

The Chesterfield College Group

Discretionary Student Support Fund and Bursary Policy 2022/23



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Impact Assessment status	In preparing the Policy, any potential disproportionate impact it might have upon individuals with protected characteristics, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, have been carefully considered. It is the conclusion of the College Group that the Policy does not adversely impact on individuals with any of the protected characteristics.
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Aim

The policy aims to ensure that:

- Students can access the appropriate financial support during their time at College to maximise participation and increase retention and achievement for students facing financial hardship.
- The College fulfils its responsibility to ensure that bursaries are awarded appropriately in accordance with funding guidance and the aims of the scheme.

Scope

This policy and associated operating procedures apply to Chesterfield College, which includes Learning Unlimited, and to our subsidiary companies; Training Services 2000 Ltd (LU Derby), Learning Unlimited ATA Ltd, Recruit Unlimited Ltd and Chesterfield College Enterprises Ltd.

Policy Statements

Chesterfield College receives an allocation of funds from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to support eligible students studying further education courses funded by the ESFA with the costs of participating in education and training post 16.

To ensure finance is not a barrier to recruitment, retention, and success, the College will promote ESFA funds and other sources of financial assistance. This policy states how the funds are allocated and prioritised.

There can be no virement between the 16-19 and 19+ funds.

A summary of this policy is available in other formats upon request. Reference to bursaries and funds available to support students will also be made in all full-time and part-time prospectuses.

Bursary support provided through Chesterfield College will take the form of the provision of services or equipment that will enable students to overcome some of the barriers to participation which they may face. Cash payments may also be deemed appropriate in a minority of situations. The College is committed to doing everything it can to support its students, however bursary funding is limited and cannot be guaranteed. The bursary fund is not intended to support costs not related to education, extra-curricular activities, or to provide learning support and other services that the College might provide to students, for example counselling, mentoring, or extra tutoring.

Any bursaries or financial support awarded are dependent upon satisfactory behaviour and attendance at College, in line with the College's Code of Conduct.

Assessment of Income

The assessment of income for all groups of students and, where applicable, the parents of students, will be made using clear and consistent criteria which takes into consideration the payments and payments in kind received from employment, benefits, and other sources, and will be clearly outlined in the application process. Applicants and, where applicable, their parents, will be responsible for the completeness and accuracy of the information used to assess eligibility.

Withdrawal and Clawback of Payment

Students are expected to meet minimum standards of attendance and participation throughout their programme. Failure to do so may result in the withdrawal or clawback of bursary payments.

Where a student has been absent for a period of four consecutive weeks or more, excluding holidays, and where a student has made the decision to withdraw from their programme of study, all payments of student support will be stopped. Payments will restart when attendance restarts and meets agreed minimum standards.

Wherever possible, support will be provided to students in the form of travel passes, equipment, access to trips, or vouchers for meals. Where Chesterfield College Group believes a cash payment has been made in error or obtained by a student or their household by fraudulent methods, it will seek to claim back this payment by all methods up to and including the employment of external debt management agencies in order that this money can be employed in the support of other students.

Provision of Bank Details

Where a cash payment is to be made to a student, this will usually be via BACS to the bank account of the student. The bank details provided by the student must be provided on a signed Chesterfield College BACS form. Students who do not have a basic bank account should be encouraged to open one as part of the application process.

Students under 18 who do not hold a bank account may request for funds to be paid into an alternative account. This must be the account of a parent or guardian and notified upon completion of the College Bursary Form.

It is expected that students aged 18 and over have their own bank account. Exceptional circumstances outside of this will be considered by the Bursary Team.

Protection of the Bursary System from Abuse

Where a student in receipt of bursary is withdrawn from the College and later reinstated, the student will not automatically continue to receive bursary funds.

Implementation

16-19 Bursary

To be considered eligible for the 16-19 FE bursary in 2022/23 the student must be:

- Resident in the UK for 3 years or more.
- Enrolled on a study programme or 16-19 Traineeship programme funded by the ESFA.
- Aged 16 or over and under 19 on 31st August 2022.
- Aged 19 or over and continuing a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuer).
- Aged 19-24 on 31st August 2022 and have an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP).

The 16-19 Bursary Fund has three priority groups:

Priority Group 1

Priority for a guaranteed bursary to a maximum value of £1,200 will be given to young people identified as Vulnerable Young People through the following criteria:

- In care.
- Care leaver.
- Receiving Income Support or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner.
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit.

