



## Learner Bursary Policy

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## **A. Rationale**

Solihull Sixth Form College recognises that some students may face financial barriers to post 16 study. The College is committed to supporting students in overcoming any financial barriers to allow them to participate in their studies.

Students at Solihull Sixth Form College travel from across the Solihull and Birmingham boroughs and we recommend that when students enrol at the College they consider any additional costs they may face such as travel, meals, equipment, trips and visits.

The College receives a government grant each year to provide financial support to eligible students. This financial support is a contribution towards the costs associated with studying and as far as possible will reduce barriers to learning; the College cannot guarantee that all costs will be met by the 16-19 bursary.

## **B. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to make clear the framework used by the College to review, award and monitor bursary funds. The policy also aims to ensure that financial support is distributed according to the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) guidance.

## **C. Application Process**

- Year 12 students should apply for bursary as soon as they have enrolled at the College using the College's application process and by October half term. Applications received after this date will be considered on a case by case basis.
- Year 13 students should re-apply for bursary at the start of their second academic year at the College using the College's application process. There is no automatic entitlement to bursary for Year 13 students who were in receipt in Year 12.
- An application must be completed in full with the required documentation. Any incomplete application will be held as pending until the correct documentation/completed application is provided.
- Evidence required includes:
  - P60(s) or audited accounts if self-employed
  - Tax Credit Award Notice(s)
  - Universal Credit
  - Benefit Entitlement letters and/or bank statements to show any other income such as maintenance payments.
- Applications will be reviewed to determine if the student is eligible for bursary. All students who apply for bursary will usually be notified of the outcome of their application within 30 days.
- Successful applications received during the academic year will not include any back payments.
- The College reserves the right to close the application process at any point within the academic year.

## **D. Free Meals**

- Eligibility for Free Meals will be assessed at the same time as the bursary application.
- For the purposes of eligibility for free meals, 'disadvantage' is defined by the students being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits (evidence is required):
  - Income Support
  - Income-based Job Seekers' Allowance
  - Income-related 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 also 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 (provided an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods)
- Eligible students will be funded daily with at least £2.53 towards a free meal in the College Refectory for each day they attend their study programme.
- This value will be loaded to the student ID Card for cashless catering. No cash payments can be made for free meals.
- Any unspent free meal payment will not rollover to the next day.
- Students on a work placement as part of BTEC programmes may be awarded a payment on condition that full attendance can be verified by work placement provider.

## **E. Payment**

- In the event that bursary includes a payment, these will be made to students by BACS.
- The bank details must be in the student's name.
- Direct payments to a student are only made when a student meets certain eligibility criteria or in exceptional circumstances.

## **F. Eligibility**

### **F1. Bursary for students in vulnerable groups**

- Students may be entitled to a bursary of up to £1,200 if at least one of the following applies:
  - They are in or have recently left local authority care
  - They get Income Support or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves
  - They get Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in their name and either Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit
  - They get Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in their name and either ESA or Universal Credit

### **F2. Discretionary Bursary**

- Students may be entitled to a discretionary bursary if their annual household income is below £40,000 gross.
- All funds are distributed on a needs basis and are subject to affordability.
- Students over 19 and who are in receipt of an Education Health and Care Plan will be funded through the 16-18 discretionary bursary fund.
- Students who meet the residency criteria as set out in the ESFA funding guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-funding-regulations-for-post-16-provision/advice-funding-regulations-for-post-16-provision-2024-to-2025#summary>

### **F3. Attendance and Behaviour**

- Bursary payments may be stopped if there are significant attendance, punctuality or behaviour concerns. As a guide:
  - Attendance not less than 95%
  - Punctuality not less than 95%
  - No active Behaviour Contracts

## **G. Types of Discretionary Bursary Support**

- On application, students are required to identify what costs associated with studying they need support with. The different support fund categories are outlined below.
- The rules for each fund are needs based on the individual circumstances of the student. Students with a household income between £35,000 and £40,000 can apply for travel, free meals and a start of year stationery pack. Students with a household income below £35,000 can apply for all types of discretionary support.
- As funds are limited, it may be necessary to close a fund at any point during the academic year.
- If a student requires a DBS check as part of their course, the cost of this will be covered by the bursary fund subject to availability.
- Students are required to select in order of preference from the following options when applying for bursary. Priority will be given to issuing eligible students with their first preference.

