

R U N S H A W C O L L E G E

POLICY TITLE: 16 – 19 Bursary Fund and Free College Meals

APPROVED BY: Governors' Committee

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POSITION: Assistant Principal

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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 2026 enrolled on and attending a Runshaw College course funded by the DfE that requires at least 580 hours of attendance/blended learning in the 2026-2027 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 the following:

1. Transport this will be via the college transport system in the first instance.
2. Specific course related equipment (including books)
3. Essential specialist clothing and equipment
4. UK-based trips that contribute to the completion course objectives (as confirmed on trip planners by Heads of School and Assistant Principals).
5. UCAS application fees or higher education providers such as conservatoires.
6. Funding towards the travel cost to attend up to three further education or higher education institution open days and interviews (on evidence of booking/ attendance).
7. Exam re-sits (maximum 3).
8. Funding to support the travel of students to work/ industry placements
9. Funding to support the cost associated with participation in one Widening Participation Programme per academic year.
10. Funding to support students with the cost of lunch (if in receipt of free college meals) whilst on work or industry placements.
11. Print credit over and above any free credit awarded by the college to all students.
12. The initial cost of a DBS certificate for work placements not already funded by the course.
13. In exceptional circumstances, the bursary fund may be used to provide further help with childcare costs for those young parents already in receipt of Care 2 Learn. Any such top up will be paid directly to the childcare provider and not the student.

14. Other miscellaneous costs to remove barriers to learning eg. Ear defenders for examinations for students with Student Support Plans.
15. The loan of IT equipment (including but not limited to laptops, dongles, iPads and tablets).

Wherever possible, these will be in-kind payments.

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 2026 in the academic year in which they start their programme of study, or
- b) *be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2026 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), or
- c) be aged 19 or over on 31 August 2026 and continuing a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers')
- d) have completed an online 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 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 Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and UC in their own right.

and can provide appropriate evidence:

- letter or online 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 £.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. This means that there is a possibility of no financial support despite eligibility criteria.

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 completed 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 (income assessed using after tax figure).
- P60 for 2025-2026 or three-months recent payslips.
- Self-Assessment Tax Calculation – latest accounts.
- Child Maintenance Payments
- Personal Independence Payments (PIP), will not be included in the household income assessment. PIP payments will only be used as evidence where a student is claiming for the vulnerable bursary and are in receipt of Universal Credit in their own right.

4.3 1 Students meeting the criteria for the Discretionary Bursary will receive access to the support listed in section 3.

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 2025-2026 is up to £45000 will be considered and entitled to the following:

- a) 50% discount on college transport annual passes
- b) 50% contribution to travel costs for higher education open days (maximum of 3) and interviews
- c) 50% contribution to travel costs to work or industry placements.
- d) Provision of IT equipment where students meet at least 3 criteria listed in section 6 for the allocation of IT equipment.
- e) 100% contribution towards essential course equipment.
- f) UK-based trips that contribute to the completion of an assignment or assessment leading to the completion of a qualification (to a maximum of £75)

When carrying out assessments £1406 will be deducted from gross annual income for the first dependent child in the household followed by a deduction of £930 for each subsequent dependent child in the household.

If in receipt of Universal Credit, the college will only apply the child related deduction for children who receive support through Universal Credit.

Payments given for disabled children (not included in the standard child element) via Universal Credit will not be included in the household income assessment.

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:

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- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the **guaranteed element** of State Pension Credit
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- Universal Credit
- Households in receipt of income related employment and support allowance or the guaranteed element of pension credit, may also be entitled to a meal.
- A voucher of £4.50 will be issued to eligible students each college day via their Runshaw Pay account. This cost comprises of a free meal allocation of £2.66 and discretionary bursary supplementation of £1.84.
- Please note that emergency support can be used in individual cases of severe hardship to provide meal support for a student. This can be awarded by the college for a student they consider to be in real need without undertaking the checks on household income that would normally be required.
- If students attend college on their timetabled 'study day', they will be able to access free college meal funding to support their wellbeing attendance and/or progress.
- If students do not attend college, they will not receive a free college meal voucher for that day.

5. Applications

Parents and Guardians of all learners will receive communications from the college on application to the college.

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.

Students/Parents/Guardians must reapply for bursary support for each academic year of study.

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 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 or industry 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/industry 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.
- 6.4 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. Print credit will be awarded to all bursary students up to a value of £5 a term, on request, to supplement the print credit awarded by the college to all students.
- 6.5 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.
- 6.6 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).
- 6.7 Students wishing to participate in Widening Access Programmes will receive bursary funding to support the travel costs of attendance to one Widening Access Programme or Activity.
- 6.7 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.
- 6.8 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 later.
- 6.9 Students studying on visual arts and photography courses can claim up to £150 for resources and/or print credit to support with the completion of assessed work per academic year. Cameras can be loaned from the department.

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 and behaviour that meet Programme targets. Failure to do so may result in bursary funding being withheld.
- 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 and parents are to be made aware on application via Pay my Student, that giving false or incomplete information that leads to incorrect or overpayment may result in incorrectly paid funds being recovered and the possible referral to the police, with the possibility of facing prosecution.

IT Access

- 8.1 Bursary students who do not have a suitable device and are required to participate in on-line learning will be loaned a laptop/tablet/iPad/Dongle. The device must be returned in good condition at the end of the course or upon leaving the college.
- 8.2 Allocation will be decided in line with strategic objectives in the following order:
- Student socioeconomic need
 - Students who have no access to online learning equipment
 - Student who may have additional learning needs
 - Students who have shared access to online learning equipment
- 8.3 Students must sign the online learning equipment agreement.

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/>.

