

# FE STUDENT BURSARY POLICY

## Policy Statement

Activate Learning empowers students to participate in education and to complete their course successfully. We recognise that money issues can be a significant barrier to participation and attendance, particularly for the most vulnerable students.

We use the group's annual allocation of Discretionary Bursary Funds to administer the following Activate Learning Bursary Schemes which provide financial support to students most in need.

- Travel Bursary
- Course Costs Bursary
- Bursary for Vulnerable Groups
- Meal Credits
- Childcare Bursary
- Accommodation Bursary

## Purpose

To provide clarity for staff and students about how Activate Learning uses its allocation of Discretionary Bursary funds and Bursaries for Vulnerable Groups during the 2023/24 academic year and to signpost to the relevant procedures.

## Scope

This policy applies to all Further Education (FE) students, who have been assessed as a 'home' student for fees purposes, aged 16 or above on the 31 August and enrolled on a funded further education course at Activate Learning or its subcontracted provision. This excludes apprenticeship students and students aged 14 and 15.

In 2023/24 Activate Learning Bursaries are open to students whose household income is:

- £27,000 or less if 16-18
- £30,000 or less if 19 or over

## Definitions and Acronyms

<b>Bursary</b>	A bursary is money that we can use to award to a student to enable them to study at college.
<b>Completed applications</b>	Applications which include all the required evidence for processing and are

	degree level.
<b>HE</b>	Higher Education – degree level courses
<b>HMRC</b>	His Majesty’s Revenue and Customs – the tax authority for the UK
<b>Home Status</b>	‘Home’ status means the student has met the required residency criteria for educational funding. For more Information on fee status please follow this link <a href="#">UKCISA - international student advice and guidance - England: FE fee status</a>
<b>SEN</b>	Special Education Needs

## Commitment Statement

### Activate Learning will:

1. Review and update the Activate Learning bursary schemes each year once our annual allocation is known. This review covers eligibility criteria, bursary procedures and application forms.
2. Follow Government guidance on how the funds are awarded, ensuring they are used in the most effective and efficient way possible to support the maximum number of eligible students.
3. Carry out a financial assessment for each student to establish their household income and make decisions on whether there is an actual financial need and any additional course participation costs.
4. Publish clear and accurate information about the bursary schemes and actively promote these to new and continuing students across multiple platforms and throughout all stages of the learner journey:
  - throughout the admissions process
  - via our websites
  - social media
  - prospectuses
  - leaflets
  - open event advice sessions
  - targeted communications via email, phone, SMS.
5. Promote Government run financial support schemes, such as Care to Learn.
6. Provide a user-friendly application process and form.
7. Treat all bursary applications as confidential and ensure that all records are stored securely in line with the [Privacy and Data Protection Policy](#)
8. Process applications fairly on a first come first served basis and aim to confirm the outcome of any application within four weeks of a completed application being received.
9. Keep a record of participation costs for each course.
10. Take individual circumstances and financial needs to participate in their course into consideration when making decisions, including the number of children living in the household.
11. Signpost students to the Student Support Team if they cannot access evidence of their financial need, or if they have extenuating circumstances and need a supporting statement for their application.
12. Award bursary funds from the date the student received confirmation of their award.
13. Send clear and accurate communications including the conditions of each scheme. All communications will be sent via email. Parents/Primary emergency contacts of students aged 17 and under on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023 will be sent an email notifying them when the student has been sent a bursary communication. If students do not wish emails to be sent to parents/emergency contacts, please write to the Group Designated Safeguarding lead to let them know.
14. Provide support in kind where possible and by the most cost-effective means.
15. Only make BACS transfer payments into student’s bank accounts in the following circumstances:
  - a. Meal Credits if the student is attending their course that is not taught on campus: SOFEA, WASPS, or during a work placement.
  - b. Refunding students upon submitting receipts for membership to professional bodies, UCAS fees, university open events and interviews.
  - c. Essential items for your course that faculty cannot provide e.g., Faculty cannot provide, for example specialist protective clothing that needs to be fitted prior to ordering.
  - d. N.B Bursary funds do not support laptops or other IT equipment, counselling or counselling supervision or costs relating to extra-curricular activities.
  - e. Travel if it is the most cost-effective method.
16. Provide travel bursary support to students who are already in receipt of a travel bursary and relocate during the academic year. This support will only be provided if funds are still available, and students

have not already received the maximum bursary award. We will only support one change of journey due to relocation in an academic year.

17. Make awards towards course fees, these are considered on an individual basis and will be at a value of 50% of the total fees initially but could be more depending on the students' financial need.
18. Award as many bursary applications as possible, however funds are limited and cannot be guaranteed.
19. Process fully complete bursary applications received by 21 August 2023 within our four-week standard period, if fully complete bursary applications are received by 11 August 2023 the bursary support will be in place for 4 September 2023.
20. Close bursary applications by 29 September 2023 or sooner if most funds have been allocated. We close the fund to reconcile against our allocated budget and recycle any unused funds. Fully completed applications received after 29 September 2023 will be added to a waiting list. If additional funds are identified, we will reopen for applications on the waiting list and process in the order in which they were received. Bursary awards for students on a waiting list are awarded from the date the fund reopens and not back dated.
21. Prioritise awarding travel bursaries when discretionary funds are limited.
22. Not make awards more than £3,500 for Travel and Course Costs bursaries combined, and travel bursary applications will be prioritised over course costs. Further awards may be made over and above £3,500 if funds are remaining in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> terms.
23. Provide an opportunity for students to appeal a decision within seven days of receipt of the application decision. Once the appeal has been considered by the panel of senior managers and a decision has been communicated, there is no further right of appeal.
24. Provide an opportunity for applicants to feedback on our service. Students are also signposted to our Comments, Suggestions and Complaints Policy if they are dissatisfied with our service.

## General Eligibility

Students must be:

- enrolled on a funded further education course and:
  - have right to study
  - fee assessed as a home student for the purposes of further education funding, this is the same as it is for enrolment fee eligibility.
  - adhere to the residency criteria below:
    - Residents of Wales – students who live in Wales and travel to study at an English institution, should approach their home local authority to make an application for Welsh EMA. Students may also apply to their English institution for help from the 16-19 Bursary fund discretionary bursary but are not eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups.
    - Residents of Scotland – students who live in Scotland and travel to study at an English institution, should approach their home local authority in Scotland to make an application for Scottish Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). These students are not eligible to apply for support from the 16-19 Bursary fund.
  - **for the 16-18 bursary**, students must be aged 16-18 on 31st August 2023, or aged 19 and continuing the same course they began when aged 16 to 18 or aged 19-25 with an EHCP with a household income of £27,000 or less. This excludes asylum seekers who do not have to evidence household income.
  - **for the 19+ bursary**, students must be aged 19+ with a net income of £30,000 or less. This excludes asylum seekers who do not have to evidence household income.
  - if students are aged 19+ and enrolling to a course that is eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan, they must have their loan fully approved before applying for a bursary and evidence of their approved loan is required to support their application. We do not support learners with their tuition fee if the course is eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan.

There is specific eligibility relating to each Bursary - please see Student Bursary Procedure for details.

## Responsibilities

Group Student Finance Team are responsible for:

- administering the bursary applications and awarding process.
- assessing applications against the eligibility criteria for each bursary applied for.
- communicating awards and payment schedules by email to students, including parents of students aged 16 and 17.

- processing bursary award payments.
- sending communications to students / parents who have provided an incomplete application to tell

