



Bursary Policy 2025-2026

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide an overview of how the College bursary is managed and allocated.
- 1.2 The 16-19 Bursary Fund is designed to provide financial support to help students overcome the specific financial barriers to participation they face so that they can remain in education. The full document can be viewed and/or downloaded from:
- [16-19 Bursary](#)
 - [Free meals in Further Education](#)
- 1.3 The aim is to ensure that as many students are assisted as possible within the criteria provided by the DfE, whilst ensuring that it remains within budget.
- 1.4 There are two types of 16-19 bursaries:
- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups
 - Discretionary bursaries awarded by the College using criteria in line with the funding rules

2 Scope

- 2.1 Institutions must assess the needs of individual students and not make flat rate payments because the fund is designed to help students overcome individual financial barriers. No student should automatically be awarded a set amount of funding without an assessment of the level of need they have.
- 2.2 The fund is intended to help students with the essential costs of participating in their study programme. It is not intended to support extra-curricular activities or provide learning support – services that institutions give to students – such as counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring. It is not intended to cover living costs.

3 Eligibility

- 3.1 To be eligible to receive the bursary, students must:
- Be under the age of 19 on 31 August 2025
 - Meet the ESFA's residency criteria
 - Be enrolled on a non-fee-paying full-time course at the College

The criteria can be found: [16-19 Bursary](#).

4 Defined Vulnerable Group Bursaries (Vulnerable Bursary)

4.1 Defined vulnerable groups are in financial need and:

- In care
- Care leavers
- Receiving Income Support or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and a dependent living with them, such as a child or partner.
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in their own right as well as Employment Support Allowance or UC in their own right

4.2 Defined Vulnerable Group bursaries of up-to £1,200 will be awarded following an assessment of the types of costs individual students face and should not automatically award the full amount. The College may refuse an application or award a reduced amount because they do not have a financial need, for example because there are no relevant costs or the financial needs are already being met.

4.3 The amount awarded will be based on need. This will be paid in weekly instalments, during term time, directly into the student's bank account subject to the student meeting the College's minimum expectations for attendance, behaviour and effort, as evidenced by Interim Report data. The minimum expected standard of actual attendance is 95%, and below this a payment may be withheld or reduced.

4.4 Students in receipt of the Defined Vulnerable Group bursaries, depending on needs, circumstances and funds available, be further financially supported in the following ways:

- Subsidy of travel costs to College
- College Deposit waived
- Reimbursement for travel discount cards
- Stationary
- Essential course equipment e.g. Art materials
- Subsidy of some compulsory trips, subject to meeting the College's minimum expectations outlined in 4.3.
- Potential support for work experience, university open days and interviews on request.
- Meal support (if not eligible for the FE free meal)

Bursary funding does not support the learning support and services that institutions give to students, for example counselling or mentoring, and is not to support general household incomes.

5 Further Education Free Meal (FE free meal)

5.1 FE free meals are targeted at disadvantaged students. Students are eligible for a FE free meal if they or their parents, can provided evidence of being 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)
- The guaranteed 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 His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)
- Working Tax Credit run on, paid four weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum

In addition, the following students will be protected against losing their FE free meals:

- Since 1 April 2018, all existing free school meals claimants have continued to receive free school meals whilst Universal Credit is rolled out. This applies regardless of any change in household circumstances, including if their earnings rise above the threshold during that time. Protections will remain in place until the end of the 2025/26 school year.

A student is only eligible to receive FE free meals when an application for the meal has been made on their behalf and their eligibility, or protected status, has been verified by the College.

Criteria can be found here [Free meals in Further Education](#).

5.2 FE free meals are provided using the on-site catering facilities (College Refectory Canteen) for every day that the eligible student attends for their programme of study, including examinations. Students who are eligible for a FE free meal will be allocated a credit each College day to cover the cost of a nutritious main meal, using their College ID Card in the College Refectory. Money allocated cannot be accumulated and non-expenditure on a particular day will not be carried forwards.