### **G1. Travel**

- Eligible students for this element will live more than a mile away from the College. Students living within one mile of College may be eligible for travel support in exceptional circumstances i.e. a condition supported by medical evidence.
- Students will be provided with a travel pass.
- Payment for the cost of petrol for lifts to and from college is not covered by bursary funds.

### **G2. Laptop**

- Students without access to IT facilities at home can apply to have a laptop.
- Laptops will be set up as the College student computers. Laptop usage will be monitored by the College in line with the Student Use of IT Policy and the Behaviour Policy.
- Students are responsible for maintaining the security of the laptop and keeping it in good condition.
- The College is not responsible for replacing any lost or damaged laptops.
- Students are expected to return their laptop to IT Support at the end of their studies at the College.

### **G3. Equipment Grant**

- Payment or voucher towards the cost of equipment, stationery and books associated with the student's courses.
- Students will need to specify the required equipment and cost within the application.
- Bursary funds cannot be used to pay for repairs or replacements to personal technological devices such as laptops and mobile phones.

### **G4. Free Meal Support**

- Students eligible for discretionary bursary but not free meals will automatically be awarded free meal support as part of their bursary subject to funds being available.
- Eligible students will be funded daily with the current meal value as determined by the ESFA towards meals in the College Refectory for each day they attend their study programme.
- This value will be loaded to the College's payment method for cashless catering and no cash payments can be made for free meal support.
- Any unspent free meal support payment will not rollover to the next day.

During the academic year, students can submit an application to request additional funding in these areas:

### **G5. Trips and Visits**

- Students can apply for support towards the cost of educational Trips and Visits organised by the College which are part of the course.
- Any payment will be made directly to the department organising the trip/visit.
- The fund may only provide a contribution towards the cost.
- If funds are available, we may support with travel costs to university events such as open days, applicant days and admissions interviews.
- We will consider whether the travel is compulsory or optional, whether the university offers its own financial support for visits and if there is an alternative such as attending online.
- We may support students with travel costs to job or apprenticeship interviews if funds are available.
- A maximum of travel to two events will typically be supported per academic year.
- The amount of the award will be calculated based on the cheapest and most reasonable method of public transport from Solihull Sixth Form College to the destination.
- Overnight accommodation costs are not supported by the policy.
- The award is to the student only and not to anyone travelling with them.
- Support for optional trips is subject to the conditions specified in F3.

### **G6. Exceptional Costs**

- Students can apply for support towards any exceptional one-off costs such as the UCAS application fee, the cost of attending university applicant or open days or job/apprenticeship interviews.
- The College also has emergency funding to help students who face particular short-term financial hardship. Each instance will be considered on its own merits.

### **G7. Enrichment**

- Where enrichment forms a part of programme of study, students can apply for any support with any associated costs.
- For example, students participating in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme as part of their programme of study can apply for support with the registration fee and any specialist equipment.

### **H. Early Leavers**

Any payments in kind such as bus passes or laptops are expected to be returned if a student leaves before the end of their programme of study.

### **I. Monitoring**

The bursary fund will be monitored termly to assess the availability of funds. The College reserves the right to close applications at any point in the year. ESFA monitoring returns will be completed as required.

### **J. Misuse of Funds**

Any student found to be sharing their bursary allocation with a peer will be subject to college disciplinary procedures and may have their bursary revoked.

### **K. Appeals**

If a student wishes to appeal an unsuccessful bursary application, they should apply in writing to Admissions within one week of receiving the decision. The College will respond within 10 working days.

**Associated Polices/Guidance**

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Behaviour Policy

Student Use of IT Policy

ESFA Guidance for all institutions administering the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund