16-19 BURSARIES AND DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUNDS POLICY
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1 Introduction

1.1 These notes set out Bridgwater and Taunton College’s 2017/2018 16-19 Bursaries and Discretionary Learner Support Fund Policy for:

- Students aged 16 to 18 attending Bridgwater and Taunton College; and,
- Students’ aged 19 and over attending Bridgwater and Taunton College.

1.2 The College will:

- Take positive action to ensure that all students know and understand what they are able to apply for through the 16-19 Bursaries and 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) through information given at open evenings and in publications
- Handle applications quickly and fairly
- Monitor and review the use of 16-19 Bursaries and DLSF.
- Ensure the 16-19 Bursaries and DLSF are distributed according to clear policy
- Assist with completion of application forms for students with disabilities.

2 Policy Statement

2.1. The 16-19 Bursaries is provided by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and the 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) is provided by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

2.2 All funds are awarded to assist students with the costs associated with coming to college therefore helping to breakdown any financial barriers that may discourage participation.

2.3 All funds are limited; therefore eligibility does not indicate entitlement to it. Early application is advised.

3 Types of Financial Support

- Help towards travelling to and from the college
- Help towards materials, equipment and other course related costs
- Help towards the cost of field trips and residential, which are essential to attend in order to achieve the desired learning aim
- Help towards the cost of registered childcare during the academic year (DLSF students only who are aged 20 or over)
- Students aged 19 and under will be eligible to get full funding for childcare through the Care to Learn Scheme (not income assessed, however maximum limits apply)
- Help towards tuition fees for specific courses, (where fee remission is not applicable, or where students are not eligible for Advanced Learning Loans) - DLSF students only
- Examination fees – DLSF students only
- Help towards the cost of onsite accommodation (Residential Bursary and Residential Access Funds)
- Help towards the cost of progression on to higher education (UCAS fees, travel to university interviews etc.)
- Free School Meals for qualifying students who are aged 16 to 18 years old and Students aged 19 to 24 who are subject to a Learning Difficulty
Assessment (LDA) or Education Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan) - (proof of eligibility will be required on application)

- Help towards meals for students who meet eligibility requirements, and where funding levels allow
- Help towards any additional expenses/emergencies which may occur during the year.

4 **Eligibility 16-19 Bursary Fund**

4.1 Students must meet the following criteria set by the Education Funding Agency – this criteria applies to all funding for students aged under 19:

- Must be aged under 19 at the start of the 2017-2018 academic year
- Must meet the residency criteria
- Must not be studying an Apprenticeship or undertaking any waged training
- Must be studying a programme funded by the Education Funding Agency

4.2 Students must also meet the following eligibility criteria set by the College:

- Gross parental (household) income must be below £35,000, proof of income and/or benefit entitlements will be requested on application

4.3 The College will financially assist all students who are not eligible for assistance from the 16-19 Bursary with the cost of bus travel providing they live over 2 miles from their chosen centre of study and the cost for the academic year is in excess of £395, up to a maximum award of £300 will be allocated and paid in instalments upon receipt of evidence of purchase. In addition students who are eligible for the 16-19 Bursary may be eligible to apply for further assistance depending on the overall cost to them.

5 **Eligibility for Guaranteed Bursary**

5.1 Students under 19 and who are considered to be vulnerable young learners may be eligible for up to £1,200 (after removal of essential fees and costs), this award is based on students studying a programme of at least 30 week duration, students studying less than this may be eligible for a proportional award. The following criteria apply for this bursary:

- Young Person currently in Care
- Young Person Leaving Care
- Young Person in receipt of Income Support
- Young Person in receipt of Universal Credit (restrictions apply)
- Young Person in receipt of both Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance
- Young Person in receipt of both Employment Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payment
- Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (under 18) who are under Local Authority care.

5.2 The College will require written evidence of the above statuses from the relevant agency working with the young person and/or written evidence of benefit entitlements.
5.3 The Guaranteed Bursary award (once essential costs have been removed) will be divided into monthly or termly payments (depending on the student’s preference) and paid directly into their bank account. Payments will only be made whilst the student is studying, i.e. term time only.

5.4 All students eligible for the Guaranteed Bursary will be required to sign a contract with the College outlining responsibilities and requirements.

6 **Eligibility for 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF)**

6.1 Students must meet the following criteria set by the Skills Funding Agency – this criteria applies to all funding for students aged 19 or over:

- Must be aged 19 or over at the start of the 2017-2018 academic year
- Must meet the residency criteria
- Must not be studying an Apprenticeship or undertaking any waged training
- Must be studying a programme funded by the Skills Funding Agency
- Must not be studying a Community Learning funded programme
- Must not be funded for their programme through a Student Loan (Advanced Learner Loan or Higher Education Loan).

6.2 The following income thresholds apply for students requiring help towards the costs laid out in section 3 of this policy.

- Student and partner joint gross income up to £35,000
- Single student gross income up to £20,000.