5.3 Eligible students who are attending a day trip with the College, which is departing from the College site, are encouraged to purchase their lunch on the morning of their visit, from the College Refectory which opens from 7am daily. Eligible students can request support for lunches during work experience placements and university visits and open days.

6 Emergency Meal Support

6.1 In individual cases of severe hardship, we can provide meal support on the days a student attends their study programme, where the student is considered to be in real need, without undertaking the checks on household income or gathering other evidence that would normally be required. This is expected to only apply to a very small number of the total 16 to 19 student cohort.

For audit purposes, we must retain a copy of:

- a record of the number of students supported in this way
- the number of days this support is given
- the £'s value of support given to each student along with the rationale for the meal support

This arrangement is not to continue on an ongoing basis for any individual student – we will exercise our discretion in each case and will be mindful that this flexibility relates to food support only.

Students who are not automatically eligible for the FE free meals can apply for support in exceptional circumstances by contacting their Senior Tutor, Pastoral Support Manager or Pastoral Director.

7 Discretionary Bursaries

7.1 Students who meet the criteria for a FE free meal may also qualify for Discretionary bursaries.

7.2 Students who reside in a household that has a household income of less than £35,000 for the most recent tax year.

7.3 During the application process the College will apply the eligibility criteria established by the guidance documents for bursary funds and free meals. For example:

- Production of a P60
- Working Tax Credit Award Certificate
- Self-Assessment Tax Calculation Form
- Three months of Universal Credit award notices or Bank Statements (dated within the last 3 months) – used to extrapolate household income

7.4 To ensure that the fund reaches those students who are most in need of financial support the College will base its need assessment on the household income, cost of travel to College and additional details provided on the application form, such as the number of dependent children in the household.

- 7.5 Students who are not automatically eligible for the bursary can apply for financial assistance in exceptional circumstances by contacting their Senior Tutor, Pastoral Support Manager or Pastoral Director.
- 7.6 We recognise that students who are Young Carers may struggle with the costs of attending College. We encourage these students to make a bursary application so we can assess how we can best support them.
- 7.7 Discretionary bursaries are dependent upon individual circumstances and the funding available. The Discretionary bursaries may, depending on needs, circumstances and funds available, be used in the following ways:
- Subsidy of travel costs to College
 - College Deposit waived
 - Reimbursement for travel discount cards
 - Stationary
 - Essential course equipment e.g. Art materials
 - Subsidy of some compulsory trips, subject to meeting the College's minimum expectations outlined in 4.3
 - Potential support for work experience, university open days and interviews on request
 - Free meal

Bursary funding does not support; the learning support and services that institutions give to students, for example counselling or mentoring, and is not to support general household incomes.

8 Subsidies for Travel Costs to College

- 8.1 Students who are incurring costs for their travel to College will receive a payment made directly to the student's bank account to subsidise transport costs, paid in advance, every half term (students in receipt of Defined Vulnerable Group bursaries will receive this payment weekly).
- 8.2 Before payments can commence the applicant must provide a receipt or copy of their daily return ticket for peak time travel to College. This can be provided at the time of application or as soon as you are enrolled by emailing bursary@reigate.ac.uk. Students who are travelling to College by car also need to provide information on their cost of travel.
- 8.3 The relevant student discount card for travel should be purchased prior to providing your receipts for travel and should be included with your proof of purchase so this can be reimbursed. See the following sites for further information on [rail travel](#) and [bus travel](#).

- 8.4 The College advises all prospective students to research the costs of transportation to Reigate College, as the College cannot guarantee that the bursary subsidies will fully cover the costs of a student's travel to College. The exact payment is based on an individual student's cost of travel to College and is subject to the student meeting the College's minimum expectations outlined in 4.3.
- 8.5 The payment amount may vary during the academic year and is likely to vary from one academic year to the next, depending on the number of bursary students and the funding received.

