



East Coast College

Bursary Policy and Procedure 2024/25

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Bursary Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

The aim of this document is to set out the policy for the distribution of support funds to students. The use of support funds is key to the College's strategic objective to raise aspirations for students and to assist those students who otherwise may not be in a position to attend College.

The College receives support funds for 16-18 and 19+ students from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The College also has its own limited support fund for Apprentices. This Policy is intended to cover all of these funds and where there are differences between them this is identified in the body of the policy.

Some of the funds are received as earmarked funds and others are received as discretionary funds, where this makes a difference the criteria for each will be identified.

The Corporation and its Committees at all time will have due regard to the Seven Principles of Public Life and the requirements of the guidance set out in HMT's 'Managing Public Money.'

2. Aim

The various funds are designed to remove barriers to participation through supporting students to continue in education or training.

3. Conditions

All beneficiaries of these funds should meet eligibility criteria and conditions as laid out by the College and publicised to applicants in information packs and through the College website.

These funds should not be used to displace other types of support available to students e.g. childcare costs which can be covered via Care to Learn or Transport costs that are subsidised by the Local Authority.

Students may only be funded from the support element applicable to their circumstances:

- 16-18 students are funded through the ESFA 16-19 Bursary Fund.
- Students aged 19 continuing on a study programme they began aged 16-18 (19+ continuers) and 19-23 students with an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) are included in the ESFA 16-19 Bursary Fund.
- Apprenticeships are only eligible for support through the College's own apprenticeship support fund.
- 19+ students who are not in receipt of an Advanced Learner loan are funded through the ESFA 19+ student support fund which now forms part of the block adult allocation.

- 19+ students who are funded through an Advanced Learner Loan (ALL) are only eligible for support through the Advanced Learner Loan bursary.

4. Types of support

There are the following types of support:

- Vulnerable Bursary (16-18)
- Discretionary Bursary/student support funds (all age groups)
- Advanced Learner Loan Bursary (19+ ALL recipients)
- College apprenticeship charity support (all age groups)
- Kirkley Poors Land Estate Fund

5. Changes to Arrangements

All arrangements are subject to change without notice if funding agency criteria are amended. At all times the funding agency rules will be the overriding criteria applied to student support and all awards will be made subject to their regulations.

6. Review of Arrangements in Exceptional Circumstances

Funding arrangements may be subject to review in exceptional circumstances if students are unable to attend their usual programme of learning or this is adapted to accommodate on and offsite learning. The College will review the support that is provided to ensure that this is modified and appropriate in line with funding agency guidelines and College policy.

Examples of exceptional circumstances include:

- Central Government national lockdown in the case of a re-occurrence a coronavirus epidemic
- Student's personal or health circumstances preventing them attending their full programme of learning

7. Bursary Procedure

7.1 The Vulnerable Bursary (16-18 students only)

A Vulnerable Bursary is available to help students with their actual costs of participating in College. The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- Those in care¹
- Care leavers²

¹ Those 'in care' are defined as children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (section 31 of the Children Act 1989). Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 defines the term 'looked after child'

² A Care Leaver is defined as a young person aged 16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16; or

- Young people who are in receipt of Universal Credit or Income Support because they are living independently, financially supporting themselves and/or dependents.
- Young people who are in receipt of Personal Independence Payments (PIP) or Disability Living Allowance as well as either Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right.

The maximum value that could be awarded for the Vulnerable Bursary is £1,200.00. This can be awarded to the student in part or full depending on the evidence and requirements/need of the student.

If a student becomes entitled to payments during the year these will be calculated pro-rata to the number of whole weeks remaining in the academic year.

Vulnerable Bursaries will be pro rata for any courses that are less than 30 weeks or part-time.

If a student's situation changes during the course of the year then their eligibility can be reassessed and the level of support offered may be increased, decreased or withdrawn completely. Additional evidence will be required to verify changes in circumstances. There is a responsibility on students to notify the College to changes in their circumstances that might affect their continued eligibility for a bursary.

Students can re-apply for a bursary if their circumstances change throughout the year or if they had a previous award withdrawn.

Criteria for the Vulnerable Bursary are determined by the ESFA, the College will implement all changes required by the ESFA to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the funding.

At present there are no vulnerable elements available to any student aged 19 or over, if these are introduced then the College will amend this policy to comply with the terms and conditions imposed by the ESFA.

Students receiving vulnerable bursary support may also receive additional support from the discretionary element of bursary funding if need is identified.

