

# P26 Learner Bursary Policy

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## Introduction

TCHC are committed to ensuring our young people are supported financially whilst in learning with us. We will support you to claim, where possible, any monies that you are entitled to, ensuring you are able to overcome the financial barriers to participation. This will support you with your studies and, where applicable your travel. TCHC will provide all necessary resources to enable you to study effectively. This will not need to be taken from your bursary allocation.

There are two types of bursary available:

### 1 16-18 Vulnerable Bursary

This is up to £1,200 per academic year. It is a mandatory award to learners who fulfil the following criteria themselves:

- 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

### 2 16-18 Discretionary Bursary

TCHC can make discretionary bursary awards to help learners with the cost of travel, or specialist clothing (such as interview clothing, for example). These are items learners would otherwise need to pay for in order to participate. TCHC will award discretionary bursaries according to household income and in three bands –

- Up to £16,190
- £16,191 to £20,187
- Over £20,188.

### 3 Free Meals in Further Education

Learners may qualify for assistance towards the cost of healthy and nutritious food, whilst in attendance on their programme. The award of free school meals is based on the household receiving one of the following benefits.

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guarantee element of State 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 (HMRC))
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit (UC) with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 for each year (after tax and not including any benefits they get)

## Additional information

- TCHC will consider fully completed applications on their individual merit. TCHC will determine the Bursary category and the funding to be allocated to successful applicants. TCHC will assess each application as fairly as possible based on the information supplied. Funds will be awarded in accordance and within the constraints of the Education and Skills Funding Agency and DfE (and within the limited funds available). Learners who are eligible for support are not automatically entitled to it. No Bursaries will be paid until the learner has been accepted on to the course.
- Equipment costs may only be supported by the 16-18 Bursary Services if they are required for the programme they are partaking in. TCHC will assess each application according to the Funding Agency Guidelines and the funding available.
- All funding is determined by TCHC whilst remaining within the funding guidelines.
- Bursaries are awarded to learners specifically for named costs, for example travel, books, equipment and specialist clothing.
- Learners must have their own bank account or a prepaid card in the learners name, we are unable to make payments into a parent / guardian / carers account. Advice and guidance is available.
- It is your responsibility to inform the Department for Work and Pensions about any Bursary or Support Fund awarded to you as this may affect your eligibility for some benefits.
- It is the responsibility of the learner to notify the centre administrator if your situation changes in any way that could affect your Bursary award, for example address, household income, change or withdrawal of a State Benefit etc.

## How to Apply

Applications must be made on the relevant application form and should be returned with relevant supporting evidence to your centre administrator.

## Annex 1

### Evidence of eligibility – vulnerable bursary

Institutions must obtain proof that students meet the criteria for the bursary for vulnerable groups in full. In other words, that they are in receipt of the specified benefits in their own name or that they fully meet the definitions for in care/care leavers. Institutions should ask for evidence from each student and retain copies for audit purposes. For example:

- For students who are in care or a care leaver, written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority - this is the local authority that looks after them or provides their leaving care services. The evidence could be a letter or an email but must be clearly from the local authority.
- For students in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit (UC), a copy of their Income Support or UC award notice. This must clearly state that the claim is in the student's name/confirm they are entitled to the benefits in their own right. The evidence must not state any conditions that prevent them from participating in further education or training. For students in receipt of UC, institutions may also request to see a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a child benefit receipt, children's birth certificates, utility bills and so on.
- For students receiving UC/ESA and Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments, a copy of their UC claim from DWP. Evidence of receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment must also be provided.

UC claimants should be able to print off details of their award from their online account. The evidence needs to be dated within the 3 months prior to applying and starting on their course.

Source for information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2025-to-2026>

## Annex 2

### Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children do not receive cash support from the Home Office and are the responsibility of the local authority. They are treated as looked after children and are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups ('in care' group), where they have a financial need.

When these young people reach legal adulthood at age 18, institutions must consider their immigration status. If the asylum claim is decided in their favour, the local authority must provide them with the same support and services as they do care leavers. As such, they continue to be eligible for a bursary as a student from a vulnerable group until they reach the upper age limit.

Where an asylum claim is not supported, the individual may not be able to stay legally in the UK. When asylum claims have been fully heard/the appeals process exhausted, an individual has no entitlement to public funds (with a few exceptions where the withdrawal of support would be seen as a breach of human rights).

Source for information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2025-to-2026>

## Annex 3

### Eligibility criteria: discretionary bursaries

TCHC will make discretionary bursary awards to help learners with the cost of travel, and in some cases, essential books, equipment or specialist clothing. These are items the learner would otherwise need to pay for in order to participate.

TCHC must base all decisions about which learners receive a discretionary bursary and how much bursary they receive on each learner's individual circumstances and their actual financial need. These will vary from student to student, depending on, for example, their household income, the distance they need to travel to the centre and the requirements of their study programme.

TCHC may decide to retain a small emergency fund from their allocation to support students who face exceptional circumstances during the year due to a change in their situation – if it impacts their ability to participate in education..

Source for information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2025-to-2026>

## Annex 4

### Using household income and establishing individual learner need

TCHC will ensure that bursary funding reaches those learners who are most in need of financial support. Therefore, we will use household income in some way to help establish the amount of support awarded to a learner. This can be used in conjunction with other factors, such as distance to travel from the institution and the number of dependent children in the household.

TCHC may require, the 3 most recent monthly universal credit award statements and/or wage slips. The take-home pay figure in addition to the amount of UC after all deductions will give a total monthly income. Using 3 months statements will act as a guide to the household income for a quarter of a year. Institutions could then estimate assumed income for a full year. Evidence supplied outside of the 3 months prior to application / start on programme will not be able to be used.

Source for information

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2025-to-2026>

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**Document History**

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