9 Applications and Data Protection/GDPR

- 9.1 Students and parents/guardians will be invited and encouraged to apply during the enrolment process and throughout the academic year. For a student to receive their first payment before October the initial closing date for applications is **mid-September**. If a student finds out they may be eligible after this date the student and parents/guardians are encouraged to still complete the application form or contact bursary@reigate.ac.uk ; in these instances bursary payments will not be back-dated before the application date.
- 9.2 The bursary Fund application form can be accessed via the College's website: www.reigate.ac.uk/admissions/finance-and-travel. The Microsoft form should be completed and returned with supporting evidence. A printable version is also available on request.
- 9.3 The College must check student eligibility in each academic year, which means that the students must apply separately for each academic year using the renewal form.
- 9.4 The College can only process applications that provide evidence of eligibility and where copies are retained for audit purposes. Applications will be refused if the required evidence is not provided.
- 9.5 Students and their families are required to make a declaration (whether paper or electronic) that the information and evidence provided is correct and complete to the best of their knowledge and belief. False or incorrect information that leads to incorrect/overpayment may result in overpayments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered. This may also cause a referral to the police with the possibility that the student or family may face prosecution. All evidence and data received and retained for audit purposes will conform to the College's GDPR policy and procedures.

10 Awards

- 10.1 Eligibility for a bursary does not automatically mean that funding will be given, it is possible that there will be no award or a limited award. This may be because there is no financial need, or the need is already being met.
- 10.2 Decisions about which students receive an award and how much bursary they receive must be based on an individual assessment of each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need.

- 10.3 There must not be blanket or flat rate/fixed rate payments to all students. A Discretionary bursary may be larger than a Vulnerable bursary award. The bursary award may vary through the academic year if the individual specific need changes. For example a student may move house.
- 10.4 The College must manage the number and size of awards to keep within their budget. A small emergency fund may also be retained to support students who face exceptional circumstances.
- 10.5 The award is not tied to attendance, achievement or behaviour and therefore can't be used to incentivise students. However, receipt of the award (e.g. a payment) is conditional upon meeting the minimum expected standards of attendance and behaviour. The minimum expected standard of actual attendance is 95%, and below this a payment may be withheld or reduced.
- 10.6 In considering withholding an award (e.g. a payment) the College must first consider the student's individual circumstances and the purpose of the award to support attendance.
- 10.7 When students are removed from the College roll, they are no longer eligible for awards (e.g. payments) and this will cease.
- 10.8 The DfE prefers awards to be made 'in-kind rather than cash as far as possible'. Where awards are made as payments they will be made to the student's bank account. The funds must only be spent on the support that has been identified as necessary for them to participate in education.
- 10.9 Bursary students are not required to pay the £75 College Deposit. However, if books or equipment are not returned or are damaged, the appropriate amount may be deducted from the bursary payment.

11 Appeals

- 11.1 It is expected students on a bursary meet the terms and conditions agreed to, which includes attendance of 95%. Anyone who doesn't receive their weekly or half termly payment has the right to appeal by contacting bursaryappeals@reigate.ac.uk.
- 11.2 Appeals will only be successful if new information comes to light that wasn't available at the time of the award decision, or it is deemed the original decision was incorrect.

12 Administration notes and Audit requirements

12.1 The College will use 5% of the bursary funding received (vulnerable group, discretionary and FE Free meals) to off-set the costs of administration. This will be administered by the finance team at the start of the academic year. The College will make an application to DfE for the vulnerable group bursary. If new applications are made in-year the academy will use any available recycled funds before making a new in-year application.

12.2 There are clear audit requirements for the collection and distribution of bursary awards. The academy must be able to confirm during an audit the records of the application and award to include:

1. Application form
2. Evidence of eligibility
3. Student declaration
4. Copy of the student's individual assessment of actual financial need
5. Purpose of the award and its value
6. Brief justification of the award
7. Evidence of award payments or support provided in kind
8. Clear bursary policy that has been applied consistently for all students
9. Details of any unspent funds being carried forward into a new academic year
10. A copy of the funding claim sent to DfE, and evidence of the payment received. For example, bank statements and remittance advice
11. All documents should be retained for 6 years in either hard or scanned formats. To include household income evidence

13 Monitoring

13.1 At the end of each academic year the impact of the policy will be evaluated by the College. This evaluation will consider changes to the guidance document (released for each new academic year) alongside these reflections, the experience gained and best practice. The policy will be reviewed annually.