7.2 Discretionary Bursary

Discretionary student support will be paid to 16-18 year old students from funds received from the ESFA. 19+ students may apply for discretionary student support from the relevant funding stream. Apprentices are not eligible for discretionary student support.

Discretionary student support will be awarded as a full or part contribution towards the cost of the following types of expenditure, where students are unable to meet those costs through any other means. Qualifying expenditure is

a young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16

defined as anything identified by the College as a barrier to success and progression. Examples of qualifying expenditure are as follows:

- Transport
- Examination re-sit fees
- Meals at College and placements including Free College Meals (see section below)
- Equipment and materials required
- Educational visits or work-related activities which are a compulsory part of the course curriculum
- Childcare support for all students. Young parents up to the age of 19 can apply for Care to Learn funding.
- Course fees support – for students aged 19+ studying under a level 3 qualification. This element is strictly limited by ESFA regulations for support in exceptional circumstances for learners who need financial support to start or stay in learning where other funding options are unavailable.
- University interviews
- Other expenses approved by the College that are related to supporting attendance and participation.

In order to assess ability to meet the costs of expenditure, the College will request information relating to all aspects of household income. Information supplied may be verified with relevant agencies such as Jobcentre Plus. Applicants may also be requested to provide information about other funding students might be receiving to support these activities, e.g. Local Authority support for transport or childcare support. Failure to supply requested evidence of income may invalidate the application.

Support will be awarded by receipt of a completed application including required evidence of household income or qualifying benefits by date order received. Support will be prioritised to students with household earnings under a gross income of £30,000 a year or receiving qualifying benefits.

Students with household income which do not fall within the £30,000 threshold may be funded at the College's discretion if sufficient funds are available, dependent on individual need and circumstances. Exceptions will be authorised by the Head of Finance.

If need is identified by the College's safeguarding and wellbeing team, a student's application may be supported at the Colleges discretion by a statement detailing circumstances and support required.

From 1st September 2014 the Government introduced Free Meals in further education. This provides a fixed amount for all eligible students to have a free meal in College. This allocation will be separate from the other support funds identified above. The College will ensure that it complies with all terms and conditions for this support fund. Students who are eligible for free meals will be provided with supermarket vouchers for any days that they are off site.

Students who do not qualify for free meals may request support through the discretionary bursary funds to use in the College canteens.

8. Key Criteria

Any student on an appropriately funded course can be considered for discretionary student support if it is deemed by the College that the fund will help support their learning or will avoid them withdrawing from college. Support in all cases will be awarded subject to the availability of funding and the level of award will be dependent on need.

Students on full cost courses are not entitled to financial support under funding agency guidelines.

When applicable, equipment purchased from the fund should be returned by the student when their need is finished and this equipment will be utilised to support future students.

Support with transport costs will be prioritised for students living 2 miles or more from College but at the College's discretion this will be waived for students, where deemed necessary. The College will pay the cheapest mode of transport or the best value option.

Transport will be capped at £35 per week, any exceptions to be authorised by the Head of Finance.

Support with transport costs will not be made if the applicant is already in receipt of third party support from elsewhere, e.g. mobility allowance element of Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payments.

Childcare support will normally be limited to £6,000 per student. For students with two or more children, a maximum of £8,000 could be awarded after taking into account any government funding. Exceptions will be authorised by the Head of Finance.

9. Application Process

All students must complete an application on the relevant online or paper application form.

All applicants will be required to provide evidence to verify their eligibility for support.

Where required, evidence of income will include any source of household income from employment, investment and benefits. This information will be self-declared but also evidenced by P60s, wage slips, Universal Credit statements, tax credit award notifications, letters of confirmation of benefits from the job centre or DWP, or a Self- Assessment Tax Return form or certified accounts for those self-employed. Changes to 16-19 Bursary Fund guidelines in 2023-24 states evidence will not be required if household circumstances have not changed from the previous year providing the student signs and dates a self-declaration form. This is only relevant to 16-19 bursary applications; other support funds remain unchanged and evidence will be required annually.

For students in care or a care leaver, written confirmation of their current or previous looked after status from the relevant local authority.

10. Assessment

Applications will be assessed by staff employed by the College in accordance with funding agency guidance. The Finance Business Partner or/and Head of Finance, will approve awards before applicants are notified of the decision. Awards from the Apprenticeship Student Support fund will need to be approved by the Trustees of the fund.

