

 ACTIVATE LEARNING	TITLE		REF	VERSION
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	DEPARTMENT	Advice and Admissions – Student Finance Team		
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FE Student Bursary Procedure

Procedure Statement

This procedure details the process by which students are awarded discretionary bursaries and bursaries for further education students in financial need during the 2023/24 academic year.

Step-by-step guide to applying for bursaries and how the bursaries are assessed and provided.

1. Information, advice, and guidance

An applicant can gather information from:

- a. Course application and enrolment communications
- b. Website
- c. Social media
- d. Course guides
- e. Open events
- f. School liaison
- g. Submission of an enquiry
- h. Discussion with an adviser

2. Enquiries relating to the progress of a bursary application or accessing a bursary award.

Information relating to applicant's specific queries relating to the progress of a bursary application, additional information required to complete the application or how to access a bursary award, for example a travel pass, can be sought by:

- a. Speaking with an Adviser at the campus Advice Centre
- b. Emailing FEbursaries@activatelearning.ac.uk
- c. Calling 0800 612 6008

3. Application

Applicants and current students can apply for a bursary from June either by downloading an application form from the website or in paper format at any campus Advice Centre or Reception. Students must apply and indicate on the form the bursaries they need and provide all evidence required. All forms must be signed by the student. Applications without the required evidence for each bursary will not be processed until this is received. Bursary funds are not backdated for applications received after the start of the course.

Applicants should only send electronic files in one of the following formats;

- a. Picture files of JPG, JPEG, GIF, PNG, and TIFF extensions
- b. Electronic files of DOC, DOCX, XLS, XLSX, PDF and XPS

4. Application received

The Group Administration Team process complete applications in received date order. The bursary application and supporting evidence is checked by the Group Administration Team then entered on to our student records database. Group Administration will email to request further information or evidence as required. Only complete applications will be processed. Group Administration may return incomplete applications and applications that have not have not been signed which could delay the assessment and award of any bursary.

5. Acknowledgement

The Group Administration team send applicants an email within five working days to acknowledge receipt of the complete application.

6. Assessment

The Group Student Finance Team assess complete applications to establish which bursaries the student is eligible for and the student's actual financial need to participate in their course. Students must meet the general eligibility for all bursaries below.

6.1 General eligibility

- **Students must be:**

- i. enrolled on a funded further education course, (excluding apprenticeships and students aged 14 and 15) and:
 - a) have right to study
 - b) fee assessed as a home student for the purposes of further education funding, this is the same as it is for enrolment fee eligibility.
 - c) adhere to the residency criteria below:
 - i) 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 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.
 - ii) Residents of Scotland – students who live in Scotland and travel to study at an English institution, should approach their home local authority in Scotland to make an application for Scottish Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). These students are not eligible to apply for support from the 16-19 Bursary fund.
- ii. for the 16-18 bursary, students must be aged 16-18 on 31st August 2023, or aged 19 and continuing the same course they began when aged 16 to 18 or aged 19-25 with an EHCP with a household income of £27,000 or less. This excludes asylum seekers who do not have to evidence household income.
- iii. for the 19+ bursary, students must be aged 19+ with a net income of £30,000 or less. This excludes asylum seekers who do not have to evidence household income.
- iv. if students are aged 19+ and enrolling to a course that is eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan, they must have their loan fully approved before applying for a bursary and evidence of their approved loan is required to support their application. We do not support learners with their tuition fee if the course is eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan.

- **Specific eligibility and evidence required for each bursary:**

- **Travel bursary**

- i. Students must live more than 3 miles walking distance from college (using Google maps) and attend their nearest college offering their chosen subject.
- ii. Have a journey less than 30 miles to college.
- iii. Plan their journey to college, informing us of the travel company and where they will embark on their journey.
- iv. Students who have their transport provided by the local authority who need a bursary to pay their contribution for the transport are required to provide a copy of the local authority's transport invoice by 22 November 2023. Payments will be made to the student directly to enable them to pay the Local Authority invoice.
- v. Students who are enrolled onto online courses are not eligible for a travel bursary.
- vi. We are not able to support the cost of taxis to college unless the taxi is for SEN transport provided by the Local Council.
- vii. Students are not usually supported with travel expenses to travel by car unless they have evidenced an exceptional need to do so.
- viii. Students attending work/industry placements who live more than 3 miles from the placement and needing support with additional travel costs must complete a work placement form to provide more details.
- ix. Students in receipt of an accommodation bursary may be awarded a travel pass from the accommodation to college if the journey is more than three miles. They are not eligible for a travel bursary towards the cost of travelling from their home address to their accommodation.

- **Course costs bursary:**

- i. Awards for course items will only be made to students with costs directly related to participating in their course which are detailed on the course participation record.
- ii. Funds are not awarded for materials and equipment that can be borrowed from college.

