Student Financial Support Policy & Guidelines 2024-25

<u>Background</u>

For 2024-25, Bolton College has received the following allocation of funds from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA):

- Further Education Free Meals Fund
- 16-18 Bursary Fund
- 19+ Hardship Fund
- 20+ Childcare Support Fund
- Advanced Learning Loans Bursary Fund
- The College also processes applications from students who are applying for Care 2 Learn.

This funding is to support eligible students studying further education courses funded by the ESFA and GMCA and to help students meet the costs of participating in post 16 education. The ESFA Guidance related to these funding streams states how the funds should be allocated and prioritised.

In addition, students aged 19+ and studying on Level 3 and above taking ESFA or GMCA funded

Discretionary Bursary Students (16-18's and 19+ on EHCP's)

For 2024-25, the College has implemented the following:

- T rise to £35,000
- Discretionary Bursary Students will qualify for Discretionary Free College Meals (DCM) in 2024-25. They will receive a meal at £4.00 for each day in college, or attending placement.
- The qualification distance for assistance with travel support will remain at 1 mile (1.6 km) as in 2023-24.
- The Our Pass cards cost £10 each and are valid for two years. Students eligible for a Discretionary Bursary will need to purchase

cost on Greater Manchester transport for 7 days per week.

The Evidence required to support the application will be as follows, to be uploaded via the Learner Hub:

Evidence of the qualifying benefits (outlined above) for example an award notice or letter from Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) or HMRC.

Evidence of EHCP for students aged 19-24 will be provided by the College Learner Support Team

Types of Support

Each student will be allocated £4.00 for each day they are required to study on site via their College ID card. Where the student is on placement, or studying at the Shockout Academy, this to be paid directly into a nominated bank account.

Assessment

Assessment will be carried out by the Student Finance Team.

16-18 Bursary Fund Policy

Priorities

Priority Group 1 – Those young people entitled to the Student Support Allowance

Student Support Allowance is

This fund is not limited, as the College draws funding from the ESFA as each eligible student is identified.

<u>Support Priority 2</u> Travel Bursary: In most cases where the student does not qualify for the Our Pass scheme, the College provides a student with cash payments into their bank account to refund their travel costs. This level of support is integral to removing barriers to attendance and retention.

This applies to students who meet Priority Group 2 criteria, and whose journey from home to their College Campus is more than 1 mile (1.6 kilometres). Google Maps is used to assess distance. This is to support journeys to and from college.

<u>Support Priority 3</u> Essential Equipment Bursary: For students who meet Priority Group 1 and 2 criteria. This is allocated for equipment which tutors deem essential for completion of the course. Some College departments will purchase essential equipment on behalf of their students; for students who qualify for the Bursary, these costs will be reimbursed to the Departments by the Student Finance Team.

Any essential equipment paid for by the College through the Bursary Funds becomes and remains the property of the College and may be recalled by the College should the student leave the course early, or at the end of the course. Please note essential equipment does not include the purchase of stationery. This level of support is integral to supporting student achievement.

<u>Support Priority 4</u> Where a student is suffering from severe financial hardship due to domestic emergency, financial assistance may be agreed on an exceptional basis by the Student Finance Lead. These awards will be made on a case by case basis, and do not set a precedent for

Adult Financial Support Fund Policy

For 2024-25, the College has been allocated monies from the ESFA to support adults with the costs of studying at college. These are

- Discretionary Learner Support Funds (DSF) this includes 19+ Hardship funds for travel costs, food support, exceptional awards from Emergency Funds and 20+ Childcare Support funds
- Advanced Learning Loans Bursary Fund (LBF) this includes support for students with Additional Learning Needs, Childcare support, Travel costs and Food support costs, and also to approve exceptional awards from Emergency funds.

19+ Hardship Funds

The ESFA provides College with the 19+ Hardship Funds to provide financial help to eligible students aged 19+. The 19+ Hardship Fund can help meet costs such as travel, food costs, essential equipment (specific conditions apply) and emergency assistance (but only in exceptional cases). It is a means tested fund and the amount a student may receive depends on their family gross household income. The fund provides support to students who are experiencing financial hardship. Awards from the fund are made to individual students on a discretionary basis. Any award is made subject to satisfacto

Types of Support

<u>Support Priority 1</u> Food Costs. This is to support students who meet the financial criteria. The College will pay

The Process

Application

All individuals wishing to receive help from the 19+ Hardship Fund will need to apply online using the in which they will need to supply the

following information:

- Proof of gross household income
- Details of assistance required
- Student declaration to confirm their understanding and agreement to observe terms and conditions

The Evidence required to support the application is as follows:

Some adult students will have supplied relevant income evidence to obtain a fee waiver for their course. The Student Finance Team will check fee waiver evidence when assessing an application. Students who have not provided evidence in that fashion must provide evidence to the Student Finance Team from the list below:

- Screenshots of Most recent Universal Credit statements
- 2024 P.60s, or two recent consecutive monthly payslips
- Relevant benefits agency letters dated within the 3 months prior to the application
- Pension Oredit Award Notice for current year
- Where the above documents are not available, Student Finance Team will agree on valid alternatives with the applicant on a case by case basis

This evidence to be uploaded to the Learner Hub, or emailed to the Sudent Finance Team

<u>Assessment</u>

Assessment and interviews (where appropriate) will be carried out by the Student Finance Team.

Level of support awarded will be determined by household income evidence.

20+ Childcare Support Funds

- Students who need financial help with childcare costs and are aged under 20 at the start of their course should check whether they are eligible for help from the Care to Learn scheme.
- Students who need financial help with childcare costs and are eligible for the Advanced Lehet

Type of Support

Childcare Support can only be used for Ofsted registered Childcare. The College cannot meet the full . The College requires students to contribute to these costs, as the College will only fund 80% of costs with a maximum contribution from the College of £55 per day. The College will not fund childcare costs during College holidays. College will pay its contribution of childcare costs directly to the childcare provider rather than the student. The College reserves the right to vary the percentage value of the contribution it makes, depending on the availability of funds.

The Process

Application

All students aged 20 or over w

Monitoring & Management Arrangements for All Funds

The Student Finance Lead and Admins will maintain records of the following:

- Details of all applications
- Application outcome
- Payment schedule (where appropriate)
- Appeals documentation
- Other records e.g., copies of evidence provided by students, letters, interview notes

The Student Finance Team will maintain electronic records of all applications for funding and outcomes using:

- BSdatabase
- Spreadsheets
- Updates identified by ESFA

Policy Statement

Bolton College will strive to:

• Do all it can so that