

FE-LEARNER SUPPORT FUND

Policy Document

Incorporating: The 16 - 19 Bursary / The 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund /
The Advanced Learner Loans Bursary / The College's Travel Scheme / Free College Meals

THE FE-LSF

The Further Education Learner Support Fund is a collection of funding streams combined for ease of application. If you are studying a further education course and are eligible for assistance this will be the fund which you need to apply. Most of the funding awarded is Government money that the college administers on their behalf. As a result there are rules and regulations governing its administration.

1. All awards are subject to availability of funds, College and Government priorities and a range of other factors.

Awards are discretionary and NOT guaranteed.

2. Many delays are the result of insufficient evidence - Applications are subject to an evidentiary standard.
3. Payment of these bursaries may have implications for your benefit eligibility.

FE-LSF POLICY STATEMENT

Heart of Worcestershire College will strive:

- To ensure that all eligible students can apply for financial help, thus supporting widening participation and the provision of learning for vulnerable and under-represented groups.
- To ensure that the fund is distributed in a consistent and equitable way, determined by Government guidelines. Student eligibility will be determined through strict criteria based on a standard formula where possible.
- To ensure that any personal information provided in an application is subject to the Data Protection Act.
- To ensure that all applications for financial support are dealt with efficiently, fairly and in compliance with Heart of Worcestershire College's Single Equality Scheme.
- To monitor and review the effectiveness of its financial support for students on a regular basis.
- To ensure that wherever possible, that no eligible student has to withdraw from their course due to financial hardship.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- All applications to the FE-LSF should be returned to The Advice Centre as soon as possible. Funds are limited and offered on a 'first come first served' basis.
- Awards are decided by a Student Finance Panel.
- All applications must be accompanied with copies of evidence of income (such as a Tax Credit Award Notice). If applicants do not provide evidence of income, awards will be delayed until the relevant evidence is provided.
- In order to receive support students are expected to maintain a rate of 90% attendance, progress academically and adhere to the Positive Behaviour Policy. Students whose attendance is less than 75% will have their funds stopped automatically.
- Payments will be made to the student bank account via BACS, either on a regular, irregular, or on a one off basis depending on the support allocated.

STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT BREAKDOWN 2020/21

ASSESSMENT GROUP	INCOME TIER	INCOME LEVEL	ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE
16 - 19	Vulnerable Tier	Vulnerable young people - as defined by Government criteria.	£1,200 bursary plus three terms of travel support, assistance with mandatory equipment, trips and uniform costs. Recipients can also get assistance with meal costs.
	Discretionary Tier	Household income less than £25,000.	Three terms of travel support, assistance with mandatory equipment, trips and uniform costs. Recipients can also get a mealcard.
	Free Travel	Household income less than £45,000 but greater than £25,000. Priority will be given to young carers and those with caring responsibilities.	Three terms of travel support in the form of bus or train passes.
19 - 23 (24+ studying a level 2 or below)	Single Learner 19+	Students income less than £14,000	Three terms of travel support, meal costs, assistance with childcare (adults aged 20 years and over), mandatory equipment and uniform costs. Recipients can also get assistance with fees and hardship in exceptional circumstances.
	Single Learner 19+ (Remitted)	Students income less than £14,000	Three terms of travel support, assistance with childcare (adults aged 20 years and over). Recipients can also get assistance with meal costs and hardship in exceptional circumstances.
	Cohabiting Learner 19+	Household income less than £25,000	Three terms of travel support, meal costs, assistance with childcare (adults aged 20 years and over), mandatory equipment and uniform costs. Recipients can also get assistance with fees and hardship in exceptional circumstances.
	Cohabiting Learner 19+ (Remitted)	Household income less than £25,000	Three terms of travel support plus assistance with childcare (adults aged 20 years and over) Recipients can also get assistance with meal costs and hardship in exceptional circumstances.
	Single Learner 19+	Students income less than £14,000	Three terms of travel support plus assistance with childcare (adults aged 20 years and over) Recipients can also get assistance with hardship in exceptional circumstances.
19 + (studying level 3 to 6) Student funded via an Advanced Learner Loan	Single Learner 19+	Students income less than £14,000	
	Cohabiting Learner 19+	Household income less than £25,000	

IMPORTANT NOTES

- To secure assistance with travel costs students must live more than 1.5 miles from their main campus of study. Receipts will be required for any bus/train passes and petrol costs.
- If you are under 20 years of age and would like assistance with childcare costs you can apply to the Care to Learn scheme at www.gov.uk/care-to-learn
- As a rule childcare support is paid directly to childcare providers
- Required equipment and their associated costs are agreed at departmental level.
- Students will need to provide proof of purchase of any mandatory uniform or kit costs for 2019/20, therefore you will need to keep all receipts.
- Payment will be based on achievement of a set target of 90% attendance, reasonable academic progress and adherence to the positive behaviour policy
- Funding is finite and will be awarded on a discretionary basis, it is not guaranteed
- The panel retains the right to make one off individual allocations in addition to bursary payments in extreme circumstances.
- Receipts will be required prior to any refund being paid for equipment/uniform or books.

FE-LSF SUPPORT BREAKDOWN

16-19 BURSARY OR 'VULNERABLE TIER'

Up to £1200 Bursaries for students who are:

- Young people in care or care-leavers
- Young people in receipt of income support or universal credits
- Disabled young people in receipt of Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit and Disability Living Allowance. (Or Personal Independence Payments).

The Panel will assess the most appropriate form of support after discussion with the '16+ Team' for each individual case and make allocations based upon this assessment, to the value of £1200. Thus it is likely that a mixed package of support will be the most common form of bursary package.

