

16-19 Bursary Fund Policy

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Ownership and Control

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16-19 Bursary Fund

The 16-19 Bursary Fund is funding that the government has given to educational institutions to provide support to students who need financial help to stay in education.

Bursary Types

There are two types of bursary – Vulnerable and Discretionary - and you can apply for ONE only:

Vulnerable Bursary

Level One

Students in the defined vulnerable groups are eligible for a bursary of up to £1,200 a year to a student participating in study programmes lasting 30 weeks or more. Students on study programmes of less than 30 weeks may be paid a pro-rata amount.

The defined vulnerable groups are:

- Young people in care or care leavers. This includes a young person placed with a foster carer by the local authority.¹
- Young people claiming Income Support or Universal Credit (in their own name).
- Young people getting both Disability Living Allowance (and the new Personal Independence Payments) and Employment Support Allowance (ESA) (in their own name).

Level Two

Students who are in receipt of free school meals or have a total household income of £16,190 or less can apply for a weekly bursary. Household income can be evidenced by receipt of benefit and/or P60, Tax Credit Award Notice or evidence of self-employment income. The allowance will be established upon agreement by the school to make awards to students. All evidence of household income will be in strict confidence. Payments will be made upon authorisation from the school that the student has satisfied all the attendance and behaviour requirements.

Level Three

Students who have a total household income of between £16,190 and £25,000 can apply for a bursary for specific educational purposes. These may include:

- Costs of transport
- Meals in school
- Books and Equipment
- Educational Trips

¹ The ESFA definition of 'care leavers' is:

- 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
- 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.

Household income can be evidenced by receipt of benefit and/or P60, Tax Credit Award Notice or evidence of self-employment income. All evidence of household income will be processed in strict confidence.

Discretionary Bursary

This fund is used to assist students who may be experiencing financial hardship to complete their course and it is only able to make contributions towards your costs incurred for attending college. It is cash-limited and priority will be given to certain groups (e.g. students who are economically disadvantaged).

Students who should consider applying for a Discretionary Bursary may be:

- a student whose parents/carers are currently claiming other means-tested benefits including Income Support, Working Tax Credit/ Child Tax Credit, Income Based Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), who is not entitled to free school meals.
- a student who is a young carer and are not in receipt of a carers allowance
- a student who does not fall under the categories listed above, but considers themselves to be in financial hardship.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility for funding does not give the individual the automatic right to funding. Assistance awarded to a student will always be conditional on the attendance and behaviour requirements outlined in this policy. The student must remain on the course and fully comply with the Student Agreement. Students must also meet the age and residency criteria below:

Age

To be eligible to receive a 16-19 Bursary in the 2020-2021 academic year, the student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31st August 2020. Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a discretionary bursary if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

These 2 groups of aged 19+ students can receive a discretionary bursary while they continue to attend education (in the case of a 19+ continuer, this must be the same programme they started before they turned 19), as long as their eligibility continues and the Trust considers they need the support to continue their participation. Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for vulnerable groups.

Residency

Students must also satisfy the residency criteria set out in the ESFA Funding Guidance (a person on 1 September who is settled in the UK, and has been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands for the three years preceding the 1 September).

Asylum Seekers

Those under 18 with an adult relative or partner and those aged 18 and above:

- are entitled to education;
- are not entitled to public funds;
- can apply to the Home Office for suitable housing and cash for essentials.

Unaccompanied children:

- are the responsibility of the local authority;
- are to be treated as 'looked after' children;
- are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

Evidence of eligibility

Students must provide proof that they meet the criteria for the bursary for vulnerable groups in full (i.e. provide proof 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). Copies of evidence provided will be retained 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 must also 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

Attendance & Behaviour Requirements

To receive any funds once the school has acknowledged eligibility, participating students must adhere to the following criteria:

To receive the bursary allowance, students should have at least 95% attendance at all timetabled lessons and registrations unless they have prior permission from the Sixth Form Team for authorised absence. Approved Examination Study Leave, participation on approved educational trips, or approved representative activities will be counted as an attendance. If students are unacceptably late to lesson or registration, then these will count as an absence and, therefore, the payment will not be made for that week.



Students must abide by the standards of behaviour and effort as agreed at the start of their learning programme as detailed in the Sixth Form Code of Conduct Agreement, including successfully completing their probationary period at the start of the course. If poor behaviour or effort is reported, the student may not receive their bursary payment for that week.

Assessment

Each Sixth Form Team will assess applications with supporting documentation in the strictest confidence. Any student who believes they are eligible for any level of funding from the 16-19 Bursary Fund should complete an application form and return it to the Sixth Form Administrator as soon as possible after admission in September. The closing date for applications will be the final week of September. A student in receipt of any level of bursary must inform the Sixth Form Administrator of any changes to family circumstances that may affect the support during the academic year. Students who become eligible during the academic year should contact the Sixth Form Administrator and make an application.

Copies of the application form may be obtained from the Sixth Form Administrator or via any of the Sigma Sixth websites.

Complaints and Appeals

Eligibility

If the application for a bursary grant has been declined, parents; guardians and students will have the right of appeal to the Sigma Sixth Executive Committee in all cases if it is felt the application has been withheld without justification.

Complaints regarding the awarding of weekly payments

Students will have the right of appeal in all cases if it is felt the payment has been withheld without justification. In the first instance, the student should contact (with supporting evidence if appropriate), within one school week, their school's Sixth Form Administrator. If the student is unhappy with the Sixth Form Administrator's decision to withhold payment, the student may appeal to their school's Head of Sixth Form. If the decision is upheld by the Head of Sixth Form, the student may appeal to the relevant Head teacher for final ratification.

All other complaints should follow the procedures outlined in The Sigma Trust's Complaints Policy, a copy of which is available on any of the Sigma Trust's websites.

Awards and Payments

The following values have been determined for the 2020-21 Academic Year.

Vulnerable Bursary Awards

Level 1 A payment of up to £30 per week of school attended by students up to a maximum of 38 weeks.

Level 2 A payment of up to £25 per week of school attended by students up to a maximum of 38 weeks.



Level 3 A level 3 award, may be an individual payment for a specific purchase or a weekly payment up to a maximum of 38 weeks. Payments will be at the discretion of the Head of Sixth Form and will not exceed £570 per academic year.

Discretionary Bursary Awards

The Head of Sixth Form has discretion to support any pupil with a bursary payment which will not exceed £250.

Payments

In line with ESFA guidance, the Trust will make Bursary Fund payments via BACS transfer directly into the student's account on a weekly basis where possible.