RUNSHAW COLLEGE			
POLICY TITLE:	16 – 19 Bursary Fund and Free College Meals		
APPROVED BY:	Governors' Committee	**AUTHOR:**	Camilla Gregory and Clare Quin
POLICY OWNER:	Andrea Neild	**POSITION:**	Assistant Principal	**Version:** 14
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1 Introduction

This policy defines the eligibility, allocation and administration of free college meals and the 16-19 Bursary Fund in line with the Department for Education (DfE) guidelines.

2 Scope

The policy applies to students aged 16 to under 19 (see also point 4.1 c below) on 31 August 2025 enrolled on and attending a Runshaw College course funded by the DfE that requires at least 580 hours of attendance/blended learning in the 2024-2025 academic year and who meet residence eligibility criteria for DfE funding.

3 Purpose

Funding for free meals is provided by the DfE to enable colleges to provide free meals to disadvantaged students.

The Bursary Fund is provided by the DfE to assist students who face the greatest barriers to continuing in education because of financial difficulty. The Bursary can help with the cost of transport, essential books, essential specialist clothing and equipment, UK-based trips *that contribute to the completion of an assignment leading to the completion of a qualification*, UCAS application fees, exam re-sits (maximum 3). Wherever possible, these will be in-kind payments. Additionally, the fund can contribute to the costs of attending mandatory industry placements, university interviews and 3 open days (on evidence of booking/ attendance).

The most vulnerable students (as defined nationally by the DfE) will be eligible for a Bursary of up to £1,200 a year. All other funds will be allocated at the discretion of the College in line with the procedures below.

4 Procedures & Allocation

4.1 General eligibility for Bursary assistance

To be eligible for a bursary all students must:

a) be aged under 19 on 31 August 2025 in the academic year in which they start their programme of study, or
b) *be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2025 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), or
c) be aged 19 or over on 31 August 2025 and continuing a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers')

d) have completed an on-line application
e) be attending a course which is directly funded by the DfE

*Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for the vulnerable student bursary.

4.2 **Vulnerable Student Bursary**

Students meeting criteria below will be assessed for the vulnerable student bursary which can pay up to £1,200 per year if they have costs that mean they need that amount of support Eligibility for the bursary for defined vulnerable groups is based on the student meeting the criteria for one of the defined groups**.**

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- in care
- 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
- receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right

and can provide appropriate evidence:

- letter or on-line statement from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) stating which benefit(s) they receive, alongside a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a child benefit receipt, children's birth certificates, utility bill etc. OR
- written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from their local authority

4.2.1 Students who are approved for the Vulnerable Student bursary will receive £4.50 per day onto their Runshaw Pay account to pay for their college meal. This allowance does not accrue if it remains unused.

4.2.2 Payment of the Vulnerable Student Bursary will be made by a combination of 'in kind' support, e.g. support for college transport passes, purchase of essential course equipment and support towards eligible trips.

4.2.3 Students who are approved for the Vulnerable Student Bursary will also be able to access a loaned college laptop for the duration of their programme.

4.2.4 The college reserves the right to decline an application for a student who meets the vulnerable student criteria if their financial needs are already met eg. Costs already covered by the local authority.

4.3 **Discretionary Bursary – based on household income**

Students not meeting the eligibility criteria to receive the Vulnerable Student Bursary may apply for discretionary bursary funding.

Priority will be given to the following group of students if they satisfy one of the criteria below:

- students whose families have a gross annual income of £40000 or less.
- students facing exceptional financial circumstances (such as a sudden drop in household income, family breakdown) and complete a Financial Statement of Need.

You can apply for a discretionary bursary if you're over 19 and either:

- Continuing a course you started aged 16-18 (known as a 19+ continuer)
- You have an education, Health Care Plan (EHCP) and can provide appropriate evidence:
- For benefits and/or annual income of £40000 or less – 3 most recent months UC monthly award statements
- P60 for 2024-2025 or three-months recent payslips.
- Self-Assessment Tax Calculation – latest accounts.

4.3 1 Students meeting the criteria for the Discretionary Bursary will receive the following:
Payment of 'in kind' support, e.g. payment of a college travel ID card, purchase of essential course equipment, support for the payment of eligible college UK trips and will be offered the loan of a college computer for the duration of their programme. If sufficient funding is available after all the above groups have been assessed and bursaries granted, students who live in households where total annual income for the tax year 2024-2025 is up to £45000 will be considered. When carrying out assessments £1350 will be deducted from gross annual income for the first dependent child in the household followed by a deduction of £900 for each subsequent dependent child in the household.

4.4 Free College Meals

To be eligible for free college meals, students, or their families, must be in receipt of one or more of the following benefits and can provide appropriate evidence:

- Income Support
- income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the **guaranteed element** of State 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 HMRC. Assessment will be based on the most recent award letter to be eligible.
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after stopping qualifying for WTC
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa. This will be assessed on up to three of the parents/carer(s) most recent Universal Credit assessment periods/statements to be eligible.

