

FURTHER EDUCATION BURSARY AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT POLICY

1. Introduction

EKC Group receives annual funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) which is allocated by the Group's Colleges to help remove barriers for socially and financially disadvantaged students and ensure that they can participate fully in education.

The aim of this policy is to:

- Set out what funding is available to students and the criteria that needs to be met to receive the funding.
- Ensure fair and consistent practices in administering the funding across the Group's Colleges
- Ensure that funding is allocated to students who have the highest level of need.
- Ensure that funding is prioritised to provide students with access to technology and internet connectivity.
- Meet the ESFA's funding rules.

The policy will be reviewed and updated annually.

2. Funding available to students

Students may apply for a range of bursaries/funding, depending on eligibility criteria. These include:

- 16-19 Bursary Fund
- 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund
- Bursary for Vulnerable Students
- Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund
- Support for Childcare
- Free meals

Further details about each funding stream is provided in section 6.

3. Funding eligibility, terms and conditions

3.1 Eligibility criteria

The eligibility criteria is reviewed and updated annually based on the ESFA published guidelines for that year.

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In accordance with the ESFA's guidelines, EKC Group will always assess a student's legal status and overall financial needs in addition to their eligibility when awarding bursary funding. This will be undertaken for each student, each academic year.

The 16-19 Bursary Fund, 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund are means-tested and applicants will be required to complete the bursary application supplementary evidence form to verify total household income. All income and benefits (including housing benefit, council tax benefit, working tax credits, child tax credits, etc.) are taken into account. If a household is in receipt of Council Tax Support, supplying a copy of the Council Tax Support Notification Letter (which includes a summary of household income and is the means by which the council calculate eligibility for support) will be sufficient evidence to confirm eligibility for Bursary support. If not receiving this support, all relevant household income must be provided. EKC Group does not take into account Child Benefit, Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment when calculating total household income.

Students applying through the Advanced Learner Loan Bursaries for Additional Learning Support costs ONLY will not be means tested.

Unless otherwise stated, students who are on Higher Education, Apprenticeship or Distance Learning programmes are not eligible for bursaries or additional funding support. Higher Education learners should refer to the HE Admissions Policy for information about financial support.

3.2 Terms and Conditions

- An assessment is made based on a fully completed application form, signed by the student and parent/guardian (dependent upon the student's age and circumstances) detailing income from employment and/or benefits along with supporting evidence of all declared income.
- Payments will be made directly to the student via BACS (apart from childcare payments which are made directly to the childcare provider).
- In order for funding to be awarded, the College expects that certain standards of behaviour and attendance will be met. Students are expected to adhere to the Terms and Conditions as published in our bursary application at all times and attend all lessons. 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. However, EKC Group recognises that there may be exceptional reasons why a student cannot attend a lesson and in these instances the College will assess each case on its merits. We will do this in collaboration with our mentor and safeguarding teams.

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- Bursary funds are limited and students are advised to apply as early as possible. EKC Group aims to support all eligible students where possible and consider applications made during the academic year, should an unforeseen situation arise. However, once the funds are exhausted, students may not automatically receive support.
- If a student withdraws from their chosen course of study and decides to leave College, they may be required to repay monies or return equipment supplied/bought through bursary funding.
- Claims for costs can only be made for costs in the current academic year, no back claims can be made for previous years.
- Wherever possible, bursaries will be paid 'in kind'. In-kind payments may include travel passes, vouchers or credits for meals and books or equipment required for a student's programme of learning. Where payments are made, EKC Group reserves the right to ask students to provide receipts to evidence that the bursary payments are being used to help the student's participation in education.
- Bursary payments will be made directly to the student's account unless there are exceptional circumstances where a student cannot manage their own funds.

4. Data Protection and privacy

EKC Group complies with its data protection obligations and will treat all applications and supporting evidence provided by students, parents and carers in a secure and confidential manner.

With the exception of evidence for the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund, we will retain supporting evidence to help us make a decision about eligibility, along with any payment records, for a period of 7 years. At the end for the retention period we will destroy the data via a secure disposal service. Students, parents and carers can find out more in our [Privacy Notice for Bursaries and Financial Support](#).

5. Information for students

Information about bursaries will be published on the website. Students may also receive information about bursaries at Open Days and at interview, enrolment and induction.

6. Digital support for learning

EKC Group recognises that a number of its students will not have access to IT hardware. This means that they may not be able to fully participate in learning and other developmental opportunities and consequently may be placed at a disadvantage. The

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Group's aim therefore is to ensure that as far as possible, bursary funding is prioritised to provide technology so that students who need it can fully engage with learning.