Payments and other assistance will be based on achievement of a set target of 90% attendance, reasonable academic progress and adherence to the Student Standards. The Student Finance Panel will retain the right to make allocation decisions on individual students who have attendance of below 90% who can demonstrate exceptional circumstances or illness. The Panel retains the right to make one off individual allocations in addition to Bursary payments in extreme circumstances. These allocations would most likely take the form of emergency meal-cards or purchase of goods to support independent living.

16-19 DISCRETIONARY TIER

Bursary funding will be allocated to students who can demonstrate eligibility. Support can be offered towards costs associated with your course such as travel and equipment. Payments will be made by BACS direct to the learner's account or purchased on their behalf. Priority will be given to students who are young carers and those with caring responsibilities.

FREE COLLEGE MEALS

Learners eligible for free meals will be given a daily allowance available on the ID card which can be used to purchase food in our on site cafes.

TRAVEL SCHEME

Learners aged 16-19 whose household income is too high to receive support via the Discretionary Bursary, and who live more than 1.5 miles from their main campus of study can access assistance with three terms worth of travel support.

Eligible household incomes begin where eligibility for the Discretionary bursary ends (£25,000) and continues up to £45,000.

In all but exceptional circumstances this fund will be issued in the form of bus or train passes.

19+ DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT (DLS)

Students 19-23 at the start of their course studying up to a Level 3 Programme and learners over 24 but studying a Programme up to a Level 2 will be assisted by the 19+ DLS portion of the FE-LSF. The table divides this cohort into four sections based on the following:

- If you are over 19 and live 'at home' i.e., with parents or guardians, the decision will be based upon your income, also if you have moved out and live alone.
- If you have moved in with a partner, then we would base our decision upon your joint income- the household income.

These groups have separate income levels and are treated as separate groups of the same tier. Students from these groups would be eligible for similar assistance.

If your course fees have been remitted, i.e., funded by the government, then the FE-LSF cannot assist with the cost of equipment for your course, instead required equipment, uniform and trips will be made available by the department in which you study. Priority will be given to those aged under 24 caring responsibilities.

19+ ADVANCED LEARNER LOANS BURSARY

This bursary is geared towards assisting with travel & childcare costs associated with the completion of a learning aim. It is only open to those students who are funding a learning aim through the Advanced Learner Loans System. In exceptional cases students can request assistance with hardship. Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund is also used to fund in year Learner support, for more details contact Customer Services.

APPEALS PROCEDURE

Appeals against the outcome of an application can be made in the first instance to the Admissions and Advice Centre Manager in writing. If not satisfied with the result of this review, a further appeal may be made to the Vice Principal Information Systems and Student Experience.

FE-LSF SUPPORT FUND PROCEDURES

1. Students are required to apply for support each academic year.
2. Students receive information on the various streams of student funding through enrolment information such as the College prospectus and website, Student Finance literature, at induction and whilst on their course.
3. All additional mandatory course costs are verified by the Student Finance team. (Courses MUST be Government funded to qualify for assistance – your tutor will be able to confirm this). Receipts will be required for reimbursement of all costs - including travel.
4. The Student Finance Panel will assess claims based on means tested criteria that are re-evaluated each year in line with the rules and regulations produced by the Government. Students must apply for financial support by completing the appropriate application form ASAP.
5. Funds are limited and awards made later in the year will be subject to the availability of funding.
6. Application forms are available on each campus.
7. Completed applications, are dated when received, and logged on a database in compliance with the Data Protection Act.
8. The Student Finance team will assess the application against the eligibility criteria, check the evidence and discuss the application with the student if required. Any other potential sources of funding will also be considered.
9. Processing is normally completed within 4 weeks of application although due to volume of applications at the start of the year, applications and notifications are likely to take longer.
10. All applications are assessed by the Student Finance Panel. The Student Finance Panel will consider the applications and decide the level of any award. The Panel retains the right to make discretionary awards to students in special circumstances where the financial situation is preventing attendance at College.
11. Payments will be based on achievement of a set target of 90% attendance, academic progress and adherence to the Student Standards. The Student Finance Panel will retain the right to make allocation decisions on individual students who have attendance of below 90% who can demonstrate exceptional circumstances or illness. The Panel reserve the right to make one off individual allocations in extreme circumstances.
12. Students with attendance below 75% will have their award stopped automatically.
13. The Finance team will notify the student by email of the decision, usually within 14 days of it being made. (If any student requires a hard copy of this then please contact the Student Finance team.)
14. The Student Finance Team arranges for the agreed award to be paid in the most appropriate manner, either: By BACS into an individual student bank account, payment direct to a childcare provider or the college finance Department.
15. Completion of attendance confirmation by tutors or lecturers will be required before releasing payment, and attendance will be checked before payments are made to childcare providers. Attendance threshold for payment is 90%, unless specific mitigating circumstances can be proved to the Student Finance Panel.
16. Students can appeal against decisions made regarding awards by writing to the Student Finance Panel within 14 days of receipt of the letter notifying them of the award. If not resolved at this stage, a further appeal can be made to the Vice Principal Information Systems and Student Experience. The appeal will be considered within 4 weeks of receipt. The applicant is informed of the outcome within 7 days. The decision of an appeal is final. (This process will take longer during the Autumn Term due to the number of applications.)
17. Applicants should be aware that payments of these bursaries may have implications for their entitlement to social security benefits. This has a particular bearing on Income Support, Family Credits, and certain Social Fund payments. You should discuss these implications with the appropriate authority.
18. For 16-19 students luncheon vouchers maybe available for days of study off campus, ie work placement/ work experience if awarded a meals.
19. The Panel will assess the most appropriate form of support after discussion with the '16+ Team' for each individual case and make allocations based upon this assessment, to the value of £1200.