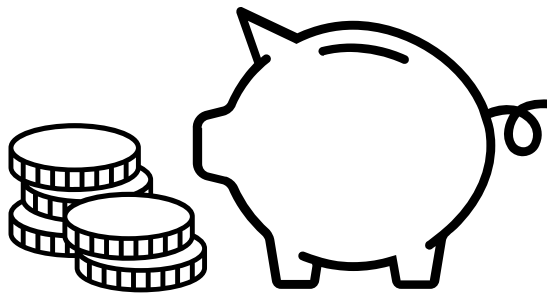


Financial Support Fund Policy

2024/25



Document control

Title	Discretionary Funding – FE Bursaries @ BLC
Service Area	Learner Journey Team
Version	1.1
Target Audience	Students, Parents/ Guardians, Staff, External IAG
Team & reviewer	Student Money and Welfare Adviser
Date of Impact assessment	10.06.2024
Review date	30.01.2025 (Funds Review) 01.07.2025 (Policy Review)

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Buxton and Leek College recognise that many students face barriers to accessing education due to additional course-related costs beyond tuition fees. To promote equality and support disadvantaged students and those experiencing financial hardship, the college is committed to providing student support funds. These funds aim to enhance the student experience and help students achieve their full potential.

The Financial Support Fund Policy outlines the college's commitment to financial support for students, in accordance with all relevant national regulations, college guidelines, and legislation.

2. DEFINITIONS

This Financial Support Fund Policy has been developed to allow students and potential students to determine their eligibility for financial support from Buxton and Leek College. Information in this policy relates to the 2024/25 Academic year only.

3. PRINCIPLES

The Financial Support Fund policy will:

- Operate the 'Pay My Student Bursary' portal as the primary administrative system, ensuring clear and responsive processes that consistently prioritise a 'student-first' approach
- Operate a means tested assessment where awards are based on a student's individual needs and not on a flat rate payment system
- Operate cashless payment systems where possible
- Promote the College's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Raise student aspiration and social mobility
- Enhance the ability of students to achieve their goals whilst at the College
- Ensure that students are treated fairly within an open and transparent application process
- Widen participation in Further and Higher Education
- Support the achievement of key college outcomes
- Administer, record, and monitor funds, ensuring that funds are used for its intended purposes in accordance with internal and external regulations and guidelines

4. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This policy covers the following Bursaries included within the Financial Support Fund:

- 16-19 Bursary Fund including Vulnerable Bursary element
- Free College Meal Scheme
- Care to Learn

For Adult Learners

- 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund
- Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Operations Manager for the Learner Journey Team is the Owner of the Policy

The Student Money and Welfare Adviser is executive owner of the Policy and responsible for successful implementation, which includes:

- Ensure all applications are processed within agreed timescales.
- Provide advice and support to curriculum departments, enquirers, and applicants.
- Examine individual student circumstances to ensure that bursary allocations are fit for purpose and adequately meet student needs.
- Ensure that justifications for bursary allocations are well-documented and can withstand audit scrutiny.
- Ensure compliance with funding and audit guidelines.

Bursary administrators are responsible for:

- Managing the administration of the Bursary process from pre-entry through to assessment.
- Handling post-panel administration to ensure all decisions are implemented and communicated effectively.

Progress Coaches and Student Mentors are responsible for:

- Signposting Financial Support Fund related enquiries
- Support with the submission of applications and required evidence.
- Ensuring students in need of financial support are identified and supported effectively and efficiently so that their learning is not affected.

Student Support Manager is responsible for:

- Identifying and supporting vulnerable learners and children in care with their transition into college life including the financial support packages available.
- Work in collaboration with the student, carers, and Local Authority to identify College related financial needs.

Curriculum Leaders are responsible for:

- Setting essential course costs and provide updates throughout the academic year towards any course cost changes.
- Ensuring student attendance records are completed accurately and systems are regularly updated.
- Ensuring student progress and performance is monitored and systems are regularly updated
- Ensuring programmes are up to date with all course delivery details

IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The roles and responsibilities of employees in implementing the policy and procedures are set out clearly in the guidelines.

All new employees are made aware of the policy and procedures during the formal employee induction process.

Updated and amended procedures are disseminated and reinforced in training sessions, team meetings and via email communications.

