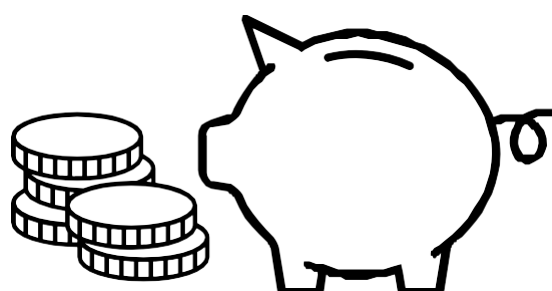


Financial Support Fund Policy

2025/26



This policy outlines the financial support available to University of Derby, Buxton Campus; how to apply, and what to expect throughout the bursary process.

Document control

Title	Discretionary Funding – FE Bursaries @ derby.ac.uk
Service Area	Learner Journey Team
Version	1.2
Target Audience	Students, Parents/ Guardians, Staff, External IAG
Team & reviewer	Student Money and Welfare Adviser
Date of Impact assessment	08.04.2026
Review date	01.07.2026(Policy Review)

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FUND POLICY CONTENTS

1. Policy Statement

- Overview of the College's commitment to supporting students financially.

2. Definitions

- Clarification of terms used within the policy.

3. Principles

- Key principles guiding the policy's implementation and administration.

4. Scope and Limitations

- Description of the bursaries covered under the policy.

5. Responsibilities

- Detailed roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders:
 - Operations Manager for the Learner Journey Team
 - Student Money and Welfare Adviser
 - Bursary Administrators
 - Progress Coaches and Student Mentors
 - Student Support Manager
 - Curriculum Leaders

6. Implementation Arrangements

- Process for implementing and disseminating the policy.

7. Monitoring and Review

- Procedures for reviewing and updating the policy.

8. Accessibility of Policy

- Availability of the policy to all relevant parties.

9. Communication Methods

- Channels and methods used to communicate the policy.

10. College Announcements

- Platforms for announcing policy updates and relevant information.

11. Provision for Alternative Formats

- Commitment to inclusivity and providing information in various formats.

12. External Documents

- Links to relevant external documents and resources for further information.

13. Support Guidelines

- Breakdown of Support Types, Eligibility, and Conditions by Funding Stream

14. Support Bandings

- Tiered funding allocations based on household income and assessed financial need.

15. Procedure

- Step by step guidance on applying for financial support, from enquiry to decision.

16. Key Information for All Student Support Funds

- Overarching rules, expectations, and common conditions applied across all bursary schemes.

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The University of Derby recognise the barriers that many students face in accessing education due to additional course-related costs beyond tuition fees.

To promote equality and support disadvantaged students and those experiencing financial hardship, the college is committed to providing student support funds.

These funds aim to enhance the student experience and help students achieve their full potential.

The Financial Support Fund Policy outlines the college's commitment to providing financial support for students, adhering to all relevant national regulations, college guidelines, and legislation.

2. DEFINITIONS

This Financial Support Fund Policy has been developed to help students and potential students determine their eligibility for financial support from The University of Derby, Buxton Campus. Information in this policy applies to the 2025/26 academic year.

3. PRINCIPLES

The Financial Support Fund policy will:

- Utilise the 'Pay My Student Bursary' portal as the primary administrative system, ensuring clear and responsive processes that consistently prioritise a 'student-first' approach.
 - Conduct means-tested assessments to provide awards based on a student's individual needs rather than a flat rate payment system.
 - Implement cashless payment systems where possible.
 - Promote the college's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion.
 - Raise student aspiration and social mobility.
 - Enhance the ability of students to achieve their goals while at the college.
 - Ensure that students are treated fairly within an open and transparent application process.
 - Support the achievement of key college outcomes.
 - Administer, record, and monitor funds, ensuring that funds are used for their intended purposes in compliance with internal and external regulations and guidelines.
-

4. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This policy covers the following Bursaries included within the Financial Support Fund:

- 16-19 Bursary Fund including Vulnerable Bursary element
- 16-19 T Level Bursary
- Free College Meal Scheme
- Care to Learn

For Adult Learners

- 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund
 - Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund
-

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

Operations Manager for the Learner Journey Team:

- **Owner of the Policy:** Responsible for the overarching guidance and adherence to the policy framework.

