

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR FURTHER EDUCATION STUDENTS

1. PURPOSE

1.1 This Policy sets out the arrangements for financial support provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) 16 to 19 Bursary Fund for Further Education students, ESFA Adult Skills Fund (ASF), and the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund (ALLBF) for 19+ learners, for 2024-25.

2. SCOPE

This Policy outlines eligibility and the support on offer for: 16-19 Bursary Fund for Further Education students, ESFA Adult Skills Fund (ASF), and the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund (ALLBF) for 19+ learners, for 2024-25.

3. OBJECTIVES

This Policy explains various types of financial assistance available to Further Education students, the eligibility criteria and the appeals process.

4. 16 – 19 BURSARY FUND

The bursary fund is to help students with the essential costs of participating in their study programme. It is not to provide support for general household incomes. All awards are subject to the student completing an application on PayMyStudent ([Blackburn College \(paymystudent.com\)](https://blackburncollege.paymystudent.com)), providing any evidence requested and outlining their study related costs. Funds will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Any award decisions will be made based on the actual financial needs of individual students, the availability of funding and the level of household income. As funds are limited, our 'All About You' support package is based on the highest priority needs and may consist of different elements of support.

4.1 Eligibility

- Household income below £34,000 (including spouse/partner).
- A student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2024 to be eligible for help from the bursary fund in the 2024 to 2025 academic year, except for the following exceptions:
 - students aged 19 or over are eligible to receive a discretionary bursary if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers) or
 - have an education, health, and care (EHC) plan
- To retain eligibility during the academic year, students must have excellent attendance of at least 90% and/or be actively engaged in their studies.
- Students must also demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviour for learning and be making the expected level of progress on their study programme.

- Payments may be withheld if students do not meet the expected attendance and behaviour standards.
- Payments will be stopped where students have been absent for a period of 4 continuous weeks or more.
- Where students withdraw from a study programme, bursary allocations will cease and students may be asked to repay any wards made or return support such as bus passes, equipment, kit and uniform etc.

4.2 Travel Assistance

Where assistance with travel is identified as an individual need, Blackburn College may use the 16-19 Bursary Fund to support eligible students with the cost of a bus pass to travel to college from their registered home address. In addition to meeting the household income threshold, students must also live more than a mile away from college.

Travel passes will be issued digitally on a termly basis and students must maintain an attendance rate of 90% or above for travel assistance to continue each term. Where attendance falls below this level, a weekly pass may be issued as an alternative until attendance improves.

Please note funds are limited and awards for travel assistance will be made on a first come, first served basis, so we advise students to apply early.

Bus passes will be issued via the Transdev Go App, to the student email address. If a student does not have a suitable mobile device, please contact us for further information.

4.3 Lunch Card

Daily Free College Meals

Additional Eligibility Requirement:

Blackburn College will provide a free college meal to the value of £3.50 per day of timetabled study for students who are –

1. Aged between 16 and 18 on 31 August 2024 who are studying a full-time, further education course and are disadvantaged as defined by the students being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the benefits listed below.
2. Aged 19+ on 31 August 2024 and continuing with a study programme they started prior to being 19, OR, with an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP), who are disadvantaged as defined by the students being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

And in receipt of one of the following eligible benefits

- Income Support.
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa.
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance.
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit.
- Child Tax Credit (provided you 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.

Funding will be added to a student's ID card which can be swiped at payment points in all college food outlets.

4.4 Food Allowance

Where students are not eligible for a Free College Meal but due to low household income, require support with the costs of food and drink during the College Day, Blackburn College may provide bursary eligible students with a food allowance of up to £3.50 per study day that can be spent at College food outlets. Credit will be uploaded to student ID cards once a term and students need to maintain an attendance rate of 90% or above for credits to be made. Students will need to manage their funding and we expect healthy food choices to be made to ensure that funding lasts for the expected term. Blackburn College retain the right to decide when payments of the food allowance will be made.

4.6 Free Breakfast

Bursary eligible students will be provided with a free breakfast for each scheduled study day. This will be available at College food outlets from 8.15 - 9.15.

4.5 Kit, Uniform and Books Assistance

Where assistance with essential equipment is identified, Blackburn College will use the Bursary Fund for eligible 16 – 18 further education students so that they can fully participate in studies by accessing additional uniform, books and equipment that they are unable to purchase for themselves. Curriculum Centres will advise what kit, uniform or books a student requires and this will be subject to funds availability. Please note, any kit and equipment supplied may need to be returned at the end of the course.

4.6 Trips & Visits

Where a trip/visit is an essential part of a student's study programme and the cost is prohibitive to a student's participation, support from the Bursary Fund may be provided. We will need to see evidence of costs and a justification from relevant curriculum staff stating what learning outcomes the trip/visit relates to. Funds are limited and award decisions will be made based on individual needs.

4.7 UCAS Fees and Open Days

Any bursary eligible 16 – 18 further education student who requires help with the cost of UCAS fees or the costs of attending open days to explore progression options, can apply for support with those costs. Funding will need to be agreed in advance and Blackburn College retain the right to decide when payments will be made, subject to fund availability.