Employees and students have access to this policy on the College website. Information will be made available to students at various stages of the learner journey:

- Pre Entry
- Entry including Induction
- On programme
- Exit and Progression

We will communicate to current and prospective students through the following methods:

- Open Events
- Enrolment (including enrolment guide sent in Summer Packs)
- Induction (drop in's, group tutorials)
- Leaflets, flyers, posters
- Email communication via Unimail account
- Letters
- Texts
- Pay My Student Portal

College Announcements

- Pay My Student Portal
- Social Media
- Tutorials
- Website
- Student Shoutout

The College will provide information to students in alternative formats if requested.

MONITORING AND REVIEW

This Policy and associated procedures will be formally reviewed after six months with regards to funding allocations and then annually for a full policy update by the Operations Manager and Student Money Adviser.

Student Satisfaction will be monitored via Student Voice feedback sessions hosted by the Union of Students.

External Documents:

16-19 Funding Guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2024-to-2025-academic-year>

Care to Learn funding guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-to-learn-guide-for-the-2024-to-2025-academic-year/care-to-learn-guide-2024-to-2025-academic-year>

Free meals in Further Education guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-guide-2024-to-2025-academic-year>

Adult Education budget funding guidance can be accessed at :

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules-for-2024-to-2025/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules-2024-to-2025#learner-support>

Advanced Learner Loans funding guidance can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advanced-learner-loans-funding-rules-2024-to-2025/advanced-learner-loans-funding-rules-2024-to-2025>

Derbyshire Post 16 Transport

<https://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/education/schools/school-places/secondary-admissions/parents-guide/more-information/16-plus-travel/post-16-travel.aspx>

Staffordshire Post 16 Transport

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/Education/School-Transport/Post-16/Post-16-travel-homepage.aspx>

Cheshire East Post 16 Transport

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/schools/school_transport/school-transport-policies.aspx

Derby City Council Post 16 Transport

<https://www.derby.gov.uk/media/derbycitycouncil/contentassets/documents/education/send/travel/htst-assistance-post-16-policy-statement-2024-25.pdf>

GUIDELINES

16-19 Student Support Funds

There are a number of funds and support schemes available for students aged 16-19, which include:

- Vulnerable element of the 16-19 Bursary Fund
- 16-19 Discretionary Support Fund
- Free College Meals
- Care to Learn

These funds are designed to help students with specific costs associated with their programme of study and are available to students who are on ESFA funded courses.

These funds and support schemes are not available to students on Apprenticeship, Higher Education or Full-Cost courses.

Household Income thresholds are based on net income for all individuals living in the household (who would normally be eligible for council tax).

16-19 Bursary Fund Vulnerable Element		
Support Available	Eligibility Criteria	Age
<p>Up to £1200 per academic year per student, to support with essential course costs, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel • Equipment & Kit • Books & Uniform • Meals • Trips <p>Additional barriers will be identified within either a learners PEP meeting or an individual assessment with the Bursary Team.</p> <p>If course costs exceed £1200, additional costs can be covered through the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary.</p> <p>Where possible the above will be paid in kind, however should any direct payments be granted- these will be paid on a fortnightly basis and subject to 85% attendance.</p> <p>If none of the costs above can be identified as a barrier – Buxton and Leek College has the right to refuse a Bursary.</p>	<p>This fund is available to students who are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young People 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) in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right <p>Please note: the above benefits must be in the students own name and not Parent(s)/ Guardian(s)</p>	<p>Students need to be 16-18 years of age as of 31.08.2024</p>



