

BURSARY POLICY

2024/25

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Approved by	SLT
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1. Introduction

Waltham Forest College receives allocations of funds from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to support eligible students to meet the costs of participating in education. The College sets its criteria for funding in accordance with the guidelines provided by the ESFA. Eligible students will be required to show supporting evidence that they meet the required criteria. In certain exceptional circumstances, Waltham Forest College may exercise its ability to make discretionary awards.

Any changes we may make to the payment amounts and methods of payment will be clearly communicated to learners.

2. Information

Waltham Forest College provides information about and promotes access to financial support via information leaflets, the College website, at interviews and at promotional events such as open events, taster events and during enrolment.

Learners can apply through the online application system called PayMyStudent. This platform is cloud-based, so can be used on any device: PC, laptop, tablet or mobile phone and can be accessed through the College website. Progressing students must reapply for funding. The online application is clear and easy to follow, and learners can get help to complete their application by visiting the Welfare and Wellbeing Team. Applications must be completed and approved before learners can receive help with support. Up-to-date, valid supporting evidence must be uploaded at the time of application.

Waltham Forest College uses an online store for students to purchase items relating to the specific course requirements. The online store sits separate to the PayMyStudent portal and students are made aware of this facility via the College Website, leaflets, interviews and during enrolment.

All learners aged 16 and over and who meet the residency criteria set out in national funding guidance and are studying an ESFA funded course are eligible to apply. Waged apprentices are not eligible. Should an applicant withdraw from their chosen course of study they may be required to repay monies or return equipment supplied/bought by the support fund.

3. Eligibility

Eligibility is based on age, residence, household income and level of qualification and in the case of travel, distance travelled from home to campus of study. The College eligibility criteria is reviewed and updated annually based on the ESFA published guidelines for that year.

Full eligibility criteria and maximum levels of support is detailed in Appendix 1. The 16-19 Bursary Fund, 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund and Advanced Learner Loans Bursaries are means-tested, and applicants will be required to provide evidence to verify total household income.

Learners applying through the Advanced Learner Loan Bursaries for Additional Learning Support costs ONLY will not be means tested.

4. Help towards meeting course related costs

Assessment of the level of support needed for each programme of study will be carried out in conjunction with information supplied during the application process, course and individual circumstance. Waltham Forest College may purchase equipment and uniform on behalf of any learners in extreme financial difficulty. Any funds paid directly to learners will be made via BACs to the designated bank account.

Course related costs are normally paid monthly with the first instalment covering essential items and will not support costs related to education (living costs), extra-curricular activities or provide learning support.

5. Help towards travel costs

Bursary funds for learners aged 16-18 will be administered in conjunction with Local Authority Transport Scheme's and Policies. In most cases. Bursary funds will be used to provide additional financial support where transport costs are not met in full or present a barrier to learning.

Support through bursary funds with the cost of travel is normally available to learners who travel more than two miles to their site of study. Travel support will be using the most cost-effective form of transport; however, the college will exercise discretion on this decision where another form of support is deemed more suitable. Learners eligible for local authority travel assistance can request assistance with the cost of the contribution they are required to make.

6. Help towards meals

Learners aged 16-18 or aged 19-25 with a valid EHCP at the beginning of the academic year who live in a household that is in receipt of one of the benefits below are entitled to free college meals on days they attend study or activity that is part of their course. (i.e. work experience).

- Income Support
- Income based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income related Employment Support Allowance
- Support under part IV of the immigration an Asylum Act 1999
- The Guaranteed Element of 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 Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.
- 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 pa

Meals provided will not exceed a maximum value of £2.53 per day and will be supplied through the college's catering outlets. Alternative arrangements will only be made for learners who are studying off site or in exceptional cases. The Discretionary Bursary fund will be used to top-up the free meal funding rate of £2.53 to £3.50.

7. Help towards childcare costs

Learners aged under 20 at the start of the academic year should apply for support with childcare costs through the Care to Learn scheme. The Student Finance Team can support learners with applications to Care to Learn.

Learners aged over 20 can apply for support with childcare costs through the Discretionary Learner Support Fund / Advanced Learner Loans Bursary. Where funding is awarded towards the cost of childcare with a registered provider.

Funds will be paid to the childcare provider, and they must be OFSTED registered.

The amount of funding available for childcare is limited and there is no guaranteed entitlement to the funds.