- iii. Awards for costs relating to university open events / interviews, UCAS fees and essential items for courses that faculty cannot provide, for example, specialist protective clothing that needs to be fitted prior to ordering are awarded after the student has submitted a course costs form with their receipts for the costs incurred.

- **Bursary for vulnerable groups:**

- i. Evidence they are in one of the following defined vulnerable groups:
 - a. in care
 - b. care leavers
 - c. 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.
 - d. 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
- ii. Students will be assessed to identify their financial need with support from a member of the Student Support Team, who will complete a financial assessment form and supporting statement for their application if required.

- **Meal credits:**

- i. To be eligible, the household must provide evidence they receive one of the following:
 - a. Income Support
 - b. Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
 - c. Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
 - d. Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - e. The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
 - f. Child Tax Credit (provided you are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 as assessed by His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
 - g. Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
 - h. Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa (after tax and not including any benefits payments)
 - i. Parents who are self-employed and in receipt of Universal Credit will need to provide:
 - j. Three months Universal Credit award letters and a copy of their tax return bill
 - k. A completed self-declaration form

- **Childcare Bursary:**

- i. To be eligible for a 19+ childcare bursary students will be aged 20+ when they start their course.
- ii. To be eligible for 16-18 childcare bursary students will have been awarded the maximum Care to Learn contribution of £180 per week

Students must provide the following evidence:

- i. The Ofsted registration number for the childcare provider.
- ii. Evidence that confirms the student receives Child Benefit for their child.
- iii. A completed childcare provider form. **Please note:** Both the student and the childcare provider must return our signed Terms and Conditions before invoices can be paid.

7. Accommodation Bursary:

- i. Students should have a household income less than £32,000.
- ii. Students should be enrolled on a specialist subject that is not available where you live e.g., land based, WASPS basketball and furniture.
- iii. Students need to apply for Accommodation at Activate Learning before applying for an Accommodation bursary.
- iv. Students live 15 miles or more from college or have a journey of more than 1 hour and 45 minutes each way by public transport.

8. Household income is assessed as follows:

- i. If the household receives Universal credit; we add together the average take home pay and average amount of Universal Credit (after all deductions) when calculating the annual household income. If the Benefits office pays your rent to the landlord, we add the rent awarded to you to the household income.

- ii. If students have provided wage slips as evidence of low income, we use the take-home pay figure (any deductions that are not statutory will be calculated as income).
- iii. If students provide Tax Credits as evidence, we use the total income stated under the heading 'Income,' often on page 2 of the award notice.
- iv. When assessing household income, we will include the income of all adults aged over 18 living in the household.
- v. We do not provide bursary support to au pairs.

9. Bursary award

The Group Student Finance Team award bursaries if the student has provided evidence that they meet the eligibility for that bursary and this award is proportionate to the students' needs.

10. Confirmation of bursary award

The Group Student Finance Team notify students of the outcome of their application within four weeks of their complete application being acknowledged. This confirms the bursaries they have been awarded, how each bursary is provided and conditions of the award. If their application for a bursary was unsuccessful, they are informed of the reason and the appeals procedure is explained. Response times may be slower during peak times – September to October.

11. How to appeal a decision

If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of their application and wishes to appeal, they should submit their appeal in writing with a supporting statement no later than 7 days after receipt of their application decision. Appeals will be reviewed by a panel and the decision will be final. The panel will include the Group Head of Advice and Admissions. Once the appeal has been considered by the panel and a decision has been communicated, there is no further right of appeal. Appeals should be addressed to the Group Head of Advice and Admissions:

- a. By email – FEbursaries@activatelearning.ac.uk
- b. By letter - Activate Learning, Group Student Finance Team, c/o Banbury and Bicester College, Broughton Road, Banbury, OX16 9QA

12. How support is provided for each bursary

Travel bursary

i. Travel pass

- a. If complete applications are received by 11 August 2023, students receive their pass at the start of term.
- b. We will purchase a travel pass on the student's behalf for the journey detailed on their bursary application form or the most cost-effective method of travel.
- c. We do not exchange travel passes for a different travel company if the original pass provided enables the journey to college from the student's home address.
- d. We purchase travel passes from the following travel companies:
 - [Arriva](#)
 - [Chiltern Railways](#)
 - [Oxford Buses \(Inc. Thames Travel\)](#)
 - [Reading Buses](#)
 - [Thames Valley Buses](#)
 - [Great Western Railways \(GWR\)](#)
 - [Southwestern Railways \(SWR\)](#)
 - [Stagecoach Oxfordshire](#)
 - [Stagecoach South](#)
 - [Falcon Buses](#)
- e. Travel passes are usually available for collection within three weeks of the award notification: students will receive a text message as soon as the pass is ready for collection.
- f. Students who have been awarded a Stagecoach South bus pass will receive an email with details of how to order their pass from Stagecoach.com. If student's need support ordering their pass, they can do this at a college Advice Centre.
- g. Passes may be collected from the campus Advice Centre. If the course is not based at an Activate Learning campus, the travel pass will be posted to the place of learning.

