

Bursary Policy

The 16 - 19 Bursary Fund is to provide financial support to help students overcome the specific financial barriers to participation they face so that they can remain in education.

The Bursary is made up of two parts - the Student Support funding and the Free Meals funding. More information on the scheme can be found on the College website.

BURSARY INCOME

Bursary Funding is grant funding received from the DfE. The Bursary policy will provide clear, accessible and transparent information to students, parents and staff about how the bursary and free meals will be administered, including how the funds will be used, eligibility criteria and the procedures used. The policy will be published on the College website. Success in achieving the aims of the fund can therefore be measured by participation rates, specifically enrolment and retention rates, and at a subsidiary level by tracking achievement, although that is not an aim of the fund. Because the fund is designed to help students overcome individual financial barriers the College must assess the needs of individual learners and cannot make flat rate payments. No student should automatically be awarded a set amount of funding without an assessment of the level of need they have. The fund is intended to help students with the essential costs of participating in their study programme. It is not intended to support extra-curricular activities or services that the College give to students such as counselling, mentoring, learning support or extra tutoring. It is not intended to cover living costs.

ELIGIBILITY

Students (aged 16-19) must meet the residency criteria for DfE funding. Accompanied asylum seekers are eligible for education but not public funds. They should apply to the Home Office for support if they are destitute. Unaccompanied asylum seekers are treated as looked after children and are eligible for the vulnerable bursary. Continuing students aged 19+ who have previously been eligible are in scope for the Discretionary Bursary only. 19+ students who hold an EHCP and are eligible are in scope for the Discretionary Bursary only.

POLICY

There are two types of 16-19 bursaries.

Bursaries for defined vulnerable students - a bursary awarded by the College using criteria in line with the funding rules. Defined vulnerable groups are:

- In care
- Care leavers
- Receiving Income Support or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves, or financially supporting themselves and a dependent living with them, such as a child or partner.

- Receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in their own right and Employment Support Allowance or UC in their own right.

Vulnerable Student bursaries of up-to £1200 will be awarded following an assessment of the types of costs individual students face, and are not automatically awarded the full amount. The College may refuse an application or award a reduced amount because they do not have a financial need, for example because there are no relevant costs or the financial needs are already being met (for example by a partner).

The Discretionary bursary award is to help to overcome the financial barriers to education, this is likely to include but is not an exhaustive or exclusive list - essential books, equipment including specialist clothing and IT equipment, activities that are an essential part of the students' programme of study, for example, study visits, home to College transport, meals - where eligible, examination re-sit fees.

Bursary funding does not support learning support and services that institutions give to students, for example counselling or mentoring, and is not to support general household income.

Free Meals

Free meals are targeted at disadvantaged students and this funding forms part of the overall bursary fund. The criteria used to allocate free meals are available in the gov.uk website. Free meals are provided using the on-site catering facilities for every day that the learner attends for their programme of study. The nominal amount of funding for each meal is £2.61 with enhancements to this being provided from the 16-19 bursary funding. We can provide emergency meal support in individual cases of severe hardship on the days a student attends their study programme, where the student is considered to be in real need, without undertaking the checks on household income or gathering other evidence that would normally be required. This is expected to only apply to a very small number of the total 16 to 19 student cohort. This arrangement is not to continue on an ongoing basis for any individual student - we will exercise our discretion in each case and will be mindful that this flexibility relates to food support only.

APPLICATIONS & GDPR

Students and parents will be invited and encouraged to apply during the enrolment process and throughout the academic year. The College will use a range of communication strategies to help students and their parent/carer feel able to apply for a bursary. If we receive your application, with all the necessary evidence before the 30th September, you will be entitled to receive payment from the start of your course.

Applications received after the end of September will be eligible for payment from the date you submit your application with all the necessary evidence. We are unable to backdate payments due to late application. This is not the date that received applications will have been processed. The College will always endeavour to meet student needs at any time of year, but following the end of September the award may be reduced to fit within the funds available.

The College must check student eligibility in each academic year, which means that the students must apply separately for each academic year.

The College can only process applications that provide evidence of eligibility and where copies are retained for audit purposes. Applications will be refused if the required evidence is not provided or copies cannot be retained.

To ensure that the fund reaches those students who are most in need of financial support the College will base its need assessment on household income, journey to learn, number of dependent children in the household as well as the actual participation needs of the student.

During the application process the College will apply the eligibility criteria established by the guidance documents for bursary funds and free meals. For example; three months of Universal Credit award notices may be required to extrapolate annual household income.

Students and their families are required to make a declaration (whether paper or electronic) that the information and evidence provided is correct and complete to the best of their knowledge and belief. False or incorrect information that leads to incorrect/overpayment may result in overpayments being stopped and

any incorrectly paid funds being recovered. This may also cause a referral to the police with the possibility that the student or family may face prosecution.

All evidence and data received and retained for audit purposes will conform to the College GDPR policy procedures.

AWARDS

Eligibility for a bursary does not automatically mean that funding will be given, it is possible that there will be no award or a limited award. This may be because there is no financial need, the need is already being met or in the case of an in-year application the funds are not available because they are allocated on a first come first served basis. Decisions about which students receive an award and how much bursary they receive must be based on an individual assessment of each student's circumstances and their actual financial needs. It is important to bear in mind that a student's circumstance and needs may change later in the year. A small emergency fund may be retained for this purpose but consequently, DfE recommends that there should be no absolute cut-off point for applications. There must not be blanket or flat rate/fixed rate payments to all students. A discretionary bursary may be larger than a vulnerable group award. Specialist equipment purchased with these funds remains the property of the College and should be returned in good condition at the end of the academic year. Other equipment, tools or protective clothing which may be reusable at a later date should be returned in good condition. The College will give practical consideration to such factors as hygiene, health and safety and wear and tear. The DfE prefers awards to be made in-kind rather than cash as far as possible. The funds must only be spent on the support that has been identified as necessary for them to participate in education. Where awards are made as payments they will be made to the student's bank account.

APPEALS & ADMINISTRATION

Students may appeal an award decision made through the College appeals process (see policies section on our website).

Administration notes and Audit requirements

The academy will use 5% of the bursary funding received (vulnerable group, discretionary and free school meals) to off-set the costs of administration. This will be administered by the finance team at the start of the academic year. The College will make an application for the vulnerable group bursary using the SBSS portal. If new applications are made in-year the College will use any available re-cycled funds before making a new in-year application to the SBSS.

There are clear audit requirements for the collection and distribution of bursary awards. The College must be able to confirm during an audit the records of the application and award to include:

- Application form
- Evidence of eligibility
- Student declaration
- Copy of the student's individual assessment of actual financial need.
- Purpose of the award and its value
- Brief justification of the award
- Evidence of award payments or support provided in kind.
- Clear bursary policy that has been applied consistently for all students.
- Details of any unspent funds being carried forward into a new academic year. A copy of the funding claim sent to SBSS and evidence of the payment received. For example, bank statements and remittance advice.

All documents should be retained for 6 years in either hard or scanned formats. To include household income evidence.

MONITORING OF POLICY

The policy will be reviewed annually, as a minimum. If you have any queries about this policy, please email bursary@qeliz.ac.uk