Where students are not eligible for bursary funding but they still require support, dependent on their financial status, EKC Group can loan IT hardware. Students can find out more from their college's welfare team.

6.2 Access to IT hardware

- For students applying through the 16-19 Bursary Fund, priority will be given to students needing access to a device for their learning who do not already have one at home or have not been previously issued one by EKC Group. In the event of providing a device, EKC Group will provide a 'one specification' laptop in its factory state to eligible students to use on their programme of study. The laptop will be owned by the student and will not be managed or maintained as part of the EKC Group's network.
- For students applying through the 19+ Discretionary Support Fund, laptops will be on loan and students will be expected to return them at the end of their programme or when they leave the course.
- Students will be issued with guidance on how to set up and maintain a secure password, install Office and obtain access to online learning software which is needed for their programme of study.
- Where students need a device which is a higher specification e.g. for creative programmes, the college will order the device on behalf of the student, up to a maximum value of £750 in consultation with the curriculum area.
- Students will need to sign an agreement to state that they will keep the laptop secure for the duration of their programme. Laptops which are broken, lost, stolen or sold will not be replaced. Students will be required to inform the College in all such cases.
- Students will need to make their own arrangements for IT support and insurance.
- For students who do not meet the bursary requirements but need access to a device as a requirement of their course, the College will make every effort to loan a laptop subject to availability.

7. Information about individual funding/bursary streams

7.1 16-19 Bursary Fund

Students may apply for bursary funds for any of the following elements:

7.1.1 Travel costs

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Bursary funds for students aged 16-18 will be administered in conjunction with the Local Authority Transport Schemes 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.

Travel support will normally be provided in the form of a travel pass using the most cost-effective form of transport. However, the College will exercise discretion on this decision where another form of support is deemed more suitable. Students eligible for local authority travel assistance can request assistance with the cost of the contribution they are required to make. The conditions of travel funding are as follows:

- There is an upper limit of £1500 per student per year (students can apply for more subject to circumstances/status). This is a contribution and students will need to 'top up' any outstanding travel costs.
- Lost or stolen bus passes will be replaced for an administrative fee charged by the bus company. Individual daily or weekly tickets will not be replaced.
- Students who live within 2 miles of the College will not be funded unless students provide evidence of extenuating circumstances e.g. disability or caring commitments.
- Colleges will fund the cost of the Travel Saver. This is a photo ID card and enables the student to receive a 50% discount on all train fares. The cost of the card is paid directly to the student to enable them to purchase the card.
- Colleges will issue weekly tickets for the first 6 weeks for new students where there is a delay in the arrival of a travel card. Subject to a completed Bursary application with supporting evidence having been completed and submitted. Returning students may apply for a travel card earlier.
- For students who travel by car, mileage will be paid at £0.-40 per mile. Park and ride costs (Canterbury College only) will be funded.

7.1.2 Equipment and sundries

- Books
- Assistive Technology which is not covered in the Additional Learning Support budget
- Uniform and footwear. EKC Group provides a stock of PPE for students' use e.g. safety boots, but where students opt to purchase their own but cannot cover the costs, the bursary fund may be used to procure such items.
- Kit (hairdressing, beauty, catering, animal care, creative, computing)
- Laptops (which are subsequently owned by the student).

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7.1.3 Trips – educational and enrichment

- Students will not miss out on a curriculum trip because of hardship. Mandatory course trips will therefore be fully funded for bursary students to a maximum of two trips per academic year. The trip must be directly related to enabling the student to pass the course. Each College will establish mandatory trips with the Heads of area before the academic year begins and inform the bursary team so that funds can be allocated.
- Educational trips will take priority over enrichment trips. Where funds permit, bursary students may apply for funding for enrichment trips and placements.

7.1.4 Eligibility for the 16-19 Full Bursary (including Travel)

Age
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August 2023 to be eligible for help from the bursary fund in the 2023 to 2024 academic year. • Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a discretionary bursary if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
Residency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must have a legal right to live and study in the UK.
Household income
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Household income must not exceed £30,000 per year. • All income and benefits (including housing benefit, council tax benefit, working tax credits, child tax credits, etc.) are taken into account. EKC Group does not take into account Child Benefit, Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment when calculating total household income. • For parents/guardians or students who are self-employed, EKC Group will assess income based on gross profit, but taking into account any business expenditure. For example, household items, mortgage and food would not be deducted from gross profit but servicing and maintenance of equipment, purchase of stationery, etc. would be deducted.
Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must be enrolled on a programme funded by the ESFA or other appropriate funding body.