- h. We recommend that students take a photograph of their travel pass; this is to ensure they have the pass number if they lose the pass and need a replacement.
 - i. We recommend students store their pass in a plastic wallet to avoid damaging the magnetic strip on the back.
 - j. Funds will not be back dated, and students are responsible for the cost of travel until their travel pass arrives.
 - k. Any travel pass that is not collected within two weeks will be returned to the travel company and there may be a fee for reissuing the pass.
 - l. Travel passes are the student's responsibility, therefore if they are lost or damaged students must contact the travel company directly and arrange for a replacement. The only exception to this is train passes and Stagecoach Oxfordshire passes.
 - m. To obtain a replacement train pass, students need to complete a damaged / duplicate pass form, which is available from the Advice Centre at their college campus. We will send the completed form to the travel company.
 - n. We will order replacement passes if the train pass is damaged. The damaged pass must be returned before collecting the replacement pass or the student will be liable to pay for the full cost of the pass.
 - o. Lost travel passes will only be replaced up to a maximum of two times, after this the student is responsible for the full cost of the pass.
 - p. Travel passes will expire on the 5 July 2024 unless we have a prior agreement and authorisation from your tutor that your pass needs extending.
 - q. If a student relocates the bursary fund will support the cost of one change of travel pass if the original pass has been returned to the Advice Centre, and providing the total travel bursary and course costs bursary award combined does not exceed £3,500 and funds are still available.
 - r. If a student needs a change of travel pass and they have reached the maximum bursary award or the funds are closed, they will be awarded travel expenses to the value of the refund we receive for their original travel pass.
 - s. If students complete or withdraw from their course before the end of the academic year the travel pass must be returned to college. If we do not receive the travel pass within three weeks from the date a student left the course, these will be charged to the student for the remainder of time remaining on the pass.
 - t. If a student leaves college and has received a smart travel pass a stop will be placed on their card.
- ii. **Travel expenses**
- a. Students may be awarded travel expenses if:
 - i. It is the most cost-effective method of support or if we do not have a purchasing agreement with the travel company or public transport is not available for the journey.
 - ii. Students have evidenced the need to travel by car due to exceptional circumstances.
 - iii. Support is needed towards the student's contribution for Special Education Needs (SEN) travel provided by the Council.
 - b. Expenses for fuel are awarded at 23p per mile for the return journey and paid by bank transfer.
 - c. Students awarded travel expense payments for travel on public transport, are required to provide receipts evidencing the cost of their travel within two weeks of receiving confirmation of their travel expenses award. They are also required to provide a couple of receipts at the beginning of each term. Awards may be reduced (or increased) if the cost of travel differs from the amount of expenses awarded. They may be stopped if receipts have not been provided. Details of how to submit receipts will be included in the email that confirms the travel expense award.
 - d. Funds awarded for SEN transport are paid to student's bank accounts in termly instalments.
 - e. Travel expenses for on campus courses are paid fortnightly, in advance, during term time.
 - f. Travel expenses to attend exams on campus for online courses are paid in

arrears, if the journey is made by public transport payments are made when receipts have been provided.

- g. Bursary funds do not support the cost of taxis.
- h. Students whose attendance rate is less than 90% for the previous three weeks may receive a reduced or cancelled payment as the funds received would not have been spent on their travel to college. They will be sent an email to notify them of the reduced or cancelled payment. Payments will resume providing they have met the attendance requirements.

Course costs bursary

- i. Support will only be provided in kind for course items which are detailed on the course participation record, for example specialist clothing, essential trips, exam re-sits. These are for items that are not available to be borrowed.
- ii. Bursary funds do not reimburse students for items they have purchased.
- iii. Awards are made in arrears to reimburse students for UCAS fees, and costs to attend university open events and interviews, these payments are made by BACS transfer into the student's bank account when a completed course costs form with receipts has been provided.
- iv. When students have been approved as eligible for the course costs bursary, faculty will provide the items needed for the course. Bursary funds awarded for these items will be paid to faculty to cover their costs.
- v. Bursary funds do not support laptops or any other IT equipment, counselling, or counselling supervision, stationery or costs relating to extra-curricular activities.
- vi. When students complete or withdraw from their course all equipment and books purchased using bursary funds must be returned. Any equipment not returned will be charged.

Course costs bursary, course fee – for students aged 19+ only.

