

Document Category	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Policy <input type="checkbox"/> Procedure <input type="checkbox"/> Position Statement <input type="checkbox"/> Charter <input type="checkbox"/> Code of Practice <input type="checkbox"/> Report <input type="checkbox"/> Plan
Title	Financial Support Policy and Guidelines 2023/24.
Description	<p>Dudley College of Technology receives an allocation of funds from the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and Student Finance. This funding is to support eligible students studying further education courses funded by the ESFA and to help students meet the costs of participating in education and training post 16.</p> <p>This policy makes clear the College's position regarding the administration of the following support funds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 to 19 Bursary Fund • Free Meals in Further Education Funding • 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund • Advanced Loan Bursary
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I. POLICY STATEMENT AND FUNDING DEFINITIONS

Dudley College of Technology (the college) receives an allocation of funds from the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and Student Finance England. This funding is to support eligible students studying further education courses funded by the ESFA and to help students meet the costs of participating in education and training post 16.

Enrolling on a learning programme or course can be expensive. Therefore, before a student starts a course consideration should be given to costs such as:

- Examination or registration fees
- Travel Costs
- Equipment and Materials
- Uniform and Kit
- Childcare
- Eating whilst at college/ or work placement
- Loan IT equipment

I.1 Bursary Support Funds are designed to help support people who face the greatest barriers in education or training post 16; and are available to provide financial support for learners with a specific financial hardship, which may prevent them from taking part or continuing in learning. A key Government priority is to eliminate the attainment gap between socioeconomic groups and to ensure every individual is able to participate in learning and recognise their full potential. Thus, a range of schemes are available to support costs associated with learning for those who are eligible.

I.2 To ensure finance is not a barrier to enrolment, the college will promote all funds and other sources of financial assistance. The funds policies and guidelines state how the funds are allocated and prioritised. There can be no virement between the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund and 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund, however, there may be some “top up” between 16 to 19 Bursary Fund and the Free Meals in Further Education Funding at the college’s discretion. The Advanced Loans Bursary is ring fenced with no virement with any other fund. There is no limit on the amount of the 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund which can be used for childcare where the learner is under the age of 20 at the start of their course, the apportionment of these funds is set at the college’s discretion. Learners below the age of 20 at the start of their course can receive childcare support from the government’s Care to Learn scheme.

I.3 The funds that will be used to support learners in their education are:

- 16 to 19 Bursary Fund
- Free Meals in Further Education Funding
- 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund
- Advanced Learner Loan Bursary

- 1.4 The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund is specifically aimed at students aged between 16 and 19 years facing financial hardship in education. The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund also includes provision for Vulnerable Learners as defined in the ESFA Funding Guidance for Young People.
- 1.5 Free Meals in Further Education Funding is aimed at students who are aged between 16 and 18 in further education and students aged between 19 and 25 with an active Education Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan). Students who turn 19 during their study programme will remain eligible for a free meal until the end of the academic year.
- 1.6 The 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund provides financial help to eligible students aged 19+. It is a means tested fund and the amount a student may receive depends on their family gross household income. The fund can help meet costs such as travel, equipment, exam costs and childcare. Awards from the fund are made to individual students on a discretionary basis. Any award is made subject to satisfactory attendance at college and meeting the college code of conduct.
- 1.7 The Advanced Learner Loan Bursary is provided to help vulnerable and disadvantaged learners who are being funded through a Loan. The fund is administered in the same way as the 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund and supports the same range of assistance including travel and childcare costs. Students accessing an Advanced loan to pay their tuition fees must have the loan “approved” before support from the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary can be agreed.

2 ADMINISTRATION OF THE FUNDS

- 2.1 The college will be responsible for the management of all the funds according to the guidelines laid out by the awarding funding bodies. The college will make awards based upon a proven hardship need, which must be substantiated by evidence which will be retained in accordance with audit requirements.
- 2.2 All individuals wishing to apply for funding support will need to apply using a standard application and provide appropriate evidence of household and personal income at the time of application.
- 2.3 The College will promote availability of funds effectively, with the assistance of key stakeholders to identify vulnerable learners before application. Student Finance subsequently, monitor and report on all aspects of the administration of the funds working with the Data and Finance departments to remain within the budget allocation.
- 2.4 Each application will be assessed fairly and subject to guidelines and the availability of funds.

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- 2.5 Learners will receive an award notice, which will allow access to services such as travel, hardship, meals and childcare support. Learners are expected to notify of any change of circumstances affecting their award and are responsible for notifying the Department of Work and Pensions of their award of funding.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- 3.1 All students are eligible to apply for funding if they are enrolled on a publicly funded course subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality provision.

- 3.1.1 Specific eligibility requirements apply to specific funding streams.

- 3.2 Students must demonstrate financial hardship to be eligible for funding by providing evidence of household income. The maximum household income to receive 16 to 19 Bursary Fund is £35,000 per annum.

The maximum household income to receive Free Meals in Further Education Funding is £16,190 per annum or specified benefits including Universal Credit.

19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund is available to students who demonstrate a financial need, and they live in a home with a maximum household income of £40,000 per annum.

- 3.3 To be eligible for help from the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund students must be under 19 on the 31st August in the academic year before they start their studies. Students will also satisfy residency criteria and be enrolled on an appropriate course of study. Bursaries cannot be paid to learners on Higher Education (HE) courses, waged Apprentices, young people in or released on temporary licence from custody.

- 3.4 Free meals are available for households who are in receipt of specified benefits (as per ESFA funding rules); household income for those in receipt of Child Tax Credit must be below £16,190 and for those in receipt of Universal Credit below £7,400. In a small number of cases, by exception to the general provisions laid out in the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide 2023 to 2024 academic year, the college will have the flexibility to provide meal support to learners in cases of severe hardship, without undertaking checks to household income or gathering evidence that would normally be required.