Learners must use their free 2 and 3-year-old childcare funding towards the cost of the childcare. This will be covered in the application form sent to the Childcare Providers to complete.

Childcare funding is only available for timetabled days and during term time. Support with deposits is not supported.

Failure to maintain an attendance percentage of 90% will result in your childcare provider not being paid for that specific calendar month. As a result, that may further impact on your child's placement.

8. Help towards course fees

There are limited funds available to assist with the cost of tuition fees for 19+ learners who are not fully funded for their course costs. Learners will only be supported where alternative means of financial support are not available and exceptional circumstances can be evidenced.

Each application will be considered on its own merit within the College criteria/budget constraints. Learners who are eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan are unable to apply for financial support with course fees.

9. Help for vulnerable students

Learners aged 16-18 in defined vulnerable groups may be entitled to a vulnerable bursary of up to £1200 (pro-rata according to length of course and hours of attendance). Learners should be aware that their application for bursary support may result in no award or a limited award.

The defined vulnerable groups are:

- Learners in the care of the Local Authority including unaccompanied asylum seekers
- Learners leaving care.
- Learners living independently and in receipt of Income Support or the equivalent Universal Credit
- Learners in receipt of both Disability Living Allowance (or the new Personal Independence Payment) and Employment Support Allowance (or Universal Credit as a replacement for ESA).

Learners who believe they qualify for the Vulnerable bursary are required to provide evidence of their care status or benefits as above to support their application. Costs awarded for travel, meals and essential course equipment/uniform will be deducted before any cash payments are made. Cash payments must be paid to the learners or legal parent/guardian's bank account. Learners aged 19 or over are not eligible for the vulnerable student bursary.

10. Educational Trips and Visits

The bursary can help pay for essential education trips and visits linked to their programme of study. The costs of educational trips and visits are capped, and a maximum of £150 claim (per student) will be allowed for each trip, however discretions may apply and will be determined by the Head of Welfare and Wellbeing. Payments are coordinated directly with the relevant Curriculum area.

11. Help towards Additional Learning Support Needs (Advanced Learner Loan learners only)

Support through bursary funds with the cost of Additional Learning Support needs is available to students who are formally assessed by the College as needing support with learning. Awards are available each academic year to a maximum award value of £1500 per student however the College reserves its right to consider exceptional levels of need/circumstances.

12. Emergency Funds

Emergency funds to meet unexpected financial crises are available. Funds can only be accessed in the case of extreme hardship and the College reserves the right to exercise its discretion in each case. The College will not assist with prior debt or housing costs.

13. Supporting industry placements

Waltham Forest College will respond and support the needs of learners undertaking industry placements as they may find themselves facing financial difficulties due to incurring extra participation costs, for example, because they need to pay for additional travel to their placement.

14. Allocation

In all cases, the application will be judged on its individual merits as outlined in the ESFA guidelines. The amount awarded will be specific to each individual application. Applicants will be advised of their full award. If attendance falls below attendance requirement, awards will be withheld.

This amount of award can be increased depending on individual circumstances.

15. Attendance

Learner attendance will be checked before each instalment payment. If a learner is found to have withdrawn from their studies, their award will be cancelled and re-allocated.

If attendance is found to be less than 90% the payment will not be made, and the Student Finance Team will contact the learner to explain the reason for non-payment. Some learner's payments may be paid on a pro rata basis to reflect current attendance.

In exceptional circumstances learners may still be able to receive their LSF allocation if they can provide evidence of extenuating circumstances causing low attendance or at the discretion of the Head of Welfare and Wellbeing.

16. Authorisation and Approval

The value of the award will be assessed by a Student Finance team member. All supporting documentation i.e. means-tested benefit statement(s) will be inspected once applications have been submitted. Failure to have incomplete or incorrect supportive evidence in place will prevent the application from being assessed until such evidence is provided. Each award will be approved by Student Finance team and will inform applicant of their award at the point of application or, when this is not possible, by email, letter or text following authorisation.

17. Confidentiality

Information provided by applicants will be treated in strict confidence and access to this information will be restricted as far as possible to members of staff directly involved with the day-to-day administration of the fund. Information may be made available to other College departments for course documentation and inspection purposes, in line with the College's Data Protection Policy.

