NCS BURSARY POLICY

2026-27

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1. Introduction and aims

The Bursary is funding provided to NCS by the Government so that it can support disadvantaged students who find it difficult to come/or stay in college where support is not given. The NCS administers these limited funds at its discretion in line with the guidelines, although funding is not guaranteed and will be based on information supplied in the need section of the application form. As part of the assessment process, we will be reviewing student's timetable.

This policy aims to:

- Have clear and transparent processes for the use and allocation of 16 to 19 bursary funds
- Make clear to parents/carers and students the type of support that is available and the means of applying for it.
- Make clear to parents/carers and students the attendance and behaviour conditions for receiving the funds

2. Relevant legislation and guidance

This policy is based on advice from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on the [16 to 19 bursary fund for the 2024 to 2025 academic year.]

3. Definitions

'In care' is defined as: children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (section 31 of the Children Act 1989)

'Looked after child' is defined as: a child in the care of a local authority or who is provided with accommodation by the authority in the exercise of any functions for more than 24 hours (section 22 of the Children Act 1989)

'Care leaver' is defined as:

- A young person aged 16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16, or
- A young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16

4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 The Governing Board

The governing board has overall responsibility for approving this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy, but has delegated this to the Finance Committee.

The monitoring the implementation of this policy has been delegated to the Head of Operations and Finance at NCS.

4.2 The Principal

The Principal is responsible for ensuring staff are familiar with this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy, and that it is being applied consistently.

4.3 Head of Operations and Finance

The Head of Operations and Finance is responsible for administering the 16 to 19 bursary fund in line with this policy and the DfE guidance and that it is being applied consistently.

4.4 Staff

Our staff are responsible for implementing this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy consistently.

The senior leadership team (SLT) will provide staff with appropriate training in relation to this policy and its implementation.

4.5 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to notify staff or the Head of Operations and finance of any concerns or queries regarding this 16 to 19 bursary fund policy.

5. How we use the bursary fund

Financial support is available to eligible students from the 16 to 19 bursary fund. See section 6 below for details of our eligibility criteria.

The fund is intended to support students aged 16 to 19 in overcoming specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- Bursaries for defined vulnerable groups; and
- Discretionary bursaries

We use the fund to provide students with support to fund:

- Transport
- Books
- Equipment
- Field trips and other course-related costs
- The costs of attending university interviews and open days

6. Eligibility

The following eligibility criteria will be assessed in addition to the individual student's actual financial needs. No student will automatically be awarded an amount of funding without an assessment of the level of actual financial need they have.

6.1 Age

To be eligible for either bursary students must be at least 16 years old but under 19 years old.

Students aged 19 or over are eligible only for a discretionary bursary if they:

- Are continuing on a study programme or course that they began when they were aged 16 to 18-years-old, or
- Have an education, health and care (EHC) plan

Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for defined vulnerable groups.

6.2 Eligible Education Provision

Students must be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (e.g. Ofsted). The provision must also fall into 1 of these groups:

- Be funded directly by the ESFA or by the ESFA via a local authority;
- Be funded or co-financed by the European Social Fund;
- Be otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3) that is accredited by Ofqual or is on the ESFA's list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19; or
- Be a 16 to 19 traineeship programme

Non-employed students aged 16 to 19 who are participating in a Prince's Trust Team Programme are also eligible to receive a bursary in the same way as any other student participating in an eligible, publicly funded course.

Students are not eligible if:

- They are on an apprenticeship programme; or
- Are on any waged training

Students who are studying via distance learning are eligible for either 16 to 19 bursary, but are likely to require financial help on a more infrequent basis (e.g. travel to exams). If this is the case, we will provide support in-kind, such as a travel pass, details of which shall be decided on a case-by-case basis.

6.3 Residency

Students must meet the residency criteria in the ESFA funding regulations for post-16 provision.

6.4 Asylum Seekers

Accompanied asylum seekers under 18 with an adult relative or partner, and asylum seekers aged 18 and above are entitled to education but are not entitled to public funds. If necessary, they can apply to the Home Office for suitable housing and cash for essentials.

We will provide in-kind support such as books, equipment and a travel pass to asylum seekers who have not had asylum refused.

Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children:

- Are the responsibility of the local authority;
- Are to be treated as 'looked after' children; and
- Are eligible for a bursary for vulnerable groups, where they have a financial need

When these students reach 18-years-old, we will consider their immigration status. They will still be eligible for a bursary as a student from a defined vulnerable group if the asylum claim is in their favour and will be treated as a 'care leaver' until they reach the upper age limit.

6.5 Bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups

Students with a financial need, who meet 1 of the following 4 criteria below, in addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 above, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups.

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- In care (NB: those who are privately fostered are not classed as looked after);
- Care leavers;
- 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 and living with them such as a child or partner; or
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) in their own right, as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right

Universal Credit has now replaced Income Support, as well as other benefits above, for current and future young people aged 16 to 18. However, students aged 19 to 25 and funded from the 16 to 19 budget (19+ continuers and students with an EHC plan) may still receive the legacy benefits listed above.

Students who meet the criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to a bursary. Students will not receive the bursary if they do not have any actual financial need (for example, because their financial needs are met from other sources and/or because they have no relevant costs).

Where a bursary is provided, the funds will generally be up to £1,200 per year for study programmes lasting 30 weeks or more. When calculating the amount, cases will be looked at individually and the outcome based on a particular student's needs. Students will only receive the amount they actually need to participate and will not automatically receive £1,200 if they do not need the full amount.

We can use our discretion, on a case-by-case basis, and provide more than £1,200 per year if such would be necessary in all the circumstances for the student to remain in education. Any such additional payment will be paid either from our discretionary bursary allocation or our own funds.

If a student's study programme lasts for less than 30 weeks, they will be paid a pro-rata amount. We will also consider the number of hours involved in a student's study programme when deciding whether a pro-rata payment is more appropriate.

We will review the student's eligibility position each academic year. Students will only continue to receive a bursary for vulnerable groups if they continue to satisfy the criteria.

We will provide this support for students from the bursary fund by making payments in kind where possible. It will not be provided as regular payments for living costs.

6.6 Discretionary bursaries

In addition to the criteria outlined in sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 above, students can apply for a discretionary bursary if they satisfy 1 or more of the following criteria:

- Young people with LDD or any disability but who are not in receipt of ESA or DLA or PIP or UC
- Young Carers
- Teenage Parents who are not in receipt of income support or UC
- Young Offenders
- Young people in receipt of free school meal in previous school
- Learners whose family income is below £35,000 per year
- Learners from far distance travelling and/or in financial disadvantage and / or have other dependent children and/or both twins attending NCS and/or disabled family members

Students who do not satisfy any of the criteria listed in this section, but who are able to demonstrate financial hardship arising from other reasons, may apply for a discretionary bursary.

In assessing any application for a discretionary bursary, we will consider:

- Level of household income
- Distance to travel between the student's home and the institution, or a location for a placement
- The number of dependent children in the student's household
- The requirements of their study programme
- Whether the student has additional responsibilities that may mean they need extra help

There is no set limit for the amount of discretionary bursary that can be awarded to students. We will base all decisions around which students receive a discretionary bursary, and how much bursary they receive, on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need.

We will review the student's eligibility position each academic year. Students will only continue to receive a discretionary bursary if they continue to satisfy the criteria.

7. Evidence

7.1 All applications for 16 to 19 bursaries must be supported by appropriate evidence.

Examples of acceptable evidence we may request are:

- Evidence of total household income (including benefits)
- Earned income – copies of the most recent 3 months pay slips and bank statements for every working adult in the household.
- Profit and Loss account or self-assessment for the year if self-employed.
- Universal Credit (printouts of the most recent 3 months statements), with breakdown of payments
- Original copies of other benefits and breakdown of payments.
- Evidence of Company Dividends if business owner.
- Documents such as a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a child benefit receipt, birth certificate or utility bills
- Written confirmation of the student's current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority
- A copy of the Universal Credit claim from Department of Work and Pensions
- Proof of costs associated with bursary, costs of travel, books and upcoming trips.

