

FE Bursary Support Policy

2026-2027

Introduction

1.1 Bursary support funds are provided by the Department for Education (DfE) and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) to support those students most in need to meet the costs of accessing and participating in education. This funding is used to support with costs that include but are not limited to travel, childcare, essential equipment/trips, free meals and where applicable hardship payments.

The funding is broken down into the following categories:

- ❖ Section 2 - 16 – 19 Bursary Fund
- ❖ Section 3 - 16 – 19 Bursary Fund for Young People in Vulnerable Groups
- ❖ Section 4 - 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund
- ❖ Section 5 - Advanced Learner Loan Bursary

1.2 The DfE publishes guidance which sets out the criteria for financial support for students and University College Birmingham sets its criteria for distributing this funding in accordance with the guidelines provided - [16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide: 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK](#)

1.3 UCB's Bursary Support Policy will ensure equitable access and administration of the funds with guidelines to maximise support for students facing financial hardship as a barrier to learning. The policy is designed to ensure that funding reaches those students who are most in need of financial support and therefore, assessment and awards are made on actual financial need.

Eligibility of Individual Funding Schemes (Sections 2 – 5)

2. 16 – 19 Bursary Fund

2.1 There are varying levels of support available to students through the 16-19 bursary fund. Please see section 2.3 for a breakdown of the support available and eligibility criteria for each area of support. To be eligible to receive any support from the bursary fund students must:

- be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31/08/26 OR;
- be aged 19 - 25 on 31/08/26 and have an EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan);
- be aged 19 on 31/08/26 and continuing on a study programme they began when aged 16 – 18;
- meet the residency criteria set by the DfE funding regulations for post-16 provision;
- be enrolled on a publicly funded DfE/WMCA course subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality provision;
- experience financial barriers to undertaking learning, including low household income¹ (£35,000 or less) and be able to evidence this; OR

¹ *Income is classified as a working income from wages, income from a pension or income held in all accounts if not in receipt of a qualifying benefit or wages from employment.

- be in receipt of, or have parents or guardians who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:
 - Universal Credit with an annual gross income of no more than 35,000
 - Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
 - attending a minimum of 2 days study per week
- Maintain acceptable levels of attendance/engagement and behaviour. This includes consideration of whether attendance has been affected by a disability or illness. Please see 7.2 for a breakdown of attendance policy regarding the bursary.

2.2 The following students are **ineligible** to receive any assistance through the 16-19 Bursary fund:

- Students on Higher Education courses (level 4 and above)
- Young people on Waged Apprenticeships
- Students in Prison or a young offender institution or who have been released on temporary licence (ROTL), for example, on a day release.

UCB will also consider any other sources of financial support received by a young person, parent or guardian when deciding whether to award a bursary.

2.3 The following categories are support provided by the 16-19 bursary fund. The eligibility criteria may differ depending on the support category.

2.3.1 Travel Support

Students who are eligible for bursary support may be able to access support with their travel to and from College within the West Midlands. This is provided in the form of a travel pass issued by the College or by fortnightly travel payments. Funding will be awarded based on number of days expected to attend College and costs will be equivalent to the most cost-efficient mode of transport. To be eligible for this support students must:

- live a minimum of 1.5 miles away from University College Birmingham – Summer Row Campus – (this is reduced to a 1 mile distance for those who reside in a category 1 area of multiple deprivation) - [Deprivation 2019 \(All Indices\) - Birmingham Postcodes — Birmingham City Observatory](#)
- live in the West Midlands travel zone. Breakdowns of these zones are included in the following links:
 - Bus travel zone - [Our operating area | NX Bus West Midlands](#)
 - Rail travel zone - [Find my rail zones - West Midlands Network \(tfwm.org.uk\)](#)
- have a household income of £35,000 or less per annum
- OR be in receipt of one or more of the benefits listed in section 2.1

Please be aware that students living in zones 1-3 of the West Midlands travel zones will be issued a bus pass or funding for bus travel. You will only be considered for a train pass or the cost of train travel if you live in zones 4 or 5.

2.3.2 Out of County Travel

For those students who travel to us from outside of the West Midlands, we can provide Out of County support. This will be provided through either a termly train pass (where possible) or through fortnightly support payments which will contribute to the cost of the travel. To be eligible students must:

- live outside of the West Midlands travel zone area
- have a household income of £35,000 or less per annum
- OR be in receipt of one or more of the benefits listed in section 2.1
- be studying on a course they cannot access closer to their permanent address

If a student receives their fortnightly travel support in the form of a cash payment, this will not exceed £150 per month and is considered as a contribution to the cost of travel. Fortnightly travel support rates take into account distance travelled.