18. Quality Standards

The Student Finance Team will ensure that each application is considered individually, according to the applicant's circumstances and in accordance with the College's Equal Opportunities Policy. Applicants to the fund must ensure that the information they provide on their application is accurate and completely honest. Any allegation or suspicion of a fraudulent application to the fund will be investigated and may result in action under the Student Disciplinary Procedure and/or criminal prosecution.

19. Equal Opportunities

Underpinning the whole process is the College Equal Opportunities Policy. To ensure we adhere to equal opportunities, every part of the process must be transparent with all assessment procedures and any individual decisions documented with a rationale. Information gathered from applications and evaluation monitoring will be available to the College's Learner Data Services.

20. Data Protection

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) replaces the Data Protection Regulation from 25 May 2018. The Regulation aims to harmonise data protection legislation across EU member states, enhancing privacy rights for individuals and providing a strict framework. By signing the application form the learner has consented for the College to process their personal data for the sole purpose of processing Learner Support Fund and considering their eligibility to receive funds. If the Learner- Support Fund Application is successful, we will retain the application for seven years as we have a legal or contractual obligation to do so, after the seven-year period the College will then securely destroy the form. If the Learner Support Fund Application is unsuccessful, we will retain the application for one year and then securely destroy the form. The learner may withdraw consent to our processing of their personal information for a particular purpose, however, this may affect their eligibility to receive funds.

21. Appeals

If any learners are not satisfied with the decision regarding their bursary award, then can appeal in writing in line with the College's Appeals Process. Further details can be accessed via <https://www.waltham.ac.uk/contact/compliments-and-complaints>

Further Information

- ESFA Funding [16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide 2024 to 2025 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2024-to-2025-academic-year).
- Free Meals in Further Education [Free meals in further education funded institutions guide: 2024 to 2025 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-guide-2024-to-2025-academic-year).
- [Adult skills fund: funding rules for 2024 to 2025](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules-2024-to-2025)
- [Advance Learner Loans Bursary 2024 to 2025](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/advance-learner-loans-bursary-2024-to-2025)

APPENDIX A: Eligibility Criteria 2024-2025

Household income is defined by support fund with priority given to learners with income falling on and below the threshold set each academic year. Deductions are made from household income for dependants, we will also make deductions for dependent children who are 18+ and in education with consideration given to children at university up to the age of 23 (evidence required). The College may choose to use discretion where household income exceeds this amount but a need for support is identified.

Maximum levels of support for 16-18 students:

Age	Level of Income	Equipment/Course cost % of contribution	Travel
16-18 (Including 19-24 on EHCP)	Income under £25,000	75%	100% (not exceeding £1,000.00)
16-18 (Including 19-24 on EHCP)	Income based benefits	75%	100% (not exceeding £1,000.00)

LSF ALLOCATION GRID FOR 19+ LEARNERS

The percentage allocations may change subject to available funds.

ESOL Course Fees	Income Band	
	Less than £16,500	Less than £28,000
Up to Level 1	-	100%
Level 2	100%	50%

All other courses fees	Income Band	
	Less than £25,000	Exceptional
Up to Level 3	60%	Individual assessment

Income Band	Travel	Kit/Equipment	Trip	Childcare	Other
In receipt of a means-tested benefit OR Income under £25,000	100%	75%	75%	90%	Individual assessment
Exceptional	Individual assessment	Individual assessment	Individual assessment	Individual assessment	Individual assessment

ADVANCED LEARNER LOAN BURSARY

The 19+ Advance Learner Loan Bursary is aimed at helping vulnerable or disadvantaged learners such as those with learning difficulties or disabilities, parents who need help with childcare and ex-military personnel. The Bursary Fund can only be used by learners who have taken out a 19+ Advance Learner Loan. If a learner does not take out a loan but pays the fees in one payment at the start of their course/programme or in instalments in the first few months, they cannot access the Bursary Fund. The fund is income assessed and learners will be expected to have a household income of not more than £25,000 (gross). Learners aged 19+ are normally assessed as independent learners and household income is assessed on their own income or with that of their spouse/partner if applicable. If a learner has no income, then the household income will be based on the income of the person(s) on whom the learner is dependent.

Income Band	Travel	Kit/Equipment	Trip	Childcare	Other
In receipt of a means-tested benefit OR Income under £25,000	100%	75%	75%	90%	Individual assessment
Exceptional	Individual assessment	Individual assessment	Individual assessment	Individual assessment	Individual assessment