Student Money and Welfare Adviser:

- **Executive Owner of the Policy:** Charged with the successful implementation of the policy, which includes:
 - Processing all applications within agreed timelines.
 - Providing advice and support to curriculum departments, enquirers, and applicants.
 - Examining individual student circumstances to ensure bursary allocations effectively meet student needs.
 - Ensuring that justifications for bursary allocations are well-documented and robust enough to withstand audit scrutiny.
 - Maintaining compliance with funding and audit guidelines.
 - Leading on the administration and distribution of responsibilities.

Bursary Administrators:

- Responsible for:
 - Managing the administration of the Bursary process, including payment schedules and childcare invoices.
 - Ensuring all decisions are implemented and communicated effectively.
 - Promoting Bursaries across colleges.
 - Managing the Free College Meal Card/Bursary Meal Card distribution process.

Progress Coaches and Student Mentors:

- Duties include:
 - Signposting Financial Support Fund related inquiries.
 - Assisting with the submission of applications and required evidence via Pay My Student.
 - Identifying students in need of financial support and ensuring they receive timely and efficient assistance to minimise impact on their education.

Student Support Manager:

- Responsibilities:
 - Identifying and supporting vulnerable learners and children in care with their transition into college life, including financial support packages.
 - Collaborating with students, carers, and local authorities to assess and meet college-related financial needs.

Curriculum Leaders:

- Charged with:
 - Setting essential course costs and providing updates throughout the academic year on any changes to these costs.
 - Ensuring student attendance records and progress/performance monitoring systems are accurately maintained and regularly updated.
 - Keeping course delivery details up to date.
-

6. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

Roles and Responsibilities: The roles and responsibilities of employees in implementing the policy and procedures are clearly outlined in the guidelines. All new employees are briefed on these policies and procedures as part of the local employee induction process. Updates and amendments to procedures are regularly disseminated and reinforced through training sessions, team meetings, and email communications.

7. MONITORING AND REVIEW

This Policy and associated procedures will be formally reviewed monthly regarding funding allocations and then annually for a full policy update by the Operations Manager and Student Money Adviser. Student Satisfaction will be monitored via Student Voice feedback sessions hosted by the Union of Students and feedback questionnaires on Pay My Student.

8. ACCESSIBILITY OF POLICY

This policy is accessible to University of Derby employees, parents, carers, students, and interested third parties through the College website. Information is made available to students at various stages of their learner journey:

- **Pre-Entry**
 - **Entry and Induction**
 - **During the Program**
 - **Exit and Progression**
-

9. COMMUNICATION METHODS

We communicate with current and prospective students through multiple channels to ensure they have all the necessary information:

- **Open Events**
 - **Enrolment:** Including guides sent in Summer Packs.
 - **Induction:** Via drop-ins and group tutorials.
 - **Marketing Materials:** Such as leaflets, flyers, and posters.
 - **Direct Communication:** Through email (via Unimail accounts), letters, and text messages.
 - **Online Platforms:** Pay My Student Portal.
-

10. COLLEGE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Information about this policy and related updates are also announced through:

- **Pay My Student Portal**
 - **Social Media**
 - **Tutorials**
 - **College Website**
 - **Student Shoutout**
-

11. PROVISION FOR ALTERNATIVE FORMATS

The College is committed to inclusivity and will provide information in alternative formats upon request.

12.EXTERNAL DOCUMENTS

Links to external documents and resources are provided for easy access to more detailed information about specific funds and guidelines.

