

16 - 19 BURSARY FUNDS

FINANCIAL
SUPPORT FOR
STUDENTS
AGED 16 - 18
INCLUSIVE

Student Guide 2023 - 2024

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The 16-19 Bursary Fund is given to Colleges by the Government to help students in financial hardship complete their course successfully. If you are eligible for support from the Fund, we will try to make sure that you get the help you need in order to succeed.

VULNERABLE GROUPS BURSARY

If you, the student, are in one of the following categories you may be eligible for a Vulnerable Groups Bursary Award of up to £1,200 to help with costs related to participation. Students will be assessed on their individual financial needs, therefore not all eligible students will receive an award:

- In care or 'looked after'
- Care Leaver
- In receipt of Income Support
- In receipt of Universal Credit (conditions apply)
- Disabled young person in receipt of BOTH Employment Support Allowance AND Disability Living Allowance, or PIP.

16-19 BURSARY

Students can apply for financial support if they are studying an ESFA Funded course of Further Education and have a NET household income (this is take home pay) of £40,000 or less (£53,000 for help towards bus/train travel only); this will be assessed by the College, and evidence of income will be required.

WHAT CAN I GET HELP WITH?

You can receive support for essential course costs. These may include:

- Help towards travel
- Help towards the cost of compulsory materials and equipment
- Help towards the cost of compulsory residentials, educational visits
- Other compulsory college related costs, if appropriate

FREE SCHOOL MEALS /MEAL CARD SCHEME

Free School Meals will be provided to all students aged 16 - 18 at the start of their course who are or their parents/carers are in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-based 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
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit with a household income less than £7,400

Students who are studying at either the Bridgwater, Taunton or Cannington Campus will have their Free School Meal deal loaded on to their Student ID card following successful application which will entitle them to £5 to spend in the restaurant outlets on each site, for each timetabled day. Students who do not qualify for Free School Meals but whose NET household income (this is take home pay) is below £40,000 may also be eligible for free meals whilst at College under the Meal Card Scheme

HOW DO I APPLY?

Application forms are available from The Student Support Teams at either the Bridgwater or Taunton Campuses. If you have any further questions, or would like assistance to complete the form, please contact the Student Support Team at Bridgwater (01278) 441233 or Taunton (01823) 366438 who will be pleased to assist.

You will need to:

- Complete a 16-19 Bursary Application Form
- Provide evidence of your/your parents/carers financial circumstances (either benefit evidence or wage slips/bank statements). Please send in photocopies as originals cannot be returned
- Provide written evidence from the Local Authority or your Social Worker if you feel you are eligible for the Vulnerable Groups Bursary Award
- Provide details of the support you need
- Provide evidence of free school meals entitlement
- Post the completed application form and evidence in a sealed envelope, marked 16-19 Bursary Fund Application - Confidential and return it to The Student Support Team, Bridgwater & Taunton College, Bath Road, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA6 4PZ.

Evidence can be emailed to us separately at studentsupport@btc.ac.uk please ensure you state the name and date of birth of the student the evidence relates to in your email.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

If you wish to know the outcome of your application before the start of your course in September, please return a completed application form before **18 August 2023**. Applications will be processed as quickly as possible.

During term-times, a decision is usually made within 15 days of receiving a completed application form and all the necessary evidence, however this may be longer during busier periods.

We will send you (the student) a letter:

- Informing you about your award and how payment will be made, or
- Informing you that your application was unsuccessful and why, or
- Asking you to provide us with further details, or evidence.

Please note:

It will delay your application if you have failed to complete the application form fully or not attached any relevant evidence.

HOW WILL THE COSTS BE MET IF I AM AWARDED MONIES FROM THE 16 - 19 BURSARY FUND?

Any support awarded towards materials or trips will be paid from the 16-19 Bursary Fund via internal transfers to the appropriate College area, where possible, or paid against invoices or receipts where compulsory items need to be purchased from an external company.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING PAYMENTS TOWARDS BUS TRAVEL

Payments will be made based on the most cost effective daily ticket price of public bus transport at the beginning of the academic year. This will be worked out based on the costs posted on the websites of the bus companies who operate the service you will use. If you are choosing to travel by train then the amount awarded will be based on a comparable bus route. If there are no bus routes that you are able to access to college and therefore need to use the train please notify us of the costs so that we are able to work out your payment amount.

We operate an attendance check system to authorise payments i.e. if weekly attendance drops below 80% in any week a warning email will be sent and if it does not improve, payment will be withheld until it returns to a level above 80%

Some evidence of tickets purchased will be required during the first month of study to ensure we have

calculated your award correctly and we may request further evidence at intervals throughout the academic year to satisfy audit requirements. You will be given advanced notice of when we will need this evidence by email to ensure tickets are retained by you for production.

We will pay in advance for the whole of September and attendance checks will begin at the start of October to allow for timetable or course changes.

REFUNDS

Where essential kit or equipment has been purchased externally rather than being paid to the College, refunds up to the amount awarded will be made by the relevant curriculum area.

WHAT ARE THE COLLEGE'S RESPONSIBILITIES?

It is the College's responsibility to use the 16 - 19 Bursary Fund to support students who are:

- In any of the categories for the Vulnerable Groups Bursary Award
- In genuine financial hardship
- Highly motivated and committed to succeeding on their course.

The College is expected to process all applications fairly and to make sure funds reach those students who are most likely to face financial difficulties whilst studying. Priority groups include:

- Students dependent on benefits (and who may reach the age of 19 during the year)
- Students in care or 'looked after'
- Care leavers
- Young carers
- Students on probation or ex-offenders
- Lone parent families
- Students on basic education or ESOL courses
- Students with disabilities who need support with transport or other significant costs.

Remember:

Attendance will be monitored and your tutor will be asked to report on your progress. Funds will only be released following receipt of positive reports.

WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES?

It is your responsibility to:

- Provide all the details and evidence asked for on the application form
- Make every efforts to succeed on your course
- Attend timetabled lessons and placements at a minimum level of 80%
- Make sure you understand what you must do to continue to receive support.

Students who leave their course before it is completed may be asked to repay awards they have received and return books/equipment to their tutor, and return any loaned equipment to Student Support.

CAN I APPEAL AGAINST THE DECISION?

If you wish to appeal, a letter stating your case should be sent to the Director of Student Experience, Bridgwater & Taunton College, Bath Road, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA6 4PZ or email Mark Nettle on nettlem@btc.ac.uk. Your tutor or the Student Union may help you with your appeal and may support you in taking the matter to an Appeals Panel.

WHAT OTHER SUPPORT MAY BE AVAILABLE FROM COLLEGE?

Care to Learn

If you are a student parent (aged under 20 at the start of your course), you may be eligible with help towards the cost of your childcare through the Care to Learn scheme. For further information, please contact the Care to Learn helpline on 0800 121 8989 or visit

www.gov.uk/care-to-learn