

## 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.

### Aim of this policy

The aim of this policy is to outline for students the financial support options available to them, largely based on their age and circumstances, and how to apply for financial support.

### Discretionary Bursaries

We offer discretionary bursaries to 16-18-year-old students, they help cover the cost of course-related day-to-day expenses such as books, stationery and course related trips, childcare, meals and emergencies.

#### To be eligible

- You need to be 16 or over on 31 August 2024 to be eligible
- Be aged 19 if you are continuing a study programme you began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- You need to have been resident in the UK, EU or EEA for 3 years prior to the start of your course. (Exceptions for 16–18-year-old asylum seekers).
- You need to have applied for a course funded through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) at Bridge Training.
- Receiving means tested benefits (for example, Universal Credit), or being supported by someone who is
- If the household income is below £25,000 Net before tax
- 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.

*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 2024 to 2025 academic year.*

## Policy 4.8 – Financial Support for Students (Bursary)



### Vulnerable bursaries

We also offer vulnerable bursaries, which provide support of up to £1200 per academic year. To qualify for this support, one of the following needs to apply:

- you're in or you recently left local authority care
- you get Income Support or Universal Credit because you're financially supporting yourself
- you get Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in your name and either Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit
- you get Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in your name and either ESA or Universal Credit

The amount you may get depends on the costs you have and what you need for your course. The award is discretionary, so some students may qualify for less than £1200, and in exceptional circumstances, we may top up students above £1200.

If you meet one of the four criteria below (plus the other criteria for age and residency) and if you are participating on a study programme that lasts for 30 weeks or more.

- In care
- Care leavers
- Receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit because you are financially supporting yourself or someone who is dependent on you and living with you such as a child or partner
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in your own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in your own right

Evidence would need to be provided and dated within the last three months. Evidence can be in the form of payslips, a work contract, most recent P60, Universal Credit online account or a letter stating the benefits you receive.

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***

### Free Meals

Support is also available in the form of free meals. If you qualified for this support in school, then it is likely you will qualify again for the same support at Bridge Training. To qualify for this support, you must fulfil the following criteria:

- A student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2024 to be eligible to receive a free meal. Students aged 19 or over are

## Policy 4.8 – Financial Support for Students (Bursary)



only eligible to receive a free meal if they are continuing a study programme, they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or have an EHCP plan.

- These 2 groups of aged 19 plus students can receive a free meal while they continue to attend education (in the case of a 19+ continuer, this must be the same programme they started before they turned 19), if their eligibility continues.

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

- students aged between 14 and 16 (these students are already covered by FSM provision)
- students aged 19 or over at the start of their study programme, unless they have an EHCP plan or are a 19+ continuer

### Eligible benefits

Free meals are targeted at disadvantaged students. Free meals in further education defines disadvantage as students 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 (ESA)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- 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 Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit (UC) with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 for each year (after tax and not including any benefits they get)

Working Tax Credit is not a qualifying benefit for free meals, and a parent or student in receipt of Working Tax Credits is not entitled to a free meal. Qualifying benefits do include the Working Tax Credit run-on which is paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit. From 1 April 2018, any student who is in receipt of, or has parents who are in receipt of, UC must have a net earned annual income of no more than £7,400 to be eligible for free meals. Students must also satisfy residency criteria.

The free meals support is topped up to £5 per day at college and includes support whilst out on work/industry placement.

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

## **Policy 4.8 – Financial Support for Students (Bursary)**



### **Childcare**

We also provide support for young parents, in the form of Care to Learn. The Care to Learn scheme can help with childcare costs while you study. You must be aged under 20 at the start of your course. The scheme is available for publicly funded courses in England.

You qualify for this support, if all of the following apply:

- you're a parent under 20 at the start of your course
- you're the main carer for your child
- you live in England
- you're either a British citizen or have a legal right to live and study in England
- your childcare provider qualifies

### **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 and is a short-term arrangement.

### **Applications**

Enquiries and evidence are to be submitted to the Student Recruitment Lead and the Recruitment Manager. Evidence will be asked for at Look-around or induction 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
- 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. photography field trip), the appropriate amount will be deducted from the allocation.

## **Policy 4.8 – Financial Support for Students (Bursary)**



### **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
- 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 student's attendance and/or punctuality is deemed unacceptable or persistent punctuality issues.

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.

### **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.

## **Policy 4.8 – Financial Support for Students (Bursary)**



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:

- Head of Safeguarding
- An impartial member of the Pastoral Team
- The Managing Director

The Appeals Panel meeting will be minuted.

## **Policy 4.8 – Financial Support for Students (Bursary)**



### **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.