- i. Students who are enrolled on funded courses, where the course is not eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan may, in exceptional circumstances be awarded a contribution towards their course fee. Students awarded a bursary towards tuition fees payable directly to Activate Learning, need only pay the balance due less the bursary they have been awarded, usually 50%.
- ii. Students who have confirmation that they have been awarded an Advanced Learner Loan, may be supported with the cost of items needed for their course, bursary funds are not awarded towards tuition fees.
- iii. Students whose course is eligible to apply for an Advanced Learner Loan and choose to pay their own course costs or, if their Advanced Learner Loan is not approved, are not eligible for bursary support.

Students enrolled on ESOL courses.

- i. Course costs bursaries to support towards your course fees are awarded for the course you enrolled on at the time of your application.
- ii. There is no need to complete another bursary application If you need support for courses that you enrol on later in the academic year; you will need to let us know that you have enrolled on another course so that we can increase your bursary award.

Bursary for vulnerable groups

- i. Students who meet the criteria for bursaries for vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to a bursary if they do not have financial needs and/or their financial needs are covered from other sources.
- ii. Bursary support that is detailed in the Student Support assessment is awarded. An explanation is included on the assessment form if vulnerable students need a travel bursary and live less than 3 miles.
- iii. The bursary for vulnerable groups supports the costs they need to participate which are detailed in the participation costs record for each course. Funds do not support bags, stationery of items for extra-curricular activities.

Meal credits

- i. Students are awarded one meal credit per day and can be used for a free breakfast or lunch on the days they are timetabled to attend their course.
- ii. Students obtain their free meal by presenting their student ID card at the till.
- iii. Students may choose any meal deal options advertised on the plasma screens around college and displayed in our catering outlets.
- iv. Students on work placement or based on a campus without a cashless payment system receive fortnightly payments of £3.50 per day by bank transfer to enable them to purchase meals. Students will have agreed when signing their bursary application to spend the funds on meals and are required to submit receipts for any meals purchased termly.
- v. Students awarded meal credit expenses whose attendance was less than 90% the previous three weeks will not have spent the funds to support them attend timetabled classes. Their next payment will be reduced or not approved. They will be sent an email to notify them of the reduced or non-payment. The following payment will be approved providing they have met the attendance requirements.

Childcare bursary

- i. Students aged 20+ will be awarded a maximum of £230 per week per child to enable students to attend their course. Payments are made in arrears directly to the childcare provider after receiving monthly invoices.
- ii. Students aged 16-19 will be awarded a maximum £50 per week to top up their Care to Learn award.
- iii. Funds are initially allocated for up to two children per household. Funding for additional children will be subject to availability.
- iv. Students enrolled on an on-line course are awarded up to three days childcare for full-time courses and one day's childcare for part-time courses.
- v. Students' childcare providers are informed by email if they have been awarded a childcare bursary and both the student and childcare provider receive terms and conditions.
- vi. Funds to pay childcare invoices are paid directly to the childcare provider.

Accommodation Bursary

- i. Awards are based on the Net household income and the number of nights per week in residential accommodation. This bursary is only open to students who are under 19 years old at the start of their full-time study programme and live further than 15 miles from the college.
 - a. Band 1 - Income less than £27,000 - up to £3,458 for five days / week residence (up to £4,00 for seven days/ week residence for students aged 18+)
 - b. Band 2 - Income between £27,001.00- £32,000, up to £2,305
- ii. Further awards may be made during the second and third term if funds are remaining.

13. In year support

- i. Activate Learning will support students to order replacement travel passes or provide a code for students to order their pass from the company website. Students will receive a text message when their travel pass is available for collection from the Advice Centre.
- ii. Course costs forms are processed throughout the academic year, and funds awarded for costs identified as needed including costs to attend work and industry placements.
- iii. Support may be awarded for students to attend additional days for catchup/revision sessions and exams.
- iv. Approve scheduled payments after checking students' attendance.

References

Net household income - Household income after taxes and National Insurance contributions have been deducted.

SEN – Special Educational Needs

References

Government Guidance

- [16 to 19 Bursary Fund](#)
- [Free meals in further education](#)

- [Residential Bursary Fund](#)
- [Care to Learn](#)
- [Adult Education Hardship](#)
- [Advanced Learner Loans Bursary](#)
- [Bracknell Forest Council Post -16 Transport Policy Statement](#)
- [Oxfordshire County Council post 16 Transport Policy update](#)
- [Reading Council - Brighter Futures Post 16 Transport Policy update](#)
- [Surrey County Council Travel Assistance Policy for learners aged 16 to 25](#)

- **Related Policies and Procedures**

- [FE Student Bursary Policy](#)
- [Privacy and Data Protection](#)
- [Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Policy](#)
- [Schedule detailing when travel expense and meal credit payments are due to reach bank accounts 2022-23](#)
- [Replacement travel passes with details update](#)

Appendices

[Student Bursary Application Form \(16-19\) update](#)

[Student Bursary Application Form \(19+\) update](#)