16-19 Discretionary Bursary Fund		
Support Available	Eligibility Criteria	Age
<p>Where a student's Household Income is between £35,000.01 and £45,000 the student may be entitled to up to 50% support towards the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus pass support • Travel support (beyond 2 mile)** <p>Where a student's Household Income is between £25,000.01 and £35,000.00, the student will be placed into priority banding dependent on Household income and will receive between 75-100% support towards the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Bus Pass • Travel support (beyond 2 mile)** • Equipment • Kit • Uniform • Books • UCAS • Essential Field Trips/ Essential Additional Courses <p>Where a student's Household Income is between £0.00 and £25,000.00, the student will be placed into priority banding dependent on Household income and will receive between 75-100% support towards the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Bus Pass • Travel support (beyond 2 mile)** • Equipment • Kit • Uniform • Books • UCAS • Essential Field Trips/ Essential Additional Courses • Meal support (if evidence for Free College Meals is not received) <p>Where transport, equipment, kit, books and uniform costs are not paid direct to the department- students will be expected to pay upfront for these and provide receipts for reimbursement.</p> <p>Where possible, the above will be paid in kind, however should any direct payments be granted- these will be paid on a fortnightly basis and subject to 85% attendance.</p>	<p>This fund is available to students who have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Household Income up to £45,000 (see support available) • Dependants of someone on Income Support • Dependants of someone on Income Based JSA or Employment and Support Allowance • Dependants of someone on Universal Credit • Dependants of someone claiming the Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit • Students who can demonstrate that they are facing financial hardship <p>For transport support**</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a £1000.00 cap on the amount given for transport costs to ensure fair distribution of funds at the start of the academic year. • External travel costs must be reasonable and offer value for money. Learners are expected to provide reasonable fuel/ taxi costs, and the College reserves the right to review and approve the costs based on market rates. 	<p>- Students need to be 16-18 years of age as of 31.08.2024</p> <p>- Or aged 19 on 31st August and continuing in to their second year of a two year course they began aged 16-18</p> <p>- or aged 19-25 and in receipt of an Education Health Care Plan</p>

Free College Meals Scheme		
Support Available	Eligibility Criteria	Age
<p>For students studying onsite</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Meal card (value of £5.00 per full timetabled day) for use in onsite cafeterias <p>Students studying offsite with no access to College run canteen facilities i.e. BFC, DCCT etc. you will receive one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A meal provided by the football club per full timetabled day • Or Direct payment of £5.00 per full timetabled day (this may be subject to change during the academic year on the basis we introduce meal specific vouchers) <p>Allowances are based on you being timetabled to be studying for the full timetabled day, where only a part day is scheduled an allowance may not be granted.</p> <p>In the event study moves to remote learning the equivalent of £5.00 will be paid to learners in receipt of a meal allowance via BACS.</p> <p>Direct payments are subject to 85% attendance.</p>	<p>Students, or their parents/guardians, must be in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income Support • Income-based Jobseekers Allowance • Income-related Employment Support Allowance • Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit • Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 • Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 (assessed by HMRC). • 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 p/a 	<p>- Students need to be 16-18 years of age as of 31.08.2024</p> <p>- Or aged 19 on 31st August and continuing in to their second year of a two year course they began aged 16-18</p> <p>- or aged 19-25 and in receipt of an Education Health Care</p>

Care to Learn scheme		
Support Available	Eligibility Criteria	Age
<p>Care to Learn can help with the cost of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • your childcare, including deposit and registration fees • a childcare taster session for up to 5 days • keeping your childcare place over the summer holidays • taking your child to their childcare provider <p>This is upto £180 per child per week.</p> <p>If the Care to Learn scheme does not fully cover the childcare costs for timetabled days, students can make an application for additional funding from an eligible funding pot such as the Vulnerable Bursary Fund.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Be the main carer and in receipt of Child Benefit for the child(ren) for whom they are claiming Care to Learn •The other parent is unable to provide childcare, for example, they are also in education or are absent. •The other parent is not claiming childcare through Tax Credits •Full details of eligibility can be found here https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Students aged under 20 at the start of their course •Students who become 20 during their study programme can continue to get funding to the end of that specific study programme.

Adult learner funds

There are two funds available for students aged 19+, which are:

- 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund
- Advanced Learner Loan Bursary

These funds are designed to help students with specific costs associated with their programme of study and are available to students who are on ESFA funded courses.

Household Income thresholds are based on net income for all individuals living in the household (who would normally be eligible for council tax).