6.3 Students may receive up to 70% towards tuition fees, up to £600 towards exams and other essential course costs and up to £600 towards travel, dependant on their income. Students applying for a bus pass should be awarded at the same level as 16-18’s.

6.4 Advanced Learner Loan funded students may apply to the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary (ALLB) for help with the cost of Travel, Childcare or other course related costs not included in the loan value. (See ALLB policy)

6.5 Higher Education Loan funded students may apply to the HE Bursaries for specific assistance (see Higher Education Student Support Funding Policy)

7 **Eligibility for 20+ Childcare Fund**

- Help towards childcare costs may be provided to students aged 20 and over up to a guided maximum limit of 90% of the total cost, providing that this cost does not exceed £5,000 per child per academic year
- The guided maximum award which can be made in order to retain the childcare provision over the holiday periods (with the exception of the Summer holiday) is 50% of the weekly award to the student
- Childcare support is awarded only for the days the student is required to attend College or a required placement
- Childcare providers must be registered with Ofsted which will be checked
- Childcare funds are paid either to the student or the childcare provider monthly in arrears as requested by the student
The student remains liable for any payment to the provider in circumstances where payments are stopped due to lack of attendance or withdrawal from the course.

Students aged 19 and under will be eligible to get full funding for childcare through the Care to Learn Scheme (not income assessed, however maximum limits apply).

The income thresholds for this support are the same as in section 6.

8 **Eligibility for Residential Bursary and Residential Access Fund**

- The Residential Bursary scheme is available for full time FE students studying specialist programmes not widely available at other colleges i.e. Agriculture, Motor Sport, International Baccalaureate. The Fund may be able to help towards the total cost of accommodation (excluding meal plans) if living on campus, in hosted or rented accommodation that is closer to the centre than their usual home address from where daily travel would be over 15 miles each way or more than an hour each way using public transport.
- Eligibility will be means tested using the same criteria as 16-19 Bursary and eligible students may be entitled to an award of up to the full cost of accommodation excluding meal plans.
- Students aged 16-18 studying non land based but other specific courses that are not available at a more local institution to their home, or where public transport is not available or feasible, or where daily travel time is excessive, may also be eligible to apply for help towards accommodation fees through the Residential Bursary.
- The Residential Access Fund is available for full time students aged 19 and over where public transport is not available or feasible, or where daily travel time is excessive, and the course they are studying is not available at a more local institution to their home address.

All students under 25 years of age who are living with parents/carers will be assessed on parent/carer gross income.

9 **Application Process**

- Complete the relevant application form fully.
- Provide evidence of the benefits / income of the household.
- Return the application form with the relevant evidence to:

  **Student Support Team, Bridgwater & Taunton College, Bath Road, Bridgwater TA6 4PZ**

Once we have received the application form along with the required evidence we will assess the student in respect of the compulsory costs related to their course. If they have been successful we shall notify them by letter or email of the amount they have been awarded and how these funds will be paid. The majority of awards made from the 16-19 Bursaries and Discretionary Learner Support Funds are transferred internally to the relevant department. If the student has been awarded funds that are paid directly to them, they shall be informed of when and how this money will be paid.
10 General Attendance Requirements and Monitoring

10.1 Students who receive support from any of the aforementioned schemes, will be required to attend timetabled lessons at a minimum level of 90%. Any student who falls below this level may have their support suspended or withdrawn. Students who may find this level of attendance difficult due to disability or caring responsibilities should notify Student Support as soon as possible to allow us to make necessary adjustments.

11 Appeals Procedure

11.1 If a student has been refused payment from the 16-19 Bursaries or Discretionary Learner Support Fund and they believe our decision is wrong, or if they believe that the level of support they have been offered is wrong, they can make an appeal against our decision.

11.2 Grounds for appeal

- **Eligibility** – The student will have been refused assistance if we do not believe that they meet the eligibility criteria. Our letter explains why we believe they do not qualify for any support. If the student decides to make an appeal against our decision to refuse support because they believe that they do in fact meet the eligibility criteria, **they will have to explain to us why they believe we are wrong and they may have to provide us with additional documentary evidence to support their appeal**

- **Level of support** - If the student is considering making an appeal against the level of support they have been offered, **they will have to explain to us why they believe that they are entitled to additional support and they may have to provide us with additional documentary evidence to support their appeal (for example, a bank statement).**

The student will need to think carefully about whether or not they have a good reason for asking us to reconsider the level of support available to them. Their application will already have received careful consideration and an appeal is not likely to be successful unless they can provide relevant new information that was not considered in their original assessment.

11.3 Procedure

If the student decides that they have grounds to make an appeal, they must write to us within 14 days of receipt of the allocation.

The original application, appeal and any other information the student supplies to us will be given fresh consideration. The appeal will be dealt with within 15 working days by a panel consisting of a member of the Student Support team, the senior tutor for the student’s area who will represent their interests and the Director of Student Services. The student will be advised of the outcome in writing.