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## **Student Support Policies and Procedures**

### **Bursary/Free Meals/Access Fund Scheme Policies and Procedures**

*Aim: To set out the college framework within which all bursary applications will be administered.*

Policy Authorisation:	Management: Senior Leadership Team
Date of Policy Update:	September 2022
Date of Policy Review:	September 2023
Policy Author	Assistant Head of Student Services (Student Finance)

# Bursary/Free Meals/Access Fund Scheme Policies and Procedures

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the college framework within which all bursary applications will be administered.
- 1.2 The college follows the Education and Skills Funding Agency guidelines for 16-19 bursaries.
- 1.3 Bursary support is available to students with the greatest financial need and provides a funding mechanism that is fair and consistent. The bursary award provides financial support towards travel and study based on individual circumstances.

## 2. Responsibilities

- 2.1 The Assistant Head of Student Services (Student Finance) is responsible for the management of the bursary scheme and Student Finance staff will support the daily administration of the bursary scheme.
- 2.2 The MIS team is responsible for setting up the IT systems to support the bursary process.
- 2.3 The Student Finance staff are responsible for advising students and staff about the bursary scheme.

## 3. Eligibility Criteria

### 3.1 Bursary A (vulnerable bursary)

Depending on individual need and assessment, a student will receive support that is equivalent to up to £1,200 per academic year if:

- They are a young person in care, including unaccompanied children seeking asylum
- They are a young care leaver
- They are a young person receiving Income Support or Universal Credit in their own right (because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and are living with the student, such as a child or partner)
- They are a young person in receipt of Employment & Support Allowance (or Universal Credit as a replacement for ESA) and Disability Living Allowance (or a Personal Independence Payment) in their own right.

### 3.2 Bursary B (free meal discretionary bursary)

A student will qualify for free meals (in the form of a credit at a minimum of £3.10 per day) and the discretionary bursary if parent(s)/carer(s) are in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit

- Child Tax Credit (provided parent(s)/carer(s) 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. Assessed on the most recent credit award letter to be eligible.
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit - from 1 April 2018, if a parent/carers is entitled to Universal Credit they must have an annual net earned income equivalent to and not exceeding £7,400 (after tax and not including any benefits they get). Assessed on up to the last three of the parent(s)/carer(s) most recent Universal Credit assessment periods/statements to be eligible.

\* Students whose parent(s)/carer(s) are entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 **will not be entitled to Bursary B** but may be eligible for a Bursary C (see below).

### 3.3 Bursary C (discretionary bursary only)

- To qualify for Bursary C, parent(s)/carer(s) must have a household income at or below £23,000. To be eligible, Working Tax Credit will be assessed on the most recent credit award letter or Universal Credit on the last three of the parent(s)/carer(s) most recent Universal Credit assessment periods/statements. If parents/carers are not in receipt of the above benefits, a P60(s) could be supplied as evidence but must show the full household income.

### 3.4 Transition Bursary

- Students who identify/evidence their receipt of Free School Meals in Year 11 of high school and are not eligible for another bursary, will be placed on the Transition Bursary.
- The Transition Bursary only provides free meals (in the form of a catering credit at a minimum of £3.10 per day) and will not qualify the student for any other means of financial support.
- A student could be eligible for Bursary C and the Transition Bursary. In this instance, the free school meal allowance of £3.10 per day would replace the £1.50 catering contribution, otherwise included in the Bursary C offering. A student would not be entitled to both.

### 3.5 The Access Fund

- An emergency fund accessible to any students who experience short-term financial hardship and are struggling to meet the costs associated with college. The fund is there to help cover costs such as textbooks, course materials, DBS checks and can contribute towards some course-related visits. Students may be required to provide evidence of their family's income such as benefit entitlement, P60 or Tax Credit Award Notice, as part of the Access Fund application process.
- A student can qualify for one bursary only but may be entitled to other types of financial support, for example a grant/loan from the Access Fund.