Documentary evidence to support applications will be checked and copies retained by the College for audit purposes.

The College aims to inform all applicants in writing of the outcome of their application within 14 working days from receipt of the fully completed documentation. During periods of high demand, for example, enrolment and the beginning of term, assessments could take longer to complete.

The team will assess the eligibility of each application, and make decisions on the level of award to be given. They will also decide the type of support to be offered (in kind or cash) and the frequency of the payments to be made. Payment arrangements can be reviewed when either requested by the applicant or if the College feels it appropriate to do so in order to support continued participation in learning.

Positive assessments will be made in date order received.

11. Payments

There will be a presumption that support will be provided in kind or payments will be made for specific goods or services (e.g. uniform or transport), direct to the supplier.

For 19+ students, cash payments or transfer of funds to a bank account may be taken into account as income by the Job Centre. It is recommended that applicants seek individual advice from the special benefits advisor at the Job Centre before accepting any cash payments.

Where a cash payment is deemed to be necessary the preference will be to make payments by BACS directly into the student's bank account, where this is practical.

Where a student has submitted an application for either the vulnerable or discretionary bursary they may be awarded provisional/emergency support pending the approval of that application. Provisional/emergency payments will only be made where absolutely necessary and where a preliminary review of the student's application indicates that they meet eligibility criteria for one of the types of support.

12. Participation

Payment of bursaries and student support will be conditional upon a range of factors. This will include regular attendance, satisfactory behaviour and completion of coursework, assignments and formal assessments.

All students are expected to maintain a minimum level of attendance in accordance with the College policy to continue to be eligible for support. Attendance will be monitored regularly. Authorised absence will be classified

as attendance. Expected attendance is 100% and if it falls below 95% then support may be reduced accordingly.

If the conditions of payment are not met, then awards may be suspended or frozen temporarily until conditions are met. The student will be told of the reasons of the temporary suspension and what they are required to do. If the conditions of payment continue to be unmet, the student will receive a written warning. Continued non-compliance after the written warning will result in any outstanding support payments being withdrawn. The student can re-apply for support in the event of it being withdrawn. The College will want to see evidence of compliance of the conditions before approving support.

13. Appeals

Applicants may appeal in writing against the decision on awarding of support by emailing the Head of Finance at studentfinance@eastcoast.ac.uk

14. Data Protection

All partners under this Policy agree to share data and information in order to verify a person's eligibility and to verify the position for any student that moves between providers during the year.

The information contained within the application will be treated as confidential and only shared where necessary to progress an application.

Hard copy information and information stored electronically associated with applications, decisions and panels will be kept to satisfy funding agency and College audit expectations. Any personal information that is kept will be kept securely and for a period of 7 years.

East Coast College has produced a privacy notice for students which is in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. The privacy notice is available on request and can be found on the College website at www.eastcoast.ac.uk/legal If you have any questions about this notice or the ways in which we use your personal information, please contact our Data Protection Officer at Rotterdam Road, Lowestoft NR32 2PJ or dataprotection@eastcoast.ac.uk

15. Reporting

Use of the funds will be reported periodically throughout the year to the Senior Leadership team. At the year end the College will report the use of the ESFA and ESFA funds in accordance with funding agency requirements. The use of the funds will also be audited at year end if required by the funding agency.

Use of the Apprenticeship Support Fund will be reported at least annually to the College Corporation through the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Use of all funds will be analysed for equality and diversity information and reported accordingly.

16. East Coast College Apprenticeship Support Fund

The East Coast College Apprenticeship Support fund is funded from monies donated to the College. Students are assessed using the same criteria as the Discretionary Learner Support Fund and awarded support based on need. Due to the limited nature of the fund, awards from this element are strictly limited and as a consequence the maximum award is £1,200, although most awards will be considerably less than this amount.

17. Kirkley Pools Land Estate Fund

This is a grant awarded by the Kirkley Poor's Land Estate trust to the College to support students for the relief of need, hardship or distress living within the boundary of the ancient Parish of Kirkley. Students are assessed using the same criteria as the Discretionary Learner Support Fund and awarded support based on need. An annual reconciliation of spend is reported to the Kirkley Pools Land Estate Fund Trustees.

18. Equal Opportunities

All aspects of the applications process and associated decisions will be managed with due regard to equal opportunities legislation and the College's Equality and Diversity policy.

East Coast College's recent or forthcoming publications can be transcribed into alternative formats or languages, upon reasonable request.