

Policy 4.8 – Financial Support for Students (Bursary)



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Statement of Policy

Bridge Training Ltd have been given an allocation of funds by the government to help students overcome specific financial barriers. This policy sets out the guidelines of how the funds will be administered, assessed, recorded, and monitored, in line with ESFA guidelines.

Financial Support / Bursary Fund

The bursary fund provides financial support to help students overcome specific barriers to participation so that they can remain in education. There are 2 types of bursaries

- Bursaries which are defined vulnerable groups of up to £1,200 per year
- Discretionary bursaries which are awarded to meet individual student needs, eg help with the cost of transport, meals, books and equipment

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for either type of bursary the student must satisfy one of the following criteria

- Be aged over 16 and under 19 at the end of the academic year.
- Be aged 19 or over at the end of the academic year and continuing a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers'). If students are over the age of 19 at the end of the academic year, they must have an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Students who are economically or socially disadvantaged and at risk of not taking up or continuing education. This group includes students with physical or other disabilities, medical conditions and/or learning difficulties.
- Students who have been in care, on probation, are young parents or otherwise considered at risk
- Students who are asylum seekers
- Students who are refugees (in receipt of supportive evidence from DWP)
- Meet the residency criteria in section 3 of the ESFA document 'Funding Regulations for Post-16 Provision'.

EHE students (those under the age of 16): are eligible for the bursaries and will be considered on a case-by-case basis in line with the 16-19 Bursary Fund Guide 2023 to 2024 academic year.

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Evidence of Eligibility

To assess eligibility, Bridge Training will require information relating to all aspects of household income. For audit purposes, copies of all documentation for the Bursary Fund should be kept for a period of three years.

You will need to submit your evidence at the time of application, this can include:

- Certified letter from the DWP.
- P60 (additional evidence will also be required).
- Self-Employment Income evidence.
- Other means tested certification.
 - Universal Credit - 3 most recent monthly award statements. If you cannot provide evidence, we cannot process your application for bursary payments.

If you cannot provide evidence, we cannot process your application for bursary payments. There are 3 categories of Bursary payments

Bursary Group	Max Annual Award	Eligibility Criteria	Evidence
Level 1 High Priority – for defined groups	£1200	The defined vulnerable groups are students who are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In care • Care Leavers • Students receiving income support, or Universal credit because they are financially supporting themselves (or someone who is dependent upon them) • Student receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right. 	A letter of evidence will be required, such as confirmation of the benefit the student is claiming or a letter from their social worker to confirm their CIC/Care Leaver status.
Level 2	£800	You have a gross annual household income of £20,000 or less. Or you are entitled to Free School Meals. Or your household is in receipt of other income-based means tested benefits	Certified letter from the DWP. P60 (additional evidence will also be required). Self-Employment Income evidence. Other means tested

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			certification. Universal Credit – 3 most recent monthly award statements, to estimate assumed income for a full year
Level 3	£200	You have a gross annual household income of between £20,000 and £35,000. Or your household is in receipt of other income-based means tested benefits	Certified letter from the DWP. P60 (additional evidence will also be required). Self-Employment Income evidence. Other means tested certification. Universal Credit – 3 most recent monthly award statements, to estimate assumed income for a full year.

Bridge Training will assess each student needs on an individual basis and will not make blank or flat payments to all students. Students who are not eligible for the £1200 bursary, may still be entitled to between £600 - £800, depending on household income.

If a student satisfies one of the above criteria, they will be entitled to a bursary. The total money paid will be based on the length of the course and on a pro rata basis. ***Payments will be made monthly and based upon student attendance, this will be done in the form of vouchers.***

Emergency Food Support

The bursary fund can be used in individual cases of severe hardship, without undertaking checks on household income. This support relates to food support only.

Applications

Application forms must be completed and submitted to the Student Services Lead. Evidence will be asked for at induction or Look-around. Funding is not guaranteed.

In addition to this, the student will also need to sign an agreement in which they agree to the following:

- Attend all time-tabled sessions
- Be punctual to sessions
- Provide evidence to explain any absence or lateness

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- Adhere to the Code of Conduct

Allocation

The decision is made by the Head of Quality and Finance regarding which students receive a bursary and how much they receive, following an analysis of each student's individual circumstances and their documented financial need.