19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund		
Support Available	Eligibility Criteria	Age
<p>Students who are studying onsite on timetabled programmes will be placed into priority banding dependent on Household income and will receive between 0-100% support towards the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel support** • Childcare Support • Tuition Fees • Professional registrations or Memberships • Equipment • Kit • Uniform • Books • Essential field Trips • Immediate Hardship <p>Learners studying on online programmes who are not subject to a timetable and attendance monitoring can apply for financial support with the following costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional registrations or Memberships • Equipment • Kit • Uniform • Books • Immediate Hardship <p>Where equipment, kit, books and uniform costs are not paid direct to the department- students will be expected to pay upfront for these and provide receipts for reimbursement</p>	<p>This fund is available to students who have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Household Income up to £45,000 • Receive Income Support • Receive Income Based JSA or Employment Support Allowance • Receive the Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit • Receive Universal Credit • Students who demonstrate that they are facing financial hardship • Tuition Fee's - Students can apply for tuition fee support if not eligible for ESFA tuition fee remission or an Advanced Learner Loan <p>No Bursary funding will be made to learners who have outstanding tuition fees and have not been ruled out from any other funding/ schemes which can cover the cost of tuition fees.</p> <p>Where possible, support will be paid in kind, however should any direct payments be granted- these will be paid on a fortnightly basis and subject to 85% attendance.</p> <p>For childcare support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Learners must complete the separate Childcare Bursary Application form which includes an agreement between the childcare provider, learner and College •Childcare must be provided by an OFSTED registered provider •Learner must be the main carer and in receipt of Child Benefit for the child/children for whom they are claiming for •Funded Early Learning (FEL) payments are to be applied first to the cost of any sessions. •The other parent is unable to provide childcare, for example they are also in education/ work or are absent •There will be a cap on the amount given for childcare to ensure fair distribution of funds. The exact cap will be determined based on the number of applications and available budget each year. •There will be a cap on the amount given for childcare to ensure fair distribution of funds. The exact cap will be determined based on the number of applications and available budget each year. •Childcare costs must be reasonable and offer value for money. Learners are expected to provide reasonable childcare costs, and the College reserves the right to review and approve the costs based on market rates. 	<p>- Students need to be aged 19 years or older as of 31.08.2024</p>

**A maximum award of £1,000.00 will be granted for travel costs per academic year unless further funding becomes available.

•External travel costs must be reasonable and offer value for money. Learners are expected to provide reasonable fuel/ taxi costs, and the College reserves the right to review and approve the costs based on market rates.



Advanced Learner Loan Bursary		
Support Available	Eligibility Criteria	Age
<p>Students who are studying onsite on timetabled programmes will be placed into priority banding dependent on Household income and will receive between 0-100% support towards the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel support** • Childcare Support • Tuition Fees • Professional registrations or Memberships • Equipment • Kit • Uniform • Books • Essential field Trips • Immediate Hardship <p>Learners studying on online programmes who are not subject to a timetable and attendance monitoring can apply for financial support with the following costs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional registrations or Memberships • Equipment • Kit • Uniform • Books • Immediate Hardship <p>Where equipment, kit, books and uniform costs are not paid direct to the department- students will be expected to pay upfront for these and provide receipts for reimbursement.</p>	<p>This fund is available to students who have successfully been awarded an Advanced Learner loan and who have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Household Income up to £45,000 • Receive Income Support • Receive Income Based JSA or Employment Support Allowance • Receive the Guarantee Element of State Pension Credit • Receive Universal Credit • Students who demonstrate that they are facing financial hardship <p>Where possible, support will be paid in kind, however should any direct payments be granted- these will be paid on a fortnightly basis and subject to 85% attendance.</p> <p>No Bursary funding will be made until a learners Advanced Learner Loan is approved and active on our system.</p> <p>For childcare support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners must complete the separate Childcare Bursary Application form which includes an agreement between the childcare provider, learner and College • Childcare must be provided by a OFSTED registered provider • Learner must be the main carer and in receipt of Child Benefit for the child/children for whom they are claiming for • Funded Early Learning (FEL) payments are to be applied first to the cost of any sessions. • The other parent is unable to provide childcare, for example they are also in education/ work or are absent • There will be a cap on the amount given for childcare to ensure fair distribution of funds. The exact cap will be determined based on the number of applications and available budget each year. • Childcare costs must be reasonable and offer value for money. Learners are expected to provide reasonable childcare costs, and the College reserves the right to review and approve the costs based on market rates. 	<p>- Students need to be aged 19 years or older as of 31.08.2024</p>

**A maximum award of £1,000.00 will be granted for travel costs per academic year unless further funding becomes available.