2.3.3 Other Travel Needs

For students whose travel needs are not met by the above funding provision we can consider alternative support arrangements. Eligible students would be any student who cannot access public transportation for a reason they can evidence e.g. medical condition. Applications for this level of support will be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

2.3.4 Uniform and Equipment Support

Students who are eligible for bursary support and on one of the following courses may be entitled to support with costs for essential Uniform and Equipment:

- A course within Creative Services
- A course within College of Food
- A course within Construction
- Level 2 Cabin Crew and Aviation
- Level 2 Early Years
- T Level Education and Early Years
- Level 3 Health and Social Care
- T Level Health
- A course within the Automotive department

To be entitled to this support students must:

- Be enrolled on a course within the departments listed above
- Have a household income of £35,000 or less per annum
- OR be in receipt of one or more of the benefits listed in section 2.1

If eligible, these students can be supported with the costs of essential uniform and equipment necessary for their course. All orders for uniform and equipment funded by the bursary must be made or approved by the College. We will provide funding for essential uniform and equipment costs only up to a total of £350.00 unless there is an exceptional circumstance. We cannot fund replacements or extra uniform unless under exceptional circumstances.

Eligible students enrolled in the Sixth Form Centre studying A-level maths or further maths or level 3 core maths will be provided with a calculator needed to access their course. Students are

responsible for the equipment purchased and we cannot fund replacements for lost or damaged equipment. If a student purchases their own calculator we cannot reimburse for this cost.

2.3.5 Meal Support

Students who are eligible for bursary support may be entitled to meal support whilst at college.

This support falls into two categories.

Free Meals in Further Education

Students are entitled to free college meals if they live in a household that is in receipt of one of the benefits listed below, and are aged:

- i. 16-18
- ii. 19 on the second year of a level 3 programme; or
- iii. 19-25 with a valid EHCP at the beginning of the academic year

- Support under part IV of the immigration an Asylum Act 1999
- Universal Credit.

The government provide free meals funding for days learners attend study or activity that is part of their course. (i.e. work experience) at £2.66 per day. The college has elected to top this funding up utilising discretionary bursary funds to £3.50 per day, for the days they are timetabled to attend College, for all learners eligible for free meals. Meals will be supplied through the college's catering outlets with funds being loaded onto Student ID cards. Alternative arrangements will only be made for students who are studying off site (collaborative provision) or in exceptional cases.

If a student's household income on their Universal Credit puts them above the eligibility threshold for bursary but they are still eligible for free meal support as per government guidelines, we will top up their meal allowance to £3.50 from the Discretionary Bursary funds.

Other Meal Support

For those students who are eligible for the 16 - 19 bursary funding but not eligible for Free Meals, the College may also provide funding for meals in exceptional cases. The college will provide £3.50 per day for the days these students are timetabled to attend College. Meals will be supplied through the college's catering outlets with funds being loaded onto Student ID cards. Alternative arrangements will only be made for students who are studying off site (collaborative provision) or in exceptional cases.

2.3.6 Care to Learn (C2L)

Young parents under 20 at the start of their study programme may be eligible for Care to Learn funding, which helps cover childcare costs while they study or take part in work placements. It can also cover travel expenses related to childcare.

Eligibility:

- Must be under 20 when the programme starts (funding continues for the duration, even if turning 20 during it).
- Must be the main carer and receive Child Benefit for the child.

Either parent can apply, provided:

- The other parent cannot provide childcare (e.g. also in education or absent).
- Childcare isn't funded through other sources (e.g. early years places or Tax Credits).
Eligibility for C2L is not dependent on household income.

C2L covers up to £180 per child per week for childcare related expenses.

The childcare provider must be registered with Ofsted, and it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that free government childcare funding is fully utilised prior to applying for support from the college.