4.4.1 **Transitional Protection**

Similarly, if a new student was eligible for free meals at school, but cannot provide evidence outlined in point 4.4 but can provide a copy of previous entitlement letters they will continue to receive free college meals for the duration of their course. This will be reviewed in March 2026.

5 **Applications**

All students on enrolment to the college will receive text and email guidance on applying for the college bursary. Applications for Bursary support should be made through the PayMyStudent Portal on the college website Financial Support — Runshaw College. This online system enables students to complete an application form and upload the necessary evidence that will be used to assess eligibility.
Applications will be assessed by the Student Finance & Welfare Officer according to eligibility based on the criteria above.
The Bursary Fund Committee comprises of the Head of Student Services (and in his/her absence any other suitable nominee of the Deputy Principal. The Student Finance & Welfare Officer (on in his/her absence any other suitable nominee of the Head of Student Services) will advise the Committee.

6 **Payment Method & Frequency**

6.1 Students eligible for Free College Meals will be able to receive one meal per day of £4.50 per day onto their Runshaw Pay account. The allowance will not accrue if it is not used. Students who are absent will forfeit their FCM for the duration of that absence and will not be able to 'store-up' unused meal credits.

For students attending work placement, a weekly payment will be made into the student's bank account based upon calculation payment of travel (receipts will be required for travel) and food. For travel to and from work placement, we will refund the cost of this based upon the cheapest and most appropriate method of transport, namely public transport. This will be reviewed in exceptional circumstances where a student's safeguarding or accessibility needs are to be considered.

6.2 Payment of the Vulnerable Student Bursary will be made by a combination of 'in kind' support, e.g., payment of a college travel ID card, purchase of essential course equipment and eligible UK trips.

6.3 All students who successfully apply for a Bursary must have a bank account or nominated bank account.

6.4 All students in receipt of a bursary will be offered the loan of a college computer for the duration of their programme. This must be returned on completion of the programme and in line with the contract of loan, payment will be requested for those not returned.

6.5 Payments will be made 'in kind' either direct to the relevant college department or by issuing e-vouchers which students can use to make on-line purchases via Runshaw Pay. Academic areas provide essential equipment lists.

6.6 Students receiving bursary who wish to attend college trips within the UK will be entitled to the full cost of the trip up to £75. The nature of the trip must be curriculum focused and have been signed off by the trip leader, relevant Head of School and member of SMT evidencing its essential nature for the completion of the course.

6.7 Extra assistance may be given to students incurring additional transport costs to attend mandatory work placements, particularly students enrolled on T level courses, university interviews and 3 open days (on evidence of booking/attendance).

6.8 Students may receive refunds for travel ID cards/essential course items on production of receipts/proof of purchase (up to 12 weeks prior to approval of bursary). Other refunds will be made via BACS into the student's bank account/nominated bank account.

6.9 Students eligible for a travel ID card will be issued with their card at the start of the academic year or at the point bursary approval if the student applies at a later date.

7 Conditions for receipt of the Bursary Funds

7.1 Students eligible for a Bursary are required to sign a declaration agreeing to the conditions listed below.

7.2 Students must agree to abide by Runshaw College's criteria on attendance, behaviour and progress/attainment on course.

7.3 Students receiving assistance must disclose any change of circumstances during their course that may affect their eligibility, including notifying the College if they leave.

7.4 Any books or equipment bought by the Bursary Fund remain the property of Runshaw College and students may be required to return them if they leave or do not complete their course.

7.5 College Travel ID cards must be returned if a student leaves their course early.

7.6 Students must re-apply for their funding each academic year and provide appropriate supporting evidence.

IT Access

8 Bursary students who do not have a suitable device and are required to participate in on-line learning will be loaned a laptop. The device must be returned in good condition at the end of their course or upon leaving the college

9 Appeals

9.1 Unsuccessful applicants may appeal in writing within 10 days of their decision letter to the Head of Student Services; Camilla Gregory, Runshaw College, Langdale Road, Leyland, PR25 3DQ. Students should state fully how they feel we have not followed our guidelines or made an error.

9.2 Appeals will normally be held within 7 days of receipt and the result of the appeal will be communicated in writing to the applicant within 10 days of the decision. There will be no further right of appeal.

9.3 Appeals cannot be considered where a refusal has been made due to the Funds being exhausted.

10 Implementation

10.1 The Assistant Principal for Student Experience will oversee this policy.

10.2 A variety of methods will be used to publicise the Bursary Fund to staff and students.

11 Data Protection

All personal data processed by Runshaw College is maintained in compliance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. If you have any questions or concerns about the College's collection, use, or disclosure of personal information, please email the College's Data Protection Officer: DataProtectionOfficer@runshaw.ac.uk

Further information can be found by visiting https://www.runshaw.ac.uk/college-policies/.