16-19 Funding Guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2025-to-2026>

Care to Learn funding guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-to-learn-guidance/care-to-learn-academic-year-2025-to-2026-conditions-of-grant-funding>

Free meals in Further Education guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-meals-in-further-education-guide/free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-guide-academic-year-2025-to-2026>

Adult Education budget funding guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-education-and-skills-funding-allocations-guidance/adult-education-and-skills-funding-allocations-update-for-2025-to-2026>

Advanced Learner Loans funding guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advanced-learner-loans-funding-and-performance-management-rules/advanced-learner-loans-funding-and-performance-management-rules-2025-to-2026>

Derbyshire Post 16 Transport

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/school-places/secondary-admissions/parents-guide/more-information/16-plus-travel/post-16-travel.aspx>

B Line Discounted Travel Pass

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/transport-roads/public-transport/fares-tickets-passes/b-line/b-line.aspx>

Staffordshire Post 16 Transport

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/School-Transport/Post-16/Post-16-travel-homepage.aspx>

Cheshire East Post 16 Transport

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/school_transport/school-transport-policies.aspx

13.SUPPORT GUIDELINES

16-19 Student Support Funds

There are several funds and support schemes available for students aged 16-19, which include:

- **Vulnerable element of the 16-19 Bursary Fund**
- **16-19 Discretionary Support Fund**
- **Free College Meals**
- **Care to Learn**

These funds are designed to assist students with specific costs associated with their program of study. They are available to students who are on ESFA-funded courses. These funds and support schemes are not available to students on Apprenticeship, Higher Education, or Full-Cost courses.

Household Income Thresholds are based on the net income of all individuals living in the household who would normally be eligible for council tax.

16-19 Bursary Fund Vulnerable Element		
Support Available	Eligibility Criteria	Age
Up to £1200 per academic year per student, to support with essential course costs, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• College Bus Pass• Travel Support (beyond 2 miles)• Equipment• Kit• Uniform• Books• Essential Field Trips / Essential Additional Courses• Meal Support:• Eligible students studying at Buxton, Skills base, BFC etc, receive a meal card allowance of £5 per day, ensuring comprehensive meal coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Young People in Care• Care Leavers• Students receiving Income Support (IS), or Universal Credit (UC) because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them• Students receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right, as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC• Please note: Benefits must be in the student's own name.	Students need to be 16-18 years of age as of 31.08.2025

<p>throughout the college term.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meal Voucher Options: For students studying offsite without access to college-run canteen facilities such as DCCT, meal vouchers or payment reimbursement options are provided to ensure equitable meal support to the value of £5 per timetabled day. 		
---	--	--

Additional Barriers will be identified within either a learner's PEP meeting or an individual assessment with the Bursary Team.

If course costs exceed £1200, additional costs may be covered through the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary, provided that a successful application is submitted via Pay My Student demonstrating a financial need for further support. Payments are typically made in kind; however, direct payments may be issued on a fortnightly basis, contingent upon maintaining an 85% attendance rate. The college reserves the right to refuse a bursary if no significant financial barriers to education can be identified.

Payment Method:

Where possible, support is provided in kind. However, direct payments such as for external transport may be granted and are typically made on a fortnightly basis, contingent upon maintaining 85% attendance.

Receipt Requirements:

Where costs are not paid directly to the department, students are required to pay upfront and provide receipts for reimbursement.

Transport Support Cap:

There is a cap of £1000 on transport support at the start of the academic year to ensure fair distribution of funds. This cap is subject to review and may be adjusted based on available evidence and funding.

External Travel Cost Requirements:

External travel costs must be reasonable and offer value for money. Learners are expected to provide reasonable fuel/taxi costs. The college reserves the right to review and approve these costs based on market rates. Exceptional need evidence must be provided for this assessment.

16-19 Discretionary Bursary Fund		
Support Available	Eligibility Criteria	Age
<p>The 16-19 Bursary Fund provides various types of support based on household income. Specific support details are broken down by income banding, which can be found in Section 15 for a detailed breakdown of the bandings.</p> <p>Support may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Bus Pass • Travel Support (beyond 2 miles) • Equipment • Kit • Uniform • Books • Essential Field Trips / Essential Additional Courses • Meal Support: • 16-19 Bursary Fund Meal Support: Eligible students receive a meal card allowance of £5 per day, ensuring comprehensive meal coverage throughout the college term. • Free College Meals (FCM) Allowance: Students eligible under FCM receive £2.61 per full timetabled day. A top-up from the 16-19 Bursary Fund can be provided to bring the total allowance to £5 per day, aligning with the bursary meal support. • Meal Voucher Options: For students studying offsite without access to college-run canteen facilities, meal vouchers or reimbursement options are provided to ensure equitable meal support to the value of £5 per timetabled day. 	<p>This fund is available to students who have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Household Income up to £45,000 • Or students who can demonstrate that they are facing financial hardship 	<p>- Students need to be 16-18 years of age as of 31.08.2025</p> <p>- Or aged 19 on 31st August and continuing into their second year of a two year course they began aged 16-18</p> <p>- or aged 19-25 and in receipt of an Education Health Care Plan</p>