Young people in Priority Group 1 will receive a combination of cash payments and support with direct course-related costs, meals, and transport up to a total award value of £1,200. Students will be awarded the amount of support they need to participate based on an assessment of the types of costs they have and will not be automatically awarded £1,200.

Students on a Study Programme lasting less than 30 weeks will be awarded a bursary on a pro-rata basis as appropriate based on an assessment of actual need.

There is no funding restriction on the number of Priority Group 1 students funded.

Priority Group 2

A discretionary bursary may be given to young people who do not qualify for the guaranteed bursary but who have a household income of under £18,000. The College will make discretionary awards based upon a proven hardship need, which must be substantiated by evidence and will be retained in accordance with audit requirements. Eligibility for Free College Meals is determined by guidance provided by the ESFA.

Allocation of discretionary 16-19 funds will be prioritised as follows:

1. Costs directly attributed to a Study Programme e.g., materials, uniforms, equipment to allow practical skills to be practiced and developed outside of College.
2. Support for Free College Meals where the student is eligible.
3. Support with the cost of meals in extenuating circumstances if the student is not entitled to Free College Meals.
4. Subsidising public transport costs for College attendance (if the student lives more than 2 miles from the College).

Successful course-related cost awards will, where possible, be paid directly to the student's curriculum area. However, where a student has purchased an item and can evidence this, payment will be made directly to the student.

A discretionary bursary may be given to young people who do not qualify for the guaranteed bursary but who have a household income of between £18,000 and £28,000. The College will make discretionary awards based upon a proven hardship need, which must be substantiated by evidence and will be retained in accordance with audit requirements.

Allocation of discretionary 16-19 funds will be prioritised as follows:

1. Costs directly attributed to a Study Programme e.g., materials, uniforms, equipment to allow practical skills to be practiced and developed outside of College.

2. Support with the cost of meals in extenuating circumstances if the student is not entitled to Free College Meals.
3. Subsidising public transport costs for College attendance (if the student lives more than 2 miles from the College).

Successful course-related cost awards will, where possible, be paid directly to the student's curriculum area. However, where a student has purchased an item and can evidence this, payment will be made directly to the student.

Priority Group 3

Students whose household income ranges from £28,000 to £40,000 will be eligible for a subsidised termly bus pass through the bursary (subject to availability of passes). Where a student lives 2 miles or more from the College but cannot access a College bus route, a contribution up to a maximum of £600 may, in exceptional circumstances, be awarded towards public transport costs.

Any student awarded a bus pass in 2021/22 will continue to be issued a pass in 2022/23.

All Priority Group 2 and Priority Group 3 awards are subject to the availability of funds.

Childcare for Students aged 19 or Under

Childcare funding for all students aged 19 or under is covered by the Government's Care to Learn scheme. Further information can be accessed on the Care to Learn website (<https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn>) or via the Learner Support Helpline (0800 121 8989).

19+ Discretionary Student Support (DSS) Funds

To be considered eligible for the 19+ DSS Fund in 2022/23 the student must be:

- Aged 19 or over on 31st August 2022 (20 or over for childcare support).
- Resident in the UK for 3 years or more.
- Enrolled on a programme of learning funded by the ESFA (students on courses funded via an Advanced Learner Loan should see the section for Advanced Learner Loan Bursary below).
- In receipt of an individual (if living alone, with parents, or with friends/flatmates/other relatives) or household (if living with a spouse/partner) income of £28,000 or less.

Eligibility is assessed at the point of enrolment. Claims for fee reduction as part of DSS will only be accepted up to 45 days after enrolment.

Students remain responsible for all correspondence with the Department for Work and Pensions and must inform them of any support funds received as this may affect eligibility for some benefits.

The DSS Fund provides support to students aged 19+ who are experiencing financial hardship. The fund can be used to help students with the costs associated with further education that are directly attributed to a learning programme, such as materials, uniforms, childcare costs, transport costs, a financial contribution towards meals in extenuating circumstances, and discretionary cash grant payments, subject to meeting minimum standards for attendance, targets, and progress, up to a maximum of £150 payable in three instalments at the beginning of each term.

For students who are not eligible for full fee remission for their tuition fees under the criteria set by the ESFA, a contribution of up to 75% of the tuition fee set by the College will be made through the

DSS Fund where the student meets the eligibility criteria for the fund. The remaining balance will need to be paid as per the terms for payment of course fees laid out in the College's Fees and Refunds Policy (FIN09).

