

16–19 Bursary Fund Policy

For Students Aged 16–19 – Academic Year 2025–2026

Author: Director of Corporate Services

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Version and Date		Actions/Notes
2.0	August 2025	Policy has been re written

Approved by SMT: August 2025

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Related policies or procedures or parent policy if applicable: Discretionary Learner Support Fund – For Students Aged 19+
Advanced Learning Loan Bursary Policy

Groups/bodies consulted in the development of the policy: DFE guidance

To be published on College Website: Yes

To be published on Student Hub: No

16–19 Bursary Fund Policy

For Students Aged 16–19 – Academic Year 2025–2026

1. Policy Statement

This policy sets out Macclesfield College’s approach to administering financial support through the 16–19 Bursary Fund, which includes both the **Vulnerable Bursary** and the **Discretionary Bursary**.

The bursary aims to support eligible students aged 16–19 on 31 August 2025 who face financial barriers to participation in education. The College will assess individual applications to ensure that awards are targeted to students most in need.

Students aged 19 or over on 31 August 2025 are only eligible if they: - Are continuing on a study programme started aged 16–18 (“19+ continuers”), or - Have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan.

All bursary awards are conditional on meeting College expectations for behaviour and engagement.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all eligible students enrolled at Macclesfield College on DFE-funded programmes, including 16–19 study programmes and traineeships, during the 2025–2026 academic year.

3. Types of Bursary

3.1 Vulnerable Bursary

Purpose

Provides financial support of up to £1,200 per year for students in defined vulnerable groups, to help them remain in education.

Eligibility

Students must be aged 16–18 on 31 August 2025 and belong to one of the following groups:

- In care (looked after by a local authority)

- Care leavers - Receiving Income Support or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves, or themselves and a dependent (e.g., child or partner)
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) **and** Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit in their own right

Award Amount

- Up to £1,200 per academic year
- Pro-rata awards for students starting six weeks or later after course commencement
- Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for this bursary

Assessment

Awards are based on assessed financial need. Students will only receive funding for verified costs necessary to participate in education.

If a student's needs exceed £1,200, additional support may be considered from the Discretionary Bursary Fund.

In-Year Eligibility

Students who become eligible during the academic year may receive a bursary from the point of eligibility.

Payment

Payments are made in instalments via BACS, subject to: - Continued attendance and engagement - Adherence to College behaviour and attendance policies

3.2 Discretionary Bursary

Purpose

Supports students facing financial hardship by contributing to costs associated with attending College.

Eligibility

Students must meet all criteria: - **Age:** 16–18 on 31 August 2025, or 19+ continuer, or have an EHC Plan - **Residency:** Meet DFE residency requirements for post-16 provision - **Programme:** Enrolled on DFE-funded provision subject to public inspection (e.g., Ofsted) - **Financial Criteria:** Gross annual household income below £39,700 (evidence required)

Evidence acceptable to support application:

Evidence Type	Requirement
Wage slips	3 months of statements in full, dated within the last 6 months
Universal Credit	3 months of statements in full, dated within the last 6 months
Self-assessment statement	Latest version
Job Seekers Allowance / Employment Support	Current entitlement documentation
Full tax credit notice	2024/2025 tax year notice
Pension statement	Dated within the last 3 months
Other	e.g., Personal Independence Payment, In care letter, Bursary letter

Students with income above £39,700 may apply if they can demonstrate financial hardship due to extenuating circumstances.

Support Available

Awards may include:

- Travel costs (if living 3+ miles from College) - College bus pass or reimbursement of bus/train tickets
- Contribution to college meals (£5.00 per day via electronic card)
- Course-related materials, books, uniforms, protective clothing
- Essential educational visits and trips
- UCAS fees and university interview costs
- Printer credit (£1/month)
- Support for students on industry placements incurring additional costs
- Exceptional hardship grants (subject to assessment)

Restrictions

The bursary cannot be used to:

- Fund learning support services (e.g. counselling)
- Support extracurricular activities unrelated to the study programme
- Cover overseas trips where equivalent provision exists in England
- Pay for non-essential educational trips

3.3 College Bursary (Exceptional Circumstances)

The College may award additional discretionary support to students experiencing severe hardship (e.g., homelessness, estrangement). Awards are subject to assessment and may include: - Additional meal contributions - One-off grants - Assistance with travel or material costs

4. Free School Meal Awards and Free College Meals

4.1 Free School Meal Award Criteria

Students must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2025 to be eligible. Students aged 19 or over are only eligible if they are continuing a study programme started aged 16–18 (19+ continuers). Students aged 19–25 with an EHC Plan are also eligible.

Eligibility requires students or parents to receive at least one of the following benefits: - Income Support - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 - Guarantee element of State Pension Credit - Child Tax Credit (without Working Tax Credit) and annual gross income ≤ £16,190 - Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after ceasing Working Tax Credit) - Universal Credit with net earnings ≤ £7,400 per annum

Note: Working Tax Credit alone is not a qualifying benefit.

4.2 Free College Meal Award Criteria

Students not meeting Free School Meal criteria may qualify for Free College Meals if they meet Discretionary Bursary criteria.

Eligible students: - Aged 16–19 on 31 August 2025 - 19–25 with an EHC Plan

Students turning 19 during the academic year remain eligible until its end or until their course finishes.

4.3 Food Allowance

- £5.00 per day for college attendance or approved activities:
 - £5.000 from discretionary allocation (Free College Meal)
 - £2.61 from Free School Meal allocation plus £2.39 discretionary top-up where applicable

Transitional protections remain in place and have been extended through the end of the 2025 to 2026 academic year. This means that any student who began receiving free school meals on or after 1 April 2018 will continue to qualify for free meals until the end of that academic year. This extension also includes students who were eligible for free school meals before transitioning into further education (FE) provision.

5. Non-Eligible Students

The following are not eligible for support: - Apprentices or students on waged training programmes - Students aged 19 and over on 31 August 2025 (unless 19+ continuer or with EHC Plan) - Distance learners, unless exceptional costs are identified (e.g., attending exams)

6. Application Process

- Complete an application form (available via Student Services or sent on the completion of the enrolment preparation form)
 - Submit required evidence (e.g., Universal Credit statements, wage slips)
 - Applications without sufficient evidence will not be processed
 - Decision notifications issued within 15 working days of a fully completed application
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7. Payment Conditions

- Payments processed monthly by Student Services
 - Attendance is checked each month; payments withheld if attendance targets are not met, including English and maths lessons
 - Exceptions may be approved following discussion with curriculum staff and documented in ProMonitor
 - Payments made via BACS; students must provide valid bank details
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8. Appeals

Students may appeal decisions in writing to the Director of Student Services within 10 working days. Appeals will be reviewed, and a decision issued within 10 working days.

9. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually in line with DFE guidance and College procedures.
