and Monitoring Administration

- 5.1 Applications for all Further Education and Loans Bursaries will be assessed by the Bursary and Student Funding Officers on each campus.
- 5.2 In cases of extreme hardship where a student demonstrates exceptional hardship which is a barrier to learning and participation, referrals may be made by the Safeguarding team.
- 5.3 **Monitoring** – The Bursary Panel consists of the Bursary and Student Funding Officers and is chaired by the ILR and Bursary Co-ordinator. The panel meet fortnightly during August, September and October, and once a term thereafter as required, to discuss Bursary matters.
- 5.4 Monitoring of the fund is the responsibility of Head of MIS and Reporting. The Bursary and Student Funding Officers track and monitor all commitments made against funds available on a weekly basis to ensure the fund is not overspent.
- 5.5 The Management of Information Services and Admissions (MIS) manager will complete an annual record of funds used, for submission to the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA) in February, with an end of year return due in October.
- 5.6 Take-up of the fund is monitored annually in relation to retention and reported in the Self-Assessment Report (SAR).
- 5.7 **Appeals** – If a student does not agree with any decision made in relation to judgements on the distribution of support funds then they can appeal in writing to bursaries@wiltshire.ac.uk all appeals should be made within 10 working days of the decision being notified and addressed to the student bursary panel.
- 5.8 Appeals will be acknowledged within 3 working days by the Bursary and Student Funding Officers and students will receive a response and a decision within 14 days of the appeal.

- 5.9** The outcome of the appeal will be decided by the ILR and Bursary Co-ordinator and MIS Manager.
- 5.10** If a student does not agree with the appeals decision, they must raise the complaint using the using the College's complaint procedure.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

Wiltshire College & University Centre strives to ensure equality of opportunity for all students, local people and the workforce. As an employer and a provider of education, the College aims to ensure that none are placed at a disadvantage as a result of its policies and procedures. It is intended that this policy and procedure is fair to all. Where any part could potentially lead to unequal outcomes, the policy then justifies why this is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

7. Data Retention Statement

Wiltshire College & University Centre is committed to ensure the data it collects, and holds is in line with the ICO's guidance and meets data protection law. Where appropriate a Data Protection Impact Assessment will be undertaken as and when policies are updated to ensure risks to the individual and college are considered and managed.

For further information please refer to Wiltshire College & University Centre's Data Protection Policy.

8. Policy Review and Ownership

This policy is owned and managed by the Head of MIS and Reporting. It will be reviewed periodically in light of developments in employment legislation, good employment practice, changes in funding rules or audit; and to ensure it continues to be relevant and supports operational effectiveness.

Annex A – Supporting evidence requirements for ESFA funded bursaries.

Source of Income	Acceptable Evidence
Waged Income	Pay slips for the last 3 consecutive months
Tax Credits	Latest Tax Credit Award Notification In full
Income from Self-Employment	Audited Accounts previous year, most recent tax return, Self Assessment Form (SA302)
Employment and Support Allowance	Most recent benefit letter and the last 2 months bank statements indicating payments are still being paid.
State Pension Guaranteed Credit	
Income Support	
Jobseekers Allowance	
Universal Credit	Most recent 3 months Universal Credit Statements in full
Asylum Seeker	Letter from the local authority
In Care or Care leaver	
Living on your own and financially supporting yourself or someone dependent on you.	Tenancy agreement, birth certificate, evidence of income as stated above.

Annex B – ESFA Funded Bursary terms and conditions.

General

Applications are usually available to all students until the specific fund closure dates or when funds are exhausted, whichever comes first. The bursary panel receives the right to extend the closure dates subject to availability of funds.

Assessment

The level of financial support awards is assessed by the students' financial need. Students under 19 and living at home and/ or supported by parents/guardians are assessed by their parents/guardian's income, except in exceptional circumstances.

Financial support is assessed against household income. Students over 19 and living at home and/or are supported by parents/guardians are assessed by their own and their parents/guardian's income, except in exceptional circumstances.

Receipt of bursary funding does not affect receipt of other means-tested benefits paid to families such as Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Benefit, Working Tax Credit and Housing Benefit. However, if a student is in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (or Personal Independence Payments) and Employment Support Allowance or in receipt of Universal Credit

parents can no longer receive household/family benefits for that child, such as Child Benefit.

As well as evidence of Income support or Universal Credit, colleges are required to see a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a child benefit receipt, children's birth certificates, utility bills etc for students who live independently under the age of 19.

Payments

Payments will start once the student has reached the qualifying period for funding (6 weeks continued attendance for full time courses, 2 weeks for part time courses).

Awards will be made either by BACS or Internal Transfer as indicated on the award letter.

If a student changes their bank account, they must inform their Bursary and Student Funding Officer so the details can be updated. The college does not take any responsibility if payments are made to the wrong account due to not being informed of the correct details.

Internal Transfers will be paid to the relevant college department by the Finance Office as directed by the Bursary and Student Funding Officers.

Awards for meals bursary will be loaded onto your student ID badge to use in the College refectory or coffee shops on campus for use on the days that the student is timetabled to be in college. Funds can be accessed using your student ID badge and are only available for a 24-hour period. Any unused funds will be removed.

Bursary payments are made with an expectation of regular attendance and adherence to the Student Code of Contact.

The Head of Department or Bursary and Student Funding Officers may consider any mitigating circumstances that prevent a student from attending College regularly.

The college does not make bursary fund payments as regular payments for living costs. This is out of scope of the bursary fund and any such payments would be subject to the Social Security Amendments (Students and Income-Related Benefits) Regulations 2000.

If an Asylum seeker is eligible for support in the form of course-related books, equipment or travel pass, these will be provided. We are not permitted to give these students cash payments.

Changes in Circumstances

You must notify the College of any changes in family circumstances which may impact upon your award. The College reserves the right to amend or withdraw awarded funds if it is made aware of a change in circumstances which would result in the student no longer being eligible for the awards. The College also reserves the right to recover all or part of any overpayment made resulting from a change in circumstances.

The College reserves the right to request repayment of all or part of any bursary payment a student has received; and/or return of equipment provided if a student withdraws from their course. Students may be asked to return books or equipment at the end of their course.