Students claiming discretionary support with childcare costs can only do so if they are aged 20 or over on the start date of their course. Students aged 19 or under can claim childcare support through the Government's Care to Learn scheme. Through DSS Funds, a student can claim up to a maximum of £2,000 per academic year, per child over the duration of a 35-week study programme. Where a study programme is shorter than 35 weeks, this will be calculated on a pro-rata basis. If a student's childcare costs exceed their DSS allocation, the student is liable for any additional fees incurred. The College may pay up to 50% retainer fees charged by the childcare provider. Funds will only be used to pay for childcare that is approved and registered with Ofsted; informal childcare arrangements (e.g., with family members) cannot be funded. The responsibility/contract for childcare costs is between the student and the childcare provider. Chesterfield College will not take responsibility for any disputes between the student and childcare provider. All payments for childcare will be made directly to the agreed provider on submission of their invoice. Should a student withdraw from the College at any point during the academic year, financial support for childcare will end on the last date of recorded attendance and the student will be liable for all outstanding fees. Payments will reflect the student's attendance and will be paid to the childcare provider in arrears. Where attendance falls below 75%, the College will only partially pay invoices, in line with student registers.

The DSS Fund aims to support vulnerable and disadvantaged students with a specific financial hardship who otherwise would not have attended College. The success of the scheme will be measured by analysing the attendance, retention, and achievement rates of the students supported through the scheme and comparing those rates with overall College performance.

More details regarding eligibility can be found in the ESFA Funding Rules. Bursaries cannot be paid to students on commercial or Higher Education courses, waged apprentices, or people released on temporary licence from custody.

Where a student is drawing down an Advanced Learner Loan but is also enrolled to an ESFA-funded course, the College will use its discretion as to which bursary fund to allocate.

Asylum Seekers

Asylum Seekers are eligible for support via the 19+ DSS Fund. This support, however, cannot take the form of any cash payment. Asylum Seekers can only be supported by 'in kind' awards. These will be one, all, or a combination of the following (subject to availability and assessed need):

- Subsidised College bus pass.
- Equipment to support practice outside of College.
- Stationary and other materials.

Once an Asylum Seeker achieves Refugee status all normal DSS Fund rules apply, and cash payments can be made where applicable.

Advanced Learner Loan Bursary

To be considered eligible for support from the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary, students should be:

- Enrolled and funding their learning through an approved Advanced Learner Loan via the Student Loans Company.

- In receipt of an individual (if living alone, with parents, or with friends/flatmates/other relatives) or household (if living with a spouse/partner) income of £28,000 or less.

This bursary forms the ESFA's commitment to additional student support requirements and allocation of this fund to the College is based on a percentage of actual Advanced Learner Loans applied for by students. This subsidiary bursary for financial aid can be used for the following purposes:

- To finance Learning Support provided in addition to the course. This will be assessed as part of the recruitment process in consultation with the relevant curriculum area.
- Costs directly attributed to a learning programme, such as materials, uniforms and kits, childcare costs, transport costs, a financial contribution towards meals in extenuating circumstances, and discretionary cash grant payments related to achievement and retention up to a maximum of £150 payable in three instalments at the beginning of each term.

Course-Related Costs

Awards for kit, materials and uniforms are available up to the amount identified by the curriculum area and described as **essential** for that course. In some cases, students will already have some or all of the kit/equipment required and will not be granted funds to duplicate or replace such equipment.

Transport

Only travel by public transport will be considered, and the cheapest option will be awarded, i.e., weekly bus ticket rather than daily. Tickets must be submitted to Student Services once used.

16-19 Bursary

The 16-19 Bursary may support the costs of coming to the College for students who are travelling more than 2 miles to their place of study but who are not on a College-subsidised bus route/have a subsidised College bus pass. The maximum award will be £600.

19+ DSS Fund

The 19+ DSS Fund may support the costs of coming to the College for students who are travelling more than 2 miles to their place of study but who are not on a College-subsidised bus route/have a subsidised College bus pass. The maximum award will be £600.

Advanced Learner Loans Bursary

The Advanced Learner Loans Bursary may support the costs of coming to the College for students who are travelling more than 2 miles to their place of study but who are not on a College-subsidised bus route/have a subsidised College bus pass. The maximum award will be £600.