In cases where travel to and from college is not straightforward—such as requiring multiple modes of transport or routes—reimbursement may be the only viable option. In such instances, learners are required to submit their travel costs weekly for review and reimbursement via Pay My Student.

Additional Funding for Vulnerable Students: If a student exhausts the initial £1200 allocation from the Vulnerable element of the 16-19 Bursary Fund and continues to demonstrate financial need for essential course-related costs, additional funding may be considered. Applications for this additional support must be substantiated with detailed financial need assessments and are subject to approval based on available funds.

Payment Method:

Where possible, support is provided in kind. However, direct payments such as for external transport may be granted and are typically made on a fortnightly basis, contingent upon maintaining 85% attendance.

Receipt Requirements:

Where costs are not paid directly to the department, students are required to pay upfront and provide receipts for reimbursement.

Transport Support Cap:

There is a cap of £1000 on transport support at the start of the academic year to ensure fair distribution of funds. This cap is subject to review and may be adjusted based on available evidence and funding.

External Travel Cost Requirements:

External travel costs must be reasonable and offer value for money. Learners are expected to provide reasonable fuel/taxi costs. The college reserves the right to review and approve these costs based on market rates. Exceptional need evidence must be provided for this assessment.

In cases where travel to and from college is not straightforward—such as requiring multiple modes of transport or routes—reimbursement may be the only viable option. In such instances, learners are required to submit their travel costs weekly for review and reimbursement via Pay My Student.

16–19 T Level Bursary – Students undertaking a T Level qualification may be eligible for additional financial support to cover industry placement costs, such as travel to the placement, specialist equipment, or uniform required by the employer. Eligibility will be assessed in line with the 16–19 Bursary Fund household income thresholds and guidance.

Funding is provided on a case-by-case basis and subject to the submission of evidence confirming placement costs. Payments are typically made in kind, but reimbursement may be possible with valid receipts.

When assessing household income, the College excludes certain disability-related benefits. This includes Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payment (PIP), and the disability elements of Universal Credit, Child Tax Credit, or Working Tax Credit. These will not be counted towards the income threshold.

Free College Meals Scheme		
Support Available	Eligibility Criteria	Age
<p>For students studying onsite including Skills base and BFC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> College Meal card (value of £2.61 per full timetabled day) for use in onsite cafeterias <p>For students studying offsite with no access to College run canteen facilities i.e .DCCT, you will receive one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A meal voucher provided by Aramark for use in Eat Central or Starbucks up to the value of £2.61 per timetabled day Direct payment of £2.61 per full timetabled day, granted upon submission of an expense's questionnaire along with an itemised receipt. 	<p>Students, or their parents/guardians, must be in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income Support Income-based Jobseekers Allowance Income-related Employment Support Allowance Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit 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 (assessed by HMRC). Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 p/a 	<p>- Students need to be 16-18 years of age as of 31.08.2025</p> <p>- Or aged 19 on 31st August and continuing in to their second year of a two year course they began aged 16-18</p> <p>- or aged 19-25 and in receipt of an Education Health Care</p>

Note: Allowances are granted based on being scheduled for a full timetabled day. If only a part-day is scheduled, an allowance may not be granted.

During the initial weeks of the term, while applications are being processed, learners are advised to pay for meals upfront where possible and submit itemised receipts as proof of purchase for reimbursement.