4.8 Industry Placements

Where additional costs will be incurred which prohibits a student from participating in an industry placement, support may be provided from the Bursary Fund. Funding will need to be agreed in advance, following an individual assessment and Blackburn College retain the right to decide when payments will be made, subject to fund availability.

4.9 Childcare

All learners aged 19 years old and under who require childcare support can access 100% of childcare costs from 'Care to Learn'. Applications are made directly to the scheme on www.gov.uk/care-to-learn.

5. BURSARIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN DEFINED VULNERABLE GROUPS

Students who meet the criteria, and who have a financial need, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups. Students will be individually assessed and 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 a bursary.

5.1 Eligibility:

- Students who are aged 16-18 (Be at least 16 but under 19 years of age on 31 August 2024).
- Students must meet the ESFA funding regulations residency criteria
- Students must be defined as being in one of the following vulnerable groups:
 - Young people in care, including looked after and unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.
 - Young care leavers
 - Young people in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit.
 - Disabled young people in receipt of Employment Support Allowance (or Universal Credit as a replacement for ESA) who are also in receipt of Disabled Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments.
- To retain eligibility during the academic year, students must have excellent attendance of at least 90% and/or be actively engaged in their studies.
- Students must also demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviour for learning and be making the expected level of progress on their study programme.

5.2 Awards and Payments

- Vulnerable students will be assessed for an award of up to £1200.
- Award amounts will vary depending on the student's individual financial needs for participation. These will be assessed as part of the bursary application, and it is possible that no award or a limited award will be made where there is not a financial need because these are already met and/or they have no relevant costs.
- Awards may consist of support with travel, a food allowance, support with study related kit and equipment, essential trips and visits, UCAS and university open days and industry placement costs.
- Any other additional costs will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.
- Payments may be withheld if students do not meet the expected attendance and behaviour standards.
- Payments will be stopped where students have been absent for a period of 4 continuous weeks or more. Where students withdraw from a study programme, bursary allocations will cease, and students may need to return any unused allocations.

6. ADULT SKILLS FUND (NOT ALLBF)

The hardship fund helps students with a specific financial hardship, preventing them from taking part or continuing in learning. It is not to provide support for general household incomes.

All awards are subject to the student completing an application on PayMyStudent ([Blackburn College \(paymystudent.com\)](https://blackburncollege.paymystudent.com)) providing any evidence requested and details of their study related costs. Funds will be allocated on a first come, first served basis and will be made on a pro rata basis for part-time students. Any award decisions will be made based on individual needs.

6.1 Eligibility

- Students who are aged 19+ as at 31 August 2024 studying an Adult Skills funded programme
- Have a household income less than £34,000 (including spouse/partner) and/or in receipt of Universal Credit, Jobseekers Allowance, Income Based Employment Support Allowance, Tax Credit Award or Income Support.
- Satisfy the residency criteria set out in the ESFA ASF Funding Guidance 2024/25.
- Students must continue to satisfactorily attend college at a rate of 90% or above.
- Students must also show a good attitude to learning and be making satisfactory progress on their course.
- Support may be withdrawn if students do not meet the expected standards of attendance and behaviour.
- It is the responsibility of any student in receipt of state benefits to inform the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about any bursary they receive as this may impact those benefits.

6.2 Travel

Blackburn College may use the Adult Skills Fund Hardship Funding for eligible 19+ Further Education students to subsidise the cost of travel. This may be provided in the form of a bus pass or a travel grant and will be based on individual needs and fund availability. Transport funds are limited and will be made available to those students travelling more than one mile into college, on a first come, first served basis.

6.3 Kit, Uniform and Books

Blackburn College will use the Adult Skills Fund Hardship Funding for eligible 19+ Further Education students so that they can fully participate in studies by accessing additional uniform, books and equipment that they may not have been able to purchase themselves. Curriculum Centres will advise what kit, uniform or books a student requires.

6.4 Food Allowance

Blackburn College will provide bursary eligible students who have a need for support with food and drink during the College Day, with a food allowance that can be spent at College food outlets. The allowance will be a contribution towards costs and will be calculated based on the number of study days and weeks and credit will be uploaded to student ID cards once a term. Students need to maintain an attendance rate of 90% or above for credits to be made. Students will need to manage their funding and we expect healthy food choices are made to ensure that funding lasts for the expected term. Blackburn College retain the right to decide when payments of the food allowance will be made.

6.5 Free Breakfast

Bursary eligible students will be provided with a free breakfast for each scheduled study day. This will be available at College food outlets from 8.15 - 9.15.

6.6 Trips & Visits

Where a trip/visit is an essential part of a student's course and the cost is prohibitive to a student's participation, support from the Bursary Fund may be provided. We will need to see evidence of costs and a justification from relevant curriculum staff stating what learning outcomes the trip/visit relates to. Funds are limited and award decisions will be made based on individual needs.

6.7 Domestic Emergencies

Support may be provided for domestic emergencies. This will be assessed on an individual basis and you will need to meet with a Student Finance Adviser who will advise you about any additional evidence required.

6.8 Examination Fee

Blackburn College may use the Adult Skills Fund Hardship Funding for eligible 19+ Further Education students to pay any examination fees associated with their course.