2.3.7 Other Support Available

Further support may be provided to students who are eligible for the 16-19 bursary. This includes support with:

- Essential trips – students can apply for support with trip costs that are essential to their course
- IT Access – students can apply to loan a laptop from the student support team for the academic year
- Exceptional Circumstances – students who have financial support needs above and beyond what is offered above can make an exceptional support request. All requests must be made through the financial support team and the decisions on funding will be decided on a case-by-case basis

3. 16 – 19 Bursary Fund for Young People in Vulnerable Groups

3.2 Eligibility

Students who meet the criteria, and who have a financial need, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups. Students who are eligible to receive this funding are students who are:

- in care
- care leavers
- receiving Income Support or Universal Credit in their own name because they are financially supporting themselves or supporting both themselves and someone who depends on them (such as a child or partner living with them).
- receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own name, as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own name.

We may also ask for evidence of other income when a student applies so we can look at the financial need of each applicant.

3.3 Support available

Each student who qualifies for the Vulnerable Bursary will be entitled to funding up to the value of £1,200 per academic year, based on an individual assessment of the support required to access education. The amount awarded will depend on the financial need for support to help with the costs of attending college and is not guaranteed at £1,200.

The funds will be used for educational purposes, for example: a travel pass, college meals, uniform and equipment costs.

We can also provide support with:

- Trips that are a compulsory part of the course
- IT Access in the form of a loan laptop
- Exceptional Circumstances – students who have financial support needs above and beyond what is offered above can make an exceptional support request. All requests must be made through the financial support team and the decisions on funding will be decided on a case-by-case basis

Vulnerable Bursaries are designed to help students overcome the individual financial barriers to participation that they face, and institutions must ensure the funds go to those who genuinely need them. No student will automatically be awarded funding without an assessment of the level of need they have. If there are additional participation needs that impact on you attending college, these needs will be assessed.

Students will be awarded the amount of support they need to participate, based on an assessment of the actual costs they have and will not be automatically awarded £1,200. Where the assessment of needs indicates that more than £1,200 is needed to ensure access to education, this can also be supported through the Discretionary Bursary.

4. 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund

4.1 Eligibility

There are varying levels of support available to students through the 19+ bursary fund.

To be eligible for any level of support from the WMCA/AEB Discretionary Learner Support Fund the student must:

- be aged 19+ years on the 01/09/2026
- Satisfy the residency criteria outlined in the DfE's funding rules
- be studying on a programme funded by the Adult Skill Agency up to and including a first full level 3 (if you are aged 19 or over and are in receipt of an Advanced Learner Loan you will instead be considered for support through the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary)
- have a household income of under £31,000 per annum for up to one dependent child (this is increased by £1,000 for each subsequent child they are responsible for, up to a maximum of four children). This will be evidenced by birth certificates, child benefit or evidenced on Universal Credit Statements.
- OR be in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:
 - Universal Credit with an annual gross income of no more than £31,000
 - Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit

4.2 Support Available

There are differing types of support depending on need for individual students.

4.2.1 Travel Support

Students who are eligible for support from the 19+ LSF may be able to access support with their travel to and from College within the West Midlands. This is provided in the form of a travel pass or by fortnightly travel payments. Funding will be awarded based on number of days expected to attend College and costs will be equivalent to the most cost-efficient mode of transport, which in the West Midlands is the bus. To be eligible for this support students must:

- live a minimum of 1.5 miles away from University College Birmingham – Summer Row Campus
- live in the West Midlands travel zone. A breakdown of these zones is included in the following link:
 - Bus travel zone - [Our operating area | NX Bus West Midlands](#)

Students will be issued with bus passes or funding equivalent to the cost of bus travel.

4.2.2 Out of County Travel

For those students who travel to us from outside of the West Midlands, we can provide Out of County travel support. This will be provided through either a termly train pass (where possible) or through fortnightly support payments which will contribute to the cost of the travel. To be eligible students must:

- live outside of the West Midlands travel zone area
- have a household income of under £31,000 per annum for up to one dependent child (this is increased by £1,000 for each subsequent child they are responsible for, up to a maximum of four children). This will be evidence by birth certificates, child benefit or evidenced on Universal Credit Statements.
- OR be in receipt of one or more of the benefits listed in section 2.1
- be studying on a course they cannot access closer to their permanent address

If a student receives their fortnightly travel support in the form of a cash payment, this will not exceed £100 per month and is considered as a contribution to the cost of travel. Fortnightly travel support rates consider distance travelled and household income amounts.

4.2.3 Childcare

Students who are eligible for support from the 19+ LSF may also be able to access support with childcare costs.

We can provide funding for childcare to support up to two children, at a maximum of £100 per child per week. The childcare provider must be registered with Ofsted, and it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that free government childcare funding is fully utilised prior to applying for support from the college.