This will vary from student to student depending on, for example, household income, number of dependent children in the household, distance travelled to Bridge and requirements of individual study programmes.

- up to 5% of the fund will be allocated to cover administrative costs
- where a student is required to attend a subject related trip (e.g. Geography field trip), the appropriate amount will be deducted from the allocation.

Payment for Discretionary Bursary

Bridge Training will base all decisions about which students receive a discretionary bursary and how much bursary they receive on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need.

These will vary from student to student, depending on, for example, their household income, and the requirements of their study programme.

Bridge Training will not make bursary fund payments as regular payments for living costs as this is out of scope of the bursary fund.

Bridge Training will provide, wherever possible (list not exhaustive)

- Cost of travel to Work Placements – including supporting students with travel costs for interviews for a job, apprenticeships and/or internships
- Travel training
- Equipment and clothing for work placements
- Books and essential equipment relating to the vocational and academic course
- exam retake fees
- Employability trips and visits
- Educational trips and visits
- Any other requirements will be considered on an individual basis, at the discretion of Bridge Training.

Where Bridge Training cannot provide the services directly, students must provide a receipt of evidence and Bridge Training (if approved) will make payment via BACS transfer.

Bridge Training reserves the right to cease bursaries where a students' attendance and/or punctuality is deemed unacceptable or persistent punctuality issues.

Payment for Higher Priority Claimants (Vulnerable Groups)

Payments will be given to students who meet the following conditions weekly:

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- For full payment, student must not have any unauthorised absences. For every day that a student is unauthorised in the week, they will lose a percentage of their total bursary allowance for the week. This calculation will be based on how many days a week they attend and the total money they are eligible to receive each week (eg in 3 days and paid £30 per week = £10 per day of attendance).
- Students must also adhere to the code of conduct. Any sanctions received during their week may result in a student losing part or full payment for the following week, depending on the severity of the sanction.
- When deciding whether to withdraw a student's payment for a period the individual circumstances of the student will always be considered first.

Payments will be subject to a student achieving a minimum of 80% attendance per month and adhering to the code of conduct. Failure to maintain this attendance minimum or poor behaviour may result in a student's support being stopped entirely.

Free School Meals in Further Education

Free school meals are targeted at disadvantaged students and provides meals for eligible students if they or their parents get one of the qualifying benefits (the definition of disadvantage is students being in receipt, or parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the qualifying benefits).

Students who are eligible for free school meals will be able to receive a food voucher for every full day of training they attend.

Appeals

Students have the right to appeal a decision. Students, or their parent/carer, will be required to put an appeal in writing within 21 days of receiving confirmation of an award or a rejection.

The letter should set out the reasons for the appeal, which must prove that the student has been wrongly assessed as falling outside the eligibility criteria, plus any further evidence to support the Appeal. It should be sent to the Managing Director.

The decision of the Appeals Panel is final and will be given in writing within 14 days of the decision.

The Appeals Panel will consist of:

- The student services Lead
- An impartial member of the Senior Management Team
- The Managing Director

The Appeals Panel meeting will be minuted.

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Audit / Monitoring and Review

This fund, and its operation, will be reviewed at the end of each academic year to review the allocations and criteria for awards for the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

Additional Comments

The Bursary fund will not be used as a routine replacement for existing benefits (eg Child Benefit), nor to pay for Higher Education course fees

Bridge Training may use up to 5% of the Bursary allocation towards administration costs. These spends will be recorded on the main spreadsheet for audit purposes.

Fraud

Fraudulent claims for bursary or discretionary allocations will be treated very seriously. Students found to have made fraudulent claims will be required to refund all payments received and may be exited from programme.

Our commitment

Bridge Training is committed to ensuring that the Bursary fund is used in accordance with the Government guidance:

- producing this statement setting out how the fund will be used
- publishing this statement on our website
- recording the use of the fund, including references to individual students who receive the fund
- to spend the allocated funds in the academic year 2023/24.