6.9 Childcare

Additional Eligibility Requirement:

- Students must access childcare support from other adults in their household, who are available during study sessions.
- Childcare must be from an Ofsted registered childcare provider
- Students must utilise at least 50% of their free government funding hours if applicable.

Blackburn College will use the Adult Skills Fund Childcare Funding for eligible Further Education students aged 20 and above to pay 90% of all childcare costs to cover timetabled classes during term time only.

7. ADVANCED LEARNER LOANS BURSARY FUND

The bursary fund is to help students with a specific financial hardship preventing them from taking part or continuing in learning. It is not to provide support for general household incomes. All awards are subject to the student completing an application on PayMyStudent, providing any evidence requested and outlining their study related costs. Funds will be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Any award decisions will be made based on individual needs.

7.1 Eligibility

- Students who are aged 19+ as at 31 August 2024 studying a programme funded by a loan approved by the Student Loan Company.

- Have a household income less than £34,000 (including spouse/partner) and/or in receipt of Universal Credit, Jobseekers Allowance, Income Based Employment Support Allowance, Tax Credit Award or Income Support.
- Satisfy the residency criteria set out in the ALLBF Funding Guidance 2024/25.
- Students must continue to satisfactorily attend college at a rate of 90% and above
- Students must also show a good attitude to learning and be making satisfactory progress on their course.
- It is the responsibility of any student in receipt of state benefits to inform the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about any bursary they receive as this may impact those benefits.

7.2 Travel

Blackburn College may use the Adult Education Budget Hardship Fund for eligible Advanced Learner Loan Further Education students to subsidise the cost of travel. This may be provided in the form of a bus pass or a travel grant and will be based on individual needs and fund availability. Transport funds are limited and will be made available to those students travelling more than one mile into college, on a first come, first served basis.

7.3 Kit, Uniform and Books

Blackburn College will use Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund for eligible 19+ Further Education ALLBF students so that they can fully participate in studies by accessing additional uniform, books and equipment that they may have not been able to purchase themselves. Curriculum Centres will advise what kit, uniform or books a student requires.

7.4 Food Allowance

Blackburn College will provide bursary eligible students who have a need for support with food and drink during the College Day, with a food allowance that can be spent at College food outlets. The allowance will be a contribution towards costs and will be calculated based on the number of study days and weeks and credit will be uploaded to student ID cards once a term. Students need to maintain an attendance rate of 90% or above for credits to be made. Students will need to manage their funding and we expect healthy food choices are made to ensure that funding lasts for the expected term. Blackburn College retain the right to decide when payments of the food allowance will be made.

7.5 Free Breakfast

Bursary eligible students will be provided with a free breakfast for each scheduled study day. This will be available at College food outlets from 8.15 - 9.15.

7.6 Trips & Visits

Where a trip/visit is an essential part of a student's course and the cost is prohibitive to a student's participation, support from the Bursary Fund may be provided. We will need to see evidence of costs and a justification from relevant curriculum staff stating what learning outcomes the trip/visit relates to. Funds are limited and award decisions will be made based on individual needs.

7.7 Domestic Emergencies

Support may be provided for domestic emergencies. This will be assessed on an individual basis and you will need to meet with a Student Finance Adviser who will advise you about any additional evidence required.

7.8 Childcare

Additional Eligibility Requirement:

- Students must access childcare support from other adults in their household, who are available during study sessions.
- Childcare must be from an Ofsted registered childcare provider.
- Students must utilise at least 50% of their free government funding hours if applicable.

Blackburn College will use Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund for eligible Further Education students aged 20 and above to pay 90% of all childcare costs to cover timetabled classes during term time only.

8. APPRENTICES

In line with Government eligibility criteria, apprentices are excluded from receiving any support from these funds.

9. Principal's Discretion

The Principal of Blackburn College may provide discretionary financial assistance to a student in hardship, whose personal circumstances fall outside of the conditions set out in this policy.

10. APPEALS

If a student does not agree with any decision taken by Student Finance in relation to judgements made on the distribution of support funds, then they can make an appeal in writing. These should be addressed to the Director of Student Support and Experience at Blackburn College. Students will receive a response and a decision within 10 days of the appeal.

11. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

This policy has been devised in accordance with the funding rules and guidance provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Blackburn College's records are audited annually against these guidelines.

12. MONITORING AND REVIEWING

11.1 The Policy will be reviewed by the College annually in line with the guidance published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency

11.2 Annual monitoring of the process takes place by both internal and external auditors, and by regular (termly) monitoring meetings with the Head of Finance and the Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services.

13. RELATED POLICIES/ PROCEDURES

Not applicable.

14. MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

The manager responsible for the effective operation of the Policy is the Director: Student Support and Experience.

15. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Blackburn College is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and providing a supportive environment for all members of our community. Our commitment means that this policy has been reviewed to ensure that it does not discriminate (either intentionally or unintentionally) any of the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation and meets our obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Therefore, this policy has no adverse impact on any of the above protected groups.

Author:	<i>Victoria Wilding, Student Services Manager</i>
Owner:	<i>Director Student Support and Experience</i>
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