7.2 What the school takes into account when working out household income

When assessing eligibility for a bursary, the school considers the total household income. This includes income from all adults residing in the household, as well as certain benefits. Specifically, the school will take into account:

- Full annual salary for all employed adults in the household

- Universal Credit (UC) payments, including the housing element
- Child Benefit payments
- Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) received by any household member
- Carer's Allowance received by any household member
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Pensions (state or private)
- Tax credits, including Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit
- Income from rental properties or other investments
- Bonuses, overtime, or commission payments included in taxable income
- Any other regular financial support received by the household

7. 3 Self-declaration form for existing students in receipt of Bursary Fund (Year 13 only):

Students who were in receipt of the bursary fund in Year 12 will need to sign a self-declaration form as there is no requirement to reapply in Year 13 if there are no changes to the household financial circumstances. The form will be sent to students at the beginning of the academic year which needs to be completed and signed by end of September.

If there are any financial changes in the students' total household income then they will need to reapply for the bursary fund and submit the documents via online to recalculate their individual need to issue the bursary fund.

8. Application and Payment Process

8.1 Application

Applications should be submitted by 25th September for each year to allow enough time for our school to assess the overall level of demand and make discretionary awards on a fair basis. This date will be clearly stated on the application form.

Applicants will be notified in writing (either via email or via letter) whether their application has been successful, together with the amount of funding awarded. If a student wishes to appeal the outcome of their application for a bursary, they must follow the school's complaints procedure.

8.2 Payment Process

Bursary funds are disbursed in instalments throughout the academic year, based on attendance and progress. Students will receive half-termly payments per academic year. These will vary from student to student based on the individual circumstances and their actual financial need. The NCS will inform to all applicants with the amount that has been awarded following an assessment of their application by the Bursary team. Bursaries will not be awarded if funds are exhausted.

Where funds remain, learners can put forward a case for one-off payments to meet a particular need; support for buying books and equipment; transport or fieldwork costs.

Term	Date of Payment
Autumn 1	Last Friday of October Half term
Autumn 2	Second to last Friday of December
Spring 1	Last Friday of February Half term
Spring 2	Last Friday of Easter Break
Summer 1	Last Friday of May Half term
Summer 2	Last Friday of July

8.3 Conditions for the receipt of bursary payments

All awards will be conditional on the attendance and behaviour of the learners. Payment of the bursary may be suspended if these conditions are not met.

Payments of the bursary are conditional on students meeting the following conditions in relation to their standards of attendance and behaviour:

- Regular attendance – 95% (including authorised study leave)
- Punctuality - maximum of one late mark per fortnight
- Appropriate behaviour - not in breach of the NCS's dress code policy/learner agreement/behaviour policy.

Attendance is monitored to ensure that bursary funds are being used by students who are actively participating in their studies.

Students must meet the following attendance criteria:

- October: Less than 3 full-day equivalent absences, or less than 4 if 3 consecutive days.
- December: Above 95% attendance in the Autumn term.
- February: Above 95% attendance in the three half terms, or if no January payment, less than 2 full-day equivalent absences in the third half term.
- April: Above 95% attendance in the first two terms, or second term for those who lost payment in January. Or if no February payment, less than 2 full-day equivalent absences in the fourth half term.
- May: Above 95% attendance in the first five half terms, or third-fifth half terms for those who lost payment in January or February. Or if no April payment, less than 2 full-day equivalent absences in the fifth half term.

All students are required to sign a declaration confirming that they agree to these conditions.

Students who fail to meet these conditions may have their payment withheld.

We will stop payments where students have been absent for a period of 4 continuous weeks or more (excluding holidays) and where students have decided to withdraw from a study programme.

We reserve the right to take back money from students where it is not spent for the reasons it was awarded.

We will consider the impact of such an action on the individual student before taking a final decision to do so, and any decision will be confirmed to the student in writing.

9. Change in circumstances

If there are changes in circumstances that may affect eligibility for a bursary, applicants and/or parents/carers must notify the school without delay.

10. Record keeping

Any paperwork and documents we retain for audit purposes (for example, copies of application forms, documents as evidence and any agreements signed by students) will be kept securely in line with our data protection policy, privacy notices and record retention schedule, which available on our website.

11. Monitoring and review

The Principal and the Head of Operation and Finance monitor the implementation of this policy, including ensuring it is updated to reflect the needs and circumstances of the school.

This policy will be reviewed annually. The governing board is responsible for approving this policy.

12. Related policies

This policy should be read alongside the school's policies on:

- E-Safety Policy
- Safeguarding and child protection
- Behaviour
- Data protection