Childcare through Care to Learn (C2L) is available for students aged under 20 at the start date of the course.

Care to Learn (C2L)

Young parents under 20 at the start of their study programme may be eligible for Care to Learn funding, which helps cover childcare costs while they study or take part in work placements. It can also cover travel expenses related to childcare.

Eligibility:

- Must be under 20 when the programme starts (funding continues for the duration, even if turning 20 during it).
- Must be the main carer and receive Child Benefit for the child.

Either parent can apply, provided:

- The other parent cannot provide childcare (e.g. also in education or absent).
- Childcare isn't funded through other sources (e.g. early years places or Tax Credits).

Eligibility for C2L is not dependent on household income.

C2L covers up to £180 per child per week for childcare related expenses.

The childcare provider must be registered with Ofsted, and it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that free government childcare funding is fully utilised prior to applying for support from the college.

4.2.4 Uniform and Equipment Support

Students who are eligible for bursary support and on one of the following courses may be entitled to support with costs for essential Uniform and Equipment:

- A course within Creative Services
- A course within College of Food
- A course within Construction
- Level 2 Cabin Crew and Aviation
- Level 2 Early Years
- T Level Education and Early Years
- Level 3 Health and Social Care
- T Level Health
- A course within the Automotive department

All orders for uniform and equipment funded by the bursary must be made or approved by the College. We will provide funding for essential uniform and equipment costs only. We cannot fund replacements or extra uniform unless under exceptional circumstances.

4.2.5 Other Support Available

Further support may be provided to students who are eligible for the 19+ LSF funding. This includes support with:

- Essential trips – students can apply for support with trip costs that are essential to their course.

- IT Access – students can apply to loan a laptop from the student services team for the academic year.
- Exceptional Circumstances – students who have financial support needs above and beyond what is offered above can make an exceptional support request. All requests must be made through the financial support team and the decisions on funding will be decided on a case-by-case basis.

5. Advanced Learner Loan Bursary

To be eligible for any level of support from the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary the student must:

- have been granted an Advanced Learner Loan
- be aged 19 years or older at the start of their course and satisfy the residency criteria outline in the DfE's funding rules
- have a household income of under £31,000 per annum for up to one dependent child (this is increased by £1,000 for each subsequent child they are responsible for, up to a maximum of four children).
- OR be in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:
 - Universal Credit with an annual gross income of no more than £31,000
 - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
 - The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit

Students eligible for support from the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary will be able to access the same types of support laid out in section 4.2.

6. Responsibilities and Obligations

6.1 Student Support will provide and assess applications fairly, subject to policy and guidelines, arranging distribution of bursary awards, including any emergency funds.

6.2 Student Support will provide students with an award notice if deemed eligible for funding outlining the support they are eligible for and details of how to access this funding.

6.3. All students are required to complete a bursary application and provide appropriate evidence of household and personal income eligibility at the time of application with a signed declaration.

6.4. All awards are subject to periodic review and students may be asked to provide evidence as to the use of funds awarded to support continued eligibility to funds.

6.5 All students have an obligation to update Student Support if household income or circumstances change during the academic year which may affect their eligibility for funding.

6.6 Students and their guardians are responsible for giving truthful and accurate information. If giving false or incomplete information leads to incorrect payments or overpayments this may result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered. It may also result in a referral to the police with the possibility of the student or their guardians facing prosecution.

7. Supporting Principles

7.1 Budget for the discretionary and advanced learner loan funding is finite; students who are eligible for support are not automatically entitled to it, with the exception of the 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary.

7.2 In the event of limited availability of funding priority will be given to those in most financial need. This includes students who are eligible for the vulnerable bursary along with any student's whose household income is below £21,000.00.

7.3 Awards will be conditional on the learner meeting standards set by the College in terms of their attendance, progress, behaviour and conduct. The expected attendance standard is 90%. Students may be asked to attend a meeting with the financial support team for support to continue if the attendance becomes a concern.

7.4 Equipment given to students on loan remains the property of the College. Students will be asked to return this at the end of their course.

7.5 Students who withdraw from the College may be asked to either return their bus pass/ equipment/ uniform, or to reimburse the College. 7.6 Students have the right to appeal a decision on a funding award. To appeal the learner or parent/guardian must complete an appeal form. All appeals will be looked at by a senior member of the financial support team.

This policy is correct at the time of publication. It may be subject to change on or before the next formal review due in mid-2027