Care to Learn scheme		
Support Available	Eligibility Criteria	Age
The Care to Learn scheme supports eligible students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants must be the primary carer and in receipt of Child Benefit 	<input type="checkbox"/> Eligible students must be under 20 at the

<p>with childcare costs, which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare costs, including deposit and registration fees. • Up to 5 days of childcare taster sessions. • Maintaining a childcare place during the summer holidays. • Travel costs associated with taking your child to the childcare provider. • Funding is provided up to £180 per child per week. 	<p>for the child(ren) they are claiming support for.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The other parent must be unable to provide childcare, for example, due to being in education or absent. • The other parent must not be claiming childcare through Tax Credits. • Detailed eligibility requirements can be accessed here. 	<p>start of their course.</p> <p>□ Students who turn 20 during their study program are eligible to continue receiving funding until the end of that specific study program.</p>
---	---	---

Additional Funding: If the Care to Learn scheme does not fully cover the childcare costs for the days when the student is timetabled to attend classes, additional funding may be available. Students can apply for supplementary support from other funding sources available at the college, such as the Vulnerable Bursary Fund.

Adult learner funds

There are two main bursary funds available for students aged 19 and over:

- **19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund**
- **Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund**

These funds are designed to help learners overcome financial barriers associated with their programme of study and are only available to those on ESFA-funded courses. Household income thresholds are assessed based on net income for all adults in the household (typically those liable for Council Tax)

19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund		
Support Available	Eligibility Criteria	Age
<p>The 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund provides various types of support based on household income. Specific support details are broken down by income banding, which can be found in Section 15 for a detailed breakdown of the bandings. Learners studying on an online course will only be considered for support marked with an Asterix.</p> <p>Support may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Bus Pass • Travel Support (beyond 2 miles) • Childcare • Tuition Fees* • Professional Memberships/ Registration Fees* • Equipment • Kit • Uniform • Books* • Essential Field Trips / Essential Additional Courses 	<p>This fund is available to learners who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a household income of up to £45,000 (based on net income) • Or can evidence financial hardship <p>Tuition Fee Support is available for those not eligible for Advanced Learner Loans or ESFA fee remission.</p> <p>Bursary funding will not be awarded where tuition fees remain unpaid, and learners have not exhausted other available fee support schemes.</p>	<p>Learners must be aged 19 or older as of 31.08.2025</p>

Additional Funding Conditions:

- Tuition Fee Support is only available to those not eligible for Advanced Learner Loans or ESFA Fee Remission.
- Learners must show ongoing dedication to their course. Applications for tuition fee support will be refused where other funding options have not been explored or where the learner has not engaged with their programme.
- All costs (e.g. for equipment, kit, uniform) must be in line with the course cost sheet and represent value for money. The college reserves the right to reject any costs it deems excessive or unjustified.
- Where not paid directly to departments, receipts must be submitted for reimbursement.

Childcare Support Criteria:

- Separate Childcare Bursary Application Form required
- Childcare must be delivered by an Ofsted-registered provider

- Learner must be in receipt of Child Benefit for the child(ren)
 - Funded Early Learning (FEL) must be used first
 - The other parent must be unable to provide care
 - A funding cap applies and will be reviewed each academic year
 - Costs must represent value for money
-

Travel Support Limits:

- Maximum travel support: £1,000 per academic year
- Travel must be essential, cost-effective, and evidence-based
- Complex travel (multiple methods) may be supported by reimbursement only, based on weekly submissions via Pay My Student
- The college reserves the right to approve or reject travel claims based on market rates
- Exceptional need evidence is required where costs exceed typical levels
- When assessing household income, the College excludes certain disability-related benefits. This includes Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Personal Independence Payment (PIP), and the disability elements of Universal Credit, Child Tax Credit, or Working Tax Credit. These will not be counted towards the income threshold.