7.1.5 Travel to Learn Bursary

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Students with a household income above £30,001 but below £32,000 are eligible for support with travel to learn costs only

<p>Age</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August 2023 to be eligible for help from the bursary fund in the 2023 to 2024 academic year. Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a discretionary bursary if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
<p>Residency</p> <p>Students must have a legal right to live and study in the UK.</p>
<p>Household Income</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household income between £30,001 and £32,000 per year. All income and benefits (including housing benefit, council tax benefit, working tax credits, child tax credits, etc.) are taken into account. EKC Group does not take into account Child Benefit, Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment when calculating total household income. <p>For parents/guardians or students who are self-employed, EKC Group will assess income based on gross profit, but taking into account any business expenditure. For example, household items, mortgage and food would not be deducted from gross profit but servicing and maintenance of equipment, purchase of stationery, etc. would be deducted.</p>
<p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students must be enrolled on a programme funded by the ESFA or other appropriate funding body.

7.2 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund

Students who are facing financial hardship and who are aged 19+ can claim from this fund for elements such as:

- travel
- course materials and equipment (including technology and internet connectivity on a loan basis)
- childcare (for students who are 20 or over only. If a student is under 20, they should apply for childcare costs through the Care to Learn scheme. The upper limit for childcare is £8,500 per year)

7.3 Vulnerable Students Bursary

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Students in certain groups may apply for this bursary, provided there is evidence of financial need. The bursary for vulnerable groups can pay up to £1,200 per year to a student participating on a study programme that lasts for 30 weeks or more. Students on study programmes of less than 30 weeks are paid a pro-rata amount. The bursary amount will be based on an assessment of needs so students may not receive the maximum amount in all cases. Students who fall into one or more of the following categories may apply:

- In care
- 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 or Personal Independence Payments in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right

Where students meet the eligibility criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups but their financial needs are already met, they have no relevant costs or do not need the maximum award, the College may decide not to award a bursary. In all such cases, the College will explain the reasons to the student.

7.4 Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund

Advanced Learner Loans provide a source of fees and support to help people aged 19 and over undertake general and technical qualifications at levels 3, 4, 5 and 6. A loans bursary fund is available to help vulnerable and disadvantaged loan funded learners to overcome cost associated with study which may prevent them from taking part in or continuing in learning.

The loans bursary fund provides the following:

- learner support funding for financial hardship, travel, childcare and residential support
- learning support activity for 'in-learning' support, such as support for teaching assistants or reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.

Student must have received approval of the Advanced Learner Loan before they can apply for a bursary and must meet the eligibility criteria.

7.5 Support for childcare

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Students who are under the age of 20 when they start their course can get help with childcare costs of up to £160 per child per week through Care to Learn funding. The College can help students with an application and payments go directly to the childcare provider who must be OfSTED registered.

Students aged over 20 can apply for support with childcare costs of up to £8,500 per year through the Discretionary Learner Support Fund / Advanced Learner Loans Bursary. Payments go directly to the childcare provided who must be OfSTED registered.

7.6 Hardship fund

Some students will occasionally encounter extreme hardship and will need additional support dependent on their circumstances. The College will not assist with prior debt i.e. debts accumulated prior to enrolment or during the first College term. The fund can cover payments for the following elements dependent on students' needs and the availability of the funding:

- UCAS fees
- Clothing for work interviews
- Travel to work experience
- Travel to university interviews
- Travel to open days at universities
- Course fees
- CSCS cards
- SU cards (Totum)
- Passport for work experience
- Emergency clothing
- Emergency accommodation
- Emergency help with utility bills
- Emergency food supplies
- Other items at the discretion of the College, dependent on need

7.7 Free meals

Students aged 16-18 or aged 19-25 with a valid EHCP at the beginning of the academic year who live in a household that is in receipt of one of the benefits below are entitled to free college meals on days they attend study or activity that is part of their course. (i.e. work experience).

- Income Support
- Income based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income related Employment Support Allowance

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- Support under part IV of the immigration an Asylum Act 1999
- The Guaranteed Element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (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.
- 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 per year

The Meal Deal provided will meet at least the minimum value stated by the DfE each day that the student is on site and will be supplied through the College's catering outlets. Alternative arrangements will be made for students who are studying off site in examples such as placements.

All students receive a free breakfast regardless of their status on days that they are in College (subject to funds being available).

8. Appeals

If any student is dissatisfied with the decision regarding their award, they can appeal in writing to the Student Support department within their respective College. All appeals will be acknowledged within 28 working days. A decision will be made within 14 days. Appeals will be made via a panel to ensure a fair and equitable approach. Appeals will also be reviewed by the relevant College's senior member of staff.

9. Complaints

If a student has a complaint about the way in which their bursary application has been managed, they should follow the Group's [Complaints Procedure](#).