## 4. Application and Assessment

- 4.1 All applications for the college bursary are made online using the online bursary portal, PayMyStudent.
- 4.2 New online application forms received through the online bursary portal with supporting documentation will be marked as received on the online portal.

- 4.3 An administrator in Student Finance will check the college database to confirm that the student has either enrolled at college or has applied to start a programme of study.
- 4.4 If the online application form is incomplete or relevant supporting evidence is missing, Student Finance will contact the applicant via email to advise what is required to complete the application process.
- 4.5 Students will be required to upload any subsequent supporting documentation to the online application prior to assessment of eligibility.
- 4.6 Once all evidence is in place, a bursary assessment is carried out by the Student Finance staff and an award decision is made. The decision is recorded on the bursary online portal.
- 4.7 All applicants who successfully complete a bursary application will receive email notification to check the outcome on the online bursary portal by logging back in.
- 4.8 All completed online application forms received after the end of September will receive a bus pass, if eligible, from the month the application was received.
- 4.9 All students who were in receipt of a bursary the previous year will be required to reapply for a bursary going forwards into their next year of study and will be contacted via email by the Student Finance team with instructions on how to reapply.
- 4.10 The Assistant Head of Student Services (Student Finance) will conduct ad-hoc checks on completed bursary applications to ensure consistency in the eligibility assessment.

## **5. Bursary Elements**

5.1 A student on a bursary may be entitled to help towards the cost of:

- travel to and from college by either bus or train (if you live 1.5 miles or more from college)
- essential course equipment/devices (e.g. art materials)
- essential course 'uniform'
- course-related books
- a contribution towards educational visits
- examination fees
- authorised university visits (e.g. university interviews)
- college arranged work experience related costs
- DBS checks where required for course related work experience

As part of the bursary application an assessment of need will be undertaken to ensure the financial support is used in a way that benefits the students the most.

5.2 There are up to three elements to the bursary.

- a) travel pass, if the student lives more than 1.5 miles walking distance from college
- b) catering credit - free meals if eligible for Bursary A, B or Transition Bursary, or £1.50 contribution if eligible for Bursary C

c) any other college related financial support throughout the academic year

- 5.3 Bursary A students may be eligible for BACS payments after individual assessment of their circumstances have taken place and the in kind college support (see 5.1) does not meet needs.
- 5.4 The travel pass element is issued directly to the student through Student Finance. Blackpool Transport will be in the form of a digital ticket emailed directly to the student's college email address for them to redeem via the Blackpool Transport app. Stagecoach and the college bus will be via the student membership card.
- 5.5 The free meal and catering contribution element is credited to a student's online cashless catering account for each day the student attends college. College will also provide arrangements for free meals for students on days when they are off-site as part of their study programme, for instance attending a work placement or work experience.
- 5.6 If a bursary student requires help with any other financial costs associated with coming to college, then they are required to email Student Finance via the [bursary@blackpoolsixth.ac.uk](mailto:bursary@blackpoolsixth.ac.uk) email address with details of their request, the cost and where it can be purchased. A member of the Student Finance team will then check the student is in receipt of a bursary and process the order.

## **6. Appeals Against Assessment of Eligibility**

- 6.1 Appeals in respect of the bursary award should be made in writing to the Head of Student Services within 10 days of the receipt of the Notice of Entitlement notification.
- 6.2 Appeals can only be considered on the grounds of extenuating circumstances, which have not previously been disclosed, or new financial evidence that has not been considered. Any additional evidence must be included with the appeal.
- 6.3 Applicants will be informed of the result of the appeal within 5 working days of the receipt of the appeal letter and in receipt of all necessary evidence.

## **7. Monitoring**

- 7.1 The bursary fund is monitored at monthly Finance Panel meetings by SLT and the Head of Finance.
- 7.2 There is an annual audit of the bursary fund completed by the Head of Finance.

## **8. Other related policies**

- Attendance policy
- Fitness to study policy
- Transport support policy