Advanced Learner Loan Bursary		
Support Available	Eligibility Criteria	Age
<p>The Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund provides various types of support based on household income. Specific support details are broken down by income banding, which can be found in Section 15 for a detailed breakdown of the bandings. Learners studying on an online course will only be considered for support marked with an Asterix.</p> <p>Support may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Bus Pass • Travel Support (beyond 2 miles) • Childcare • Professional Memberships/ Registration Fees* • Equipment • Kit • Uniform • Books* • Essential Field Trips / Essential Additional Courses 	<p>This fund is available to students who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have been awarded an Advanced Learner loan and who have • Have a household income of up to £45,000 (based on net income) • Or can evidence financial hardship <p>No Bursary funding will be made until a learners Advanced Learner Loan is approved and active on our system.</p>	<p>- Students need to be aged 19 years or older as of 31.08.2025</p>

Important Notes:

- No bursary funding will be issued until the learner's Advanced Learner Loan has been approved and active on the system.
- All costs (e.g. for equipment, kit, uniform) must be in line with the course cost sheet and represent value for money. The college reserves the right to reject any costs it deems excessive or unjustified.
- Where not paid directly to departments, receipts must be submitted for reimbursement.

Childcare and Travel Terms for this fund are identical to those listed under the 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund above.

14. SUPPORT BANDINGS AND FINANCIAL AWARD STRUCTURE

To ensure fairness, transparency, and targeted financial assistance, The University of Derby, Buxton Campus operates a tiered bursary award system aligned to household income levels. This banding structure applies across the 16–19 Bursary Fund (including Discretionary and Vulnerable Elements), the 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund, and the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund. Support levels vary according to assessed financial need and the course-related costs identified during the application process.

All support awards are subject to the learner maintaining a minimum of 85% attendance, unless otherwise agreed due to exceptional circumstances. Award decisions are based on completed applications submitted via PayMyStudent and verified against mandatory evidence requirements, as outlined in Section 15.

In cases where learners experience acute hardship not fully reflected in household income (such as family breakdown, recent income loss, or housing instability), applications may be escalated to the Financial Support Panel for additional consideration.

Where applicable, learners may be required to contribute a percentage towards certain costs. For example, a “10% contribution” means the learner is expected to cover 10% of the total cost of eligible support (e.g. equipment or transport), while the remaining amount is funded via bursary.

Support remains subject to funding availability, value-for-money checks, and the College’s overarching commitment to equitable and needs-based provision.

Income Assessment

Household income is assessed using net income for all adults in the household who would normally be liable for council tax. This is in line with Universal Credit assessment criteria. Awards are determined by income band and the identified need for course-related support.

16–19 Bursary Support Bandings

Income Band	Priority Group	Student Contribution	Support Allocation
£0 – £10,000	Group 1	Up to 10%	100% support for bus pass, 100% for travel, 90% for equipment, essential trips, meal support top-up, hardship (panel review).

Income Band	Priority Group	Student Contribution	Support Allocation
£10,000.01 – £28,000	Group 2	Up to 15%	100% bus pass, 100% for travel 85% for equipment, field trips, meal support top-up, hardship (panel review).
£28,000.01 – £30,000	Group 3	Up to 20%	100% bus pass, 100% travel 80% for equipment/trips, hardship and meal support (panel review).
£30,000.01 – £35,000	Group 4	Up to 25%	90% bus pass, 75% other support, hardship (panel review).
£35,000.01 – £45,000	Group 5	Up to 50%	50% bus pass/ transport costs only. Hardship towards contribution (panel review).

Learners eligible for the Vulnerable Bursary may receive up to £1,200 in support. Where costs exceed this, additional eligible needs may be met through the 16–19 Discretionary Fund.

19+ Learner Support & Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Bandings

Income Band	Priority Group	Student Contribution	Support Allocation
£0 – £10,000	Group 1	Up to 10%	100% bus pass, 100% travel 90% equipment/childcare, hardship, tuition (panel).
£10,000.01 – £28,000	Group 2	Up to 15%	100% bus pass, 100% travel, 85% equipment/childcare, hardship, tuition (panel).
£28,000.01 – £30,000	Group 3	Up to 20%	90% bus pass, 80% support, hardship, childcare (90%), tuition (panel).
£30,000.01 – £40,000	Group 4	Up to 30%	75% support including bus pass, childcare (90%), hardship, tuition (panel).
£40,000.01 – £45,000	Group 5	Up to 50%	50% bus pass/equipment/childcare, hardship, tuition (panel).