- 3.5 To be eligible for help from the 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund and a student must be over 19 years of age at the start of their studies. No funding will be awarded to students who are accessing an Advanced loan to pay their tuition fees an application to the Advanced Loans bursary can be made instead.

- 3.6 To be eligible for support from the Advanced Loan Bursary, learners must have an approved active Advanced Learner Loan and meet the eligibility criteria for 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund.
- 3.7 Students will also need to satisfy residency criteria evidencing they have the right to live permanently in the United Kingdom without any immigration restrictions (know as the Right of Abode), or evidencing they are a citizen of a country that is within the European Economic Area (EEA).

They must have ordinarily been resident in the United Kingdom and Islands or the European Union (EU) or the European Economic Area (EEA) continuously for at least the previous three years on the first day of learning.

Asylum seekers and refugees will need to provide a copy of Home Office evidence of residency status.

Generally, asylum seekers are not entitled to public funds. But accompanied asylum seeking children (under 18 with an adult relative or partner) can receive in-kind student support such as books, equipment or a travel pass, unless they have had their application for asylum refused. Unaccompanied asylum seeking children are the responsibility of the local authority and are treated as looked-after-children eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

- 3.8 Maintaining acceptable levels of attendance and behaviour in line with Dudley College Conduct will be necessary to be eligible for support.

85% attendance across each Term will be the minimum level of attendance necessary to receive funding support, for all learners across all programmes.

- 3.9 In the event of limited availability of funds, priority will be given to the following groups:

16 to19 Bursary Fund: Priority Group 1

Young people on learning programmes that meet ESFA eligibility criteria who are:

- In care or care leavers.
- In receipt of Income Support.
- In receipt of Universal Credit and have a tenancy agreement in their own name.
- In receipt of Universal Credit and Disability Living Allowance or Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payments.

Priority Group 2

Young people on learning programmes that meet ESFA eligibility criteria who are:

Struggling to meet the costs of attending college and who come from a home which has a combined annual gross income of under £35,000*.

19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund:

Learners who are unemployed in receipt of a means tested benefit or unwaged dependents of persons in receipt of the above will be prioritised for funding support.

- 3.10 The following learners will not be eligible for support from any fund: learners on Higher Education (HE) courses waged Apprentices, people in or released on temporary licence from custody.

4. SPECIFIC SUPPORT AVAILABLE

4.1 16 to 19 Bursary Fund:

Priority group 1:

Can receive travel support, free meals and where necessary associated course related costs such as mandatory trips that are necessary to complete coursework.

Priority group 2:

May be eligible to receive travel support and free meals subject to eligibility.

4.2 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund:

Learners can be supported with travel support, Examination or registration fees, equipment and material costs, uniform and kit, childcare eating whilst at college/ or work placement where such support is necessary for the completion of their qualification.

4.3 Advanced Loan Bursary:

Learners can be supported with travel support, examination or registration fees, equipment and material costs, uniform and kit, childcare eating whilst at college/ or work placement where such support is necessary for the completion of their qualification.

- 4.4 Where funding is available for Travel support, this will be provided for learners who live within the West Midlands travel area (National Express services); administered via smart phone M Tickets or Swift Card. For learners who are unable to travel independently such as those with an EHCP, the equivalent monetary value of a bus pass will be offered.

- 4.5 Where funding is available for childcare it will be paid at a maximum daily rate of £50 per day, per child. Childcare providers must be Ofsted registered. Funds can be used to provide further help with childcare costs for young parents in receipt of Care to Learn whose costs exceed the weekly maximum costs of the scheme.

If a student's childcare costs exceed any **19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund** allocation, then the student is liable for any additional fees incurred.

Should a student cease to attend or withdrawn from Dudley College of Technology at any point during the academic year, financial support for childcare will finish on the last date of recorded attendance. The responsibility for childcare costs reverts to the student from that date.

- 4.6 Any trip or visit that a learner requests funding support for must be embedded within their course and necessary for the completion of their programme of study. Any learners who are unsure of their eligibility for support should contact the Student Finance Team.
- 4.7 Where a learner is on a work placement that is necessary for the completion of their programme of study and are not eligible for support from the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund or their travel support is not sufficient they are able to apply for exceptional support. All cases will be considered on an individual basis and criteria such as the household income, expectations of the extended work placement, attendance and academic performance will be considered by a panel. Applications for support should be submitted using the Bursary application form. All supporting information must be provided at the time of the application.

5. APPEALS

If a student wishes to appeal against the outcome of an application, this will be reviewed by the Student Finance and Welfare Supervisor. If satisfaction is not reached a further appeal can be made directly to the Executive Director Public Affairs and Marketing. This should be in writing and should set out the reasons for the appeal. The Executive Director Public Affairs and Marketing will respond to the appeal in writing within ten working days. This decision is final.

6. GENERAL CONDITIONS OF FUNDING

The college will strive to:

- Do all it can so no eligible student has to withdraw from their course due to lack of financial support*.
- Take steps to ensure that all eligible students can apply for financial help, thus supporting "widening participation" and the provision of learning for under-represented groups.
- Ensure that any personal information you provide in an application is subject to The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018.
- Ensure that all applications for financial support are dealt with efficiently and fairly.

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- Monitor and review the effectiveness of its financial support for students on a regular basis.
- Dudley College of Technology maintains the right to make in-year adjustments to provisions within the scope of this policy with the approval of both the college's senior management team and its governing body.

*Dudley College of Technology is committed to do everything it can to support its learners; however, it is acknowledged that in all cases funding is limited and cannot be guaranteed.