



“Inspiring learning, developing character, building futures”

Student Support Policies and Procedures

Financial Support Policy

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

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Financial Support/Free Meals/Access Fund Scheme Policies and Procedures

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the college framework within which all financial support applications will be administered.
- 1.2 Financial Support funding is provided from the 16-19 Bursary Fund. The college follows the Department For Education's (DfE) 16-19 Bursary Fund Guide.
- 1.3 Financial support is available to students with the greatest financial need and provides a funding mechanism that is fair and consistent. The support offered is dependent on the student's individual circumstances and is awarded following an assessment of eligibility and need.

2. Responsibilities

- 2.1 The Head of Student Services is responsible for the management of the financial support available and Student Finance staff will support the daily administration of the financial support schemes.
- 2.2 The Technical Support and MIEX teams are responsible for setting up the IT systems to support the financial support process.
- 2.3 The Student Finance staff are responsible for advising students and staff about the financial support on offer.

3. Eligibility Criteria

- 3.1 There is a range of financial support available to students to provide help towards the essential costs of college studies. The support provided is dependent on a student's individual circumstances and is awarded following an assessment of eligibility and need. This applies to both the vulnerable bursary (Enhanced Bursary) and discretionary bursary (Bursary). More information about the variety of support available and eligibility criteria is available on the website: <https://www.blackpoolsixth.ac.uk/financial-support/>.

4. Application and Assessment

- 4.1 All applications for financial support are made online using PayMyStudent.
- 4.2 New online application forms received with supporting documentation will be marked as received
- 4.3 The Student Finance team 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, an assessment is carried out by the Student Finance staff on eligibility/financial need and an award decision is made. The decision is recorded on the financial support online portal.
- 4.7 All applicants who successfully complete a financial support application will receive an email with a Notice of Entitlement confirming the support they have been awarded based on the financial information provided and the assessment of need.
- 4.8 For any eligible applications submitted after September, bus passes will be issued starting from the month of receipt, provided a need for transport support is demonstrated in the assessment. Please note that financial assistance cannot be applied retrospectively to previous months of the academic year prior to the assessment date.
- 4.9 All students who were in receipt of financial support for the previous academic year will be required to reapply for financial support 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 Head of Student Services will coordinate ad-hoc checks on completed financial support applications to ensure consistency in the eligibility assessment.

5. Financial Support

5.1 A student receiving financial support may be entitled to help towards the cost of:

- travel to and from college by either bus or train (if you live over 1.5 miles from college)
- essential course equipment/devices
- essential course 'uniform'
- course-related books
- a contribution towards essential educational visits
- college arranged work experience related costs

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

5.2 There are up to three elements

- a) travel pass, if the student lives more than 1.5 miles walking distance from college
- b) catering credit - depending on eligibility, students may receive a free meal allowance at a minimum rate in line with the Free Meals in Further Education guidance*
- c) any other essential college related financial support throughout the academic year

*The catering credit may be topped up using the discretionary bursary fund. At Blackpool Sixth, eligibility for free college meals, qualifies students for the use of discretionary bursary fund solely for a top up to the minimum rate to use for the cost of a meal in the days of attendance at college.

5.3 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 will be a physical travel pass, provided directly from the Student Finance office.
- Students using Archway services will receive weekly BACS payments for the ticket**
- Students using train travel will receive a 50% refund of the cost of travel**

*Only one travel pass element is included as part of the financial support offer

** Students using Archway or train travel, will be asked to provide receipts as evidence

- 5.4 The free meal 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. Students will be asked to provide receipts for meals they have bought whilst on placement.
- 5.5 If an eligible student requires help with any other essential financial costs associated with coming to college, then they are required to email Student Finance via the financialsupport@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 financial support, if the items are essential and process the order.

6. Access Fund

- 6.1 The Access Fund is an emergency fund accessible to any student who experiences short-term financial hardship and is struggling to meet the costs associated with college. This is assessed on a case by case basis. 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. The fund is there to help cover costs such as transport, meals, textbooks, course materials, and can contribute towards some essential course-related visits.
- 6.2 A student can qualify for one tier of financial support only but may be entitled to other types of financial support, for example a grant/loan from the Access Fund.
- 6.3 The Access Fund is for short-term financial hardship and typically students will only receive support from this fund for a short period of time. The need for support from the Access Fund will be regularly reviewed. Students may receive support from the Access Fund on a longer term basis, where exceptional circumstances are identified following an assessment of eligibility and need.

7. Appeals Against Assessment of Eligibility

- 7.1 Appeals in respect of the financial support award should be made in writing to the Head of Student Services within 10 days of the receipt of the Notice of Entitlement notification.
- 7.2 Possible grounds for appeal include:
- assessment outcome is incorrect based on the published assessment criteria and thresholds

- there was perceived unfairness or bias in the assessment process
- college policy/procedures were not followed

7.3 Where new evidence has come to light (e.g. new financial information that has not been considered), then a new application should be made with all the relevant evidence. Since the initial assessment is based solely on the evidence provided, it would not be considered an incorrect assessment under the grounds for appeal; therefore, an appeal would be unsuitable in such instances.

7.4 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.

8. Monitoring

8.1 The financial support fund is monitored at Finance Meetings by the Senior Leadership Team.

8.2 Ad-hoc audits of the financial support fund are carried out by a member of the college Finance team, overseen by the Finance Lead.