Support is based on course cost sheets or receipts with justification. All awards are subject to available funding and 85% attendance compliance. Awards may not be granted where no evidence of need is provided.

Hardship Applications and Discretionary Awards

While the bursary system is primarily based on assessed household income, The University of Derby recognises that some students may experience **acute financial hardship** that is not fully captured in their income assessment. This may include:

- Sudden or recent loss of household income
- Changes to family circumstances (e.g. separation, illness, caring responsibilities)
- Homelessness or housing instability
- No access to financial support from parents/carers despite being under 19
- Other exceptional personal circumstances impacting access to learning


In these cases, learners (or their Progress Coach/Welfare Adviser) may request a hardship review. Applications are considered by the **Financial Support Panel**, who will assess need based on:

- Individual circumstances and narrative
- Supporting documentation (e.g. eviction notice, benefit sanction letter, safeguarding reports)
- Evidence of engagement with college and learner welfare teams

Where appropriate, the Panel may:

- Approve funding beyond standard banding limits
- Waive or reduce the expected student contribution
- Prioritise the learner for **immediate hardship support** (e.g. travel, food, emergency kits)

All hardship decisions are discretionary and based on available funding. Awards must still demonstrate value for money and be linked to course participation or progression.

 *To initiate a hardship request, students should contact the Learner Journey Team or Student Money and Welfare Adviser. All discussions will be handled sensitively and in confidence.*

15. Procedure

This section outlines the key stages students will follow when applying for financial support, including expectations, timelines, and assessment procedures.

15.1 Student Support Fund Application Process

The Financial Support Fund application process consists of four key stages:

Stage	Description
Step 1: Initial Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG)	Students can access funding information through college open days, the BLC website, drop-in sessions, and direct enquiries with the Learner Journey Team or Student Money Adviser.
Step 2: Application Submission	Applications open from late July each year and should be submitted via the PayMyStudent (PMS) portal: https://blc.paymystudent.com/portal
Step 3: Assessment	Once all required evidence is submitted, applications will be reviewed and assessed. Incomplete applications will be returned with a request for further evidence.
Step 4: Decision and Notification	Outcomes are communicated via the PMS portal, Unimail email, letter, or text. Awards will only be backdated to the date a completed application was received.

15.2 Submission Methods

- Online: via the PMS portal or college website
- Paper-based: available in exceptional cases. Contact:
Financialsupportfund@blc.ac.uk
- Postal Return:
Financial Support Fund Team
Clarendon House, Buxton and Leek College
Devonshire Road, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 6RY

All applications are acknowledged within 5 working days, subject to staff availability.

15.3 Assessment and Timelines

- All fully completed applications with correct evidence will normally be assessed within **4 weeks** of receipt. During peak periods (e.g. enrolment), this may extend to a maximum of 6 weeks. Applications will be acknowledged within **3–5 working days** after the enrolment period has ended.

- Students must monitor their PMS and Unimail accounts for status updates or evidence requests.
- Incomplete applications will be deactivated after 12 weeks. Students must then reapply with full documentation.
- Financial support will only be considered from the date a complete application was submitted.

15.4 Evidence Requirements

⚠ Important: Incomplete, unclear, or incorrectly formatted evidence (e.g. blurry images, missing pages, or unsupported file types) will delay the processing of your application. Please ensure all uploads are clear, complete, and correctly labelled.

Students must upload or submit all required supporting evidence, such as household income documents, benefit letters, or timetables. A full evidence checklist is available on the Pay My Student (PMS) portal and in the Bursary Guide.

Failure to provide the requested evidence within 10 working days may result in your application being deactivated.

Please note: Disability-related benefits are not included when calculating household income. This includes the 'disabled element' shown on Universal Credit statements or Tax Credit awards, which will not be counted in our assessment.

15.5 Application Outcomes

An application may be declined for the following reasons:

- The student does not meet eligibility criteria as defined by national guidance.
- Required supporting evidence is incomplete or missing.
- The student does not meet minimum attendance or behaviour standards.
- No clear financial need can be established.

