

CAST 16-19 Bursary Fund Policy and Guidance

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome the specific financial barriers to participation they face so they can remain in education. The bursary fund is intended to help students with their actual costs of participating, and bursary decisions are based on students' individual circumstances and their actual financial need.

Funding is provided by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and administered by the School. CAST carries out a financial assessment of each applicant and administers bursaries in line with the ESFA's Bursary Fund Guide and as set out in this policy.

Students can learn more about these bursaries.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- bursaries for students in one of the defined vulnerable groups of up to £1,200 a year; and
- discretionary bursaries which institutions award to meet individual need, using policies they set in line with the ESFA's funding rules

Defined vulnerable groups bursaries are awarded to students who have a financial need and who are:

- in care
- care leavers
- receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit 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
- receiving Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right

The school conducts a financial needs assessment to confirm actual financial need and the amount of support required. Students do not automatically receive £1,200.

Discretionary bursaries are awarded by the school to help students with costs such as travel, essential books or equipment.

As with defined vulnerable groups bursaries, a financial needs assessment is conducted and the school bases decisions about which students receive a discretionary bursary and how much they receive on each student's individual circumstances and their actual financial need.

Students applying for a discretionary bursary should indicate on their application forms what they would like to use the bursary funding for. The School will consider requests for help with transport, books and equipment, field trips and other course-related costs, as well as the costs of attending industry placements, university interviews and open days.

Eligibility and Application Process

For all bursaries, students must be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August (the end of their year 13 academic year) to be eligible for help from the bursary fund. Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a discretionary bursary if they are continuing on a study programme, they began aged 16 to 18, or if they have an Education, Health, and Care Plan. Students must also meet the residency criteria in the ESFA funding regulations for post-16 provision.

Once you have applied, the School will assess your application in line with the eligibility criteria set out here and will let you know if your application has been successful. If your application is successful you will be issued with an award letter confirming the amount and type of support you have been awarded, and setting out any payment conditions.

Rather than paying money into your bank account, the School may decide to provide some or all of your award as 'in kind' support – this means that they will purchase the resources you require, such as a bus pass or books, on your behalf.

Students who meet the criteria for bursaries for vulnerable groups are not entitled to a bursary if they do not have financial needs and/or their financial needs are covered from other sources.

Please use the relevant form to apply for either the vulnerable groups bursary or the discretionary bursary. All applications will be treated in strict confidence.

Timing

Your application should be submitted by **November 30th**. It will be reviewed after the application deadline has passed by the Bursary Committee which is made up of the Head of Sixth Form, Head of Pastoral Care and Student Services Officer. Students will be notified as soon as possible of the outcome.

The School will set aside 10% of its Discretionary Bursary allocation to accommodate changes in circumstance and to ensure that requests for funding from students received after 30 November can be considered. Students facing financial hardship at any time during the academic year should apply using the form set out below.

Conditions

CAST reserves the right to withhold the bursary if students fail to meet expectations for attendance and behaviour.

Please be aware that CAST will stop any payments where a student has been absent for a period of four continuous weeks or more (excluding holidays) and where students have decided to withdraw from a study programme.

Where the School purchases books or equipment, students may be asked to return these at the end of their study programme. On other occasions, the School may insist bursary payments are spent only on the support that has been identified as necessary to help a student participate in education. These details will be specified in the student's award letter.

Please note that when you apply for a bursary you are asked to confirm that the evidence you have provided is correct and complete to the best of your knowledge and belief. Supporting documentation must also be provided to establish financial need, as set out in the application forms below. Giving false or incomplete information that leads to incorrect/overpayment may result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered. This might also result in a referral to the police with the possibility of the student and/or their family facing prosecution.

You must inform the School in writing if, after you are awarded a bursary, there is any material change in your personal or financial circumstances.

All information submitted by students will be treated in confidence and held securely.

Assessment Criteria

The School follows the ESFA's guidance in relation to eligibility criteria, and as part of that conducts a financial assessment of all applicant students. The evidence you will need to provide in relation to each bursary is clearly set out in the relevant application form. The School is looking to establish that you are in financial need and, in relation to the discretionary bursary, that you are in need of specific items or services relating to your education that you would otherwise need to pay for in order to participate.

The School bases its decisions in relation to both types of bursary award on students' individual circumstances and actual financial need. Awards will vary from student to student and will depend on, for example, household income, requirements of the study programme, distance required to travel to School and available transport options, the number of dependent children within a student's household, relevant participation needs, and any other relevant home circumstances.

Exceptional Circumstances

The School recognises that it is not possible to cover every eventuality in this policy. In exceptional circumstances, students and parents / carers may apply in writing to the Head of Sixth Form for a discretionary bursary. Such applications should outline the specific circumstances and provide supporting documentation. A decision will be taken by the Bursary Committee at the sole discretion of the School and will be dependent on funds being available.]

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