Emergency Payments

The College will retain 5% of the annual allocation of support funds for emergency and late payments. A separate procedure applies in exceptional circumstances for granting emergency support to the most vulnerable students, which is approved by the Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing and/or Vice Principal Finance and Corporate Services, or an appropriate deputy.

Administration Charge

The College can utilise up to 5% of the total DSS allocation, capped in line with historic costs, to pay for the administration of the scheme, in line with ESFA guidelines.

Free College Meals

Chesterfield College Group will administer funds provided by the ESFA for the provision of Free College Meals as per guidance provided by the ESFA. These awards will comply with the eligibility criteria detailed below:

1. Age

Students must be aged between 16 and 18 on 31st August 2022 to be eligible for a free meal. Students who turn 19 during the 2022/23 academic year will remain eligible for a free meal until the end of the academic year or to the end of their Study Programme, whichever is sooner.

Students aged 19 to 24 on 31st August 2022 who are subject to an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are also entitled to a free meal while attending their provision if they meet the eligibility criteria.

The following groups of students are not eligible for free meals in further education support:

- Students aged 19 and over on 31st August 2022, unless they have an EHCP.
- Apprentices, including those with an EHCP.

2. Eligible Benefits

Free meals are targeted at disadvantaged students. For the purposes of eligibility for free meals, disadvantage is defined by the student being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support.
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance.
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- 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 HMRC.
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit).
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 for each year (after tax and not including any other benefits).

A student is only eligible to receive a free meal once they, or a parent/guardian on their behalf, have made a successful application to the College.

Feedback has indicated that there is some confusion about Working Tax Credit and whether children from families in receipt of it are eligible for free meals. Working Tax Credit is not a qualifying benefit for free meals, and a parent or student who is in receipt of Working Tax Credits only is not entitled to a free meal.

However, if a parent or student is in receipt of one of the other qualifying benefits (with the exception of Child Tax Credit) as well as Working Tax Credit then they are eligible for free meals, i.e., the other qualifying benefit takes precedence over Working Tax Credit. At present, only Child Tax Credit has an income threshold (no more than £16,190 as shown above). The income threshold applies solely to Child Tax Credit and not to any of the other qualifying benefits.

3. *Payment*

The standard rate of payment for Free College Meals allowance is £2.41 per day for eligible students. However, Chesterfield College intends to boost this allowance to £3.50 per day for the 2022/23 academic year. This allowance is transferred internally from bursary funds to the College refectory where students sign for a meal each day that they attend College.

On some remote College sites, payment of free meals allowance by cash is the only possible option. Where this is the case, the College aim to make payments in 3 instalments at the beginning of each term.

Industry Placements

Students who undertake an Industry Placement through the ESFA's Capacity and Delivery fund (for a minimum of 315 hours) will receive an additional bursary payment to support costs incurred in attending the placement. This is not restricted to those students who would normally be entitled to receive the bursary. All students attending the Industry Placement will receive a day rate of £5 to cover general subsistence including meals. Any additional costs over and above (for example for travel, PPE, and DBS checks) will also be covered.

Communication Flow

The Discretionary Student Support Fund and Bursary Policy is available for staff and students to view on the College website. All staff with responsibility for processing application forms and payments within the Student Services and Finance departments are familiar with and work to the policy and procedures outlined within this document.

Regular meetings take place between Student Services and Finance to monitor processing of applications and payments, and monthly reports are created by MIS to support this process.

The Student Services Team have developed an introduction to the service that provides information and guidance around the College bursary and DSS, which is delivered to cross-College staff and students as part of the induction process.

Monitoring

College staff involved with administering the bursary scheme will comply with College policy on the storage and transfer of information supplied in the course of application and payment.

The annual return to the ESFA will be completed by the due deadline.

This policy and accompanying procedures will be reviewed by Student Services and Finance on an annual basis and submitted to the Finance and Corporate Services Committee for approval.

Complaints concerning failure to comply with this policy or published procedures should be made in accordance with the College's Complaints and Compliments Policy and Procedure (CSE06).

Associated Information and Guidance

ESFA guidelines on financial support for students: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-education-financial-support-for-students>

Advanced Learner Loans Bursary guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan/bursary-fund>

Related Chesterfield College Group Policies and Documents

- Fees and Refunds Policy (FIN09)
- Complaints and Compliments Policy (CSE06)