15.6 Appeals and Complaints

- Informal appeals should be directed in writing to the Financial Support Fund Manager at:
Financialsupportfund@blc.ac.uk
- Formal complaints must follow the University of Derby procedure:
<https://www.derby.ac.uk/about/academic-regulations/complaints-procedure>

15.7 Cashless Payment Principles

Where possible, bursary awards are made through cashless systems to simplify administration and ensure transparency. For example:

Support Type	Payment Method
Bus Pass	Internal transfer to Transport Department
Meal Support (Onsite)	College-issued meal card
Meal Support (Offsite)	Meal vouchers or direct reimbursement with receipts
Equipment, Kit, Uniform, Field Trips, Exam Resits	Internal transfer to department
Childcare	Paid directly to OFSTED-registered providers based on invoicing
Tuition Fees	Internal transfer to Finance Department

16. Key Information for All Student Support Funds

This section outlines key principles that apply to all support funds administered by The University of Derby, regardless of the bursary type or learner age group.

16.1 General Principles

- Awards are issued on a first-come, first-served basis and are subject to available funding.
 - All applications are assessed individually, based on the financial evidence submitted and specific support needs.
 - Bursary support is designed to contribute toward essential course-related costs; it may not cover 100% of all needs.
 - Support will not be granted where a clear financial need cannot be demonstrated.
-

16.2 Attendance and Behaviour Expectations


- Students must maintain a minimum of 85% attendance and appropriate conduct throughout their studies.
- Ongoing attendance and behaviour will be monitored by the Learner Journey Team and curriculum departments.

- Failure to meet expectations may result in financial support being reduced or withdrawn.
-

16.3 Payment Conditions

- Wherever possible, payments are made in kind (e.g. bus passes, equipment, meal cards).
 - Direct payments are made via BACS only to the student's own bank account (not parent or carer).
 - No direct bursary payment will be made until a learner is:
 - Fully enrolled
 - Has attended for a minimum of three weeks
 - Has a completed and approved bursary assessment
(*In urgent hardship cases, exceptions may be considered.*)
 - Meal support (including Free College Meals and Bursary-funded meal top-ups) will not be issued until eligibility has been assessed and confirmed. Students should bring money for meals until notified of their award. Receipts for meals purchased during this period may be submitted for reimbursement if the application is approved.
-

16.4 Receipts and Reimbursements

 For transport reimbursements, students must upload a completed Travel Questionnaire and provide receipts showing one full week of travel costs each half term. Receipts must clearly show journey details and amounts paid. Delays or rejections may occur if receipts are not clear or do not reflect actual travel.

- Where support (e.g. transport, meals, equipment) is not paid directly, students must pay upfront and provide valid receipts for reimbursement.
 - Receipts must match the item or service claimed and be submitted via PayMyStudent within the relevant timeframe.
-

16.5 Termly Review Requirements

- Students receiving external transport or meal support must complete:
 - The PayMyStudent Travel Questionnaire
 - The PayMyStudent Meal Support Questionnaire

- These forms must be supported with one week's receipts and submitted each term for continued reimbursement.
-

16.6 Value for Money and Cost Reasonableness

- The college reserves the right to decline reimbursement where costs are deemed:
 - Excessive
 - Unreasonable
 - Inconsistent with the course cost sheet or bursary guidelines
 - Transport costs will be assessed using AA mileage calculations (45p per mile) or local travel provider pricing.
-

16.7 Immediate Hardship

- A Hardship Fund is available to support urgent, one-off needs (e.g. food, emergency travel).
 - Awards from this fund are discretionary and based on the availability of resources and evidence of need.
 - Students should contact the Student Money and Welfare Adviser or Learner Journey Team for a confidential discussion.
-

16.8 Fraud, Repayments and Misuse

- Any student found to have made a false claim may face disciplinary action or be referred to the police in serious cases.
 - Learners who leave the college early may be invoiced for partial repayment of funds or asked to return items (e.g. uniforms, kits, equipment).
-

16.9 End-of-Year and Mid-Year Reviews

- The bursary team will review remaining funds regularly throughout the year.
- If surplus funds are available, students may be reassessed for additional support not previously awarded.