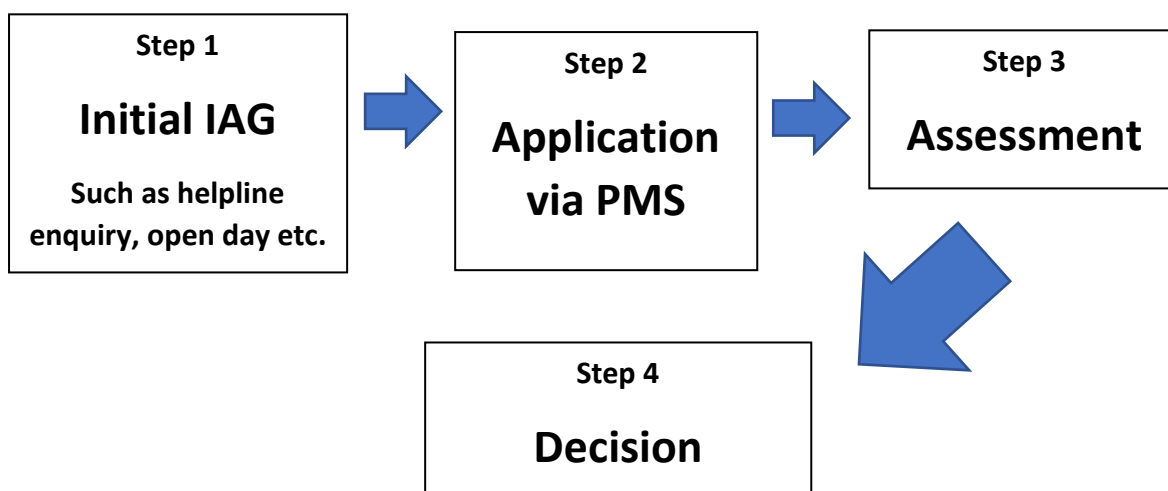
•External travel costs must be reasonable and offer value for money. Learners are expected to provide reasonable fuel/ taxi costs, and the College reserves the right to review and approve the costs based on market rates.

10. PROCEDURE

This section sets out the top-level procedure and service standards that students can expect. Other specific information is identified in the guidance section of this policy.

Student Support Fund Application and Assessment Process

The application and assessment process is based on four key stages shown in the flowchart below.



Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG)

Prospective and current students are encouraged to find out more about the Financial Support Fund before submitting an application.

They can do this via the following methods:

- Online via the college website: <https://www.blc.ac.uk/funding-bursaries-loans-14-18-2/>
- Contacting the Student Money and Welfare Adviser
- Attending a College open day
- Linking with the Learner Journey Team

Application

Financial Support Fund applications can be submitted from late July each year. Early applications are advised.

Applications can be completed via the following method:

- <https://blc.paymystudent.com/portal/>
- Online via the college website via the link below:
- <https://www.blc.ac.uk/funding-bursaries-loans-14-18-2/>
- Paper based application forms will only be issued in exceptional circumstances and can be requested on E: Financialsupportfund@blc.ac.uk
- Completed paper based application forms can be dropped in at any college campus or returned via post to Financial Support Fund Team, Clarendon House, Buxton and Leek College, Devonshire Road, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 6RY
- Applications must be supported with the documentary evidence requested
- All applications submitted will be acknowledged within 5 working days of the application receipt date (subject to annual leave over the Summer Holidays) via PayMyStudent

Assessment

- Assessments can take up to 6 weeks to approve subject to a completed application on PayMyStudent with all mandatory evidence included.
- Students are expected to monitor their PayMyStudent and Unimal account regularly for updates regarding their application, if students are required to submit additional evidence this must be within 10 working days.
- Application decisions and awards will be communicated via the following methods:
 - Via the Pay My Student Portal
 - Email – Unimail account only
 - Text
 - Letter
- Applications that remain incomplete 12 weeks after submission will be deactivated, students will then be expected to complete a new application with required evidence.
- Awards will only be backdated to the date in which a completed application was submitted

Evidence

- All students are expected to include the complete mandatory evidence requested via the PayMyStudent portal
- The information regarding what evidence to submit alongside your application form can be found via PayMyStudent or the online Bursary Guide found on the PayMyStudent Portal [Guide - Applying for a Bursary.pdf](#)

Reasons for not approving an application

A Financial Support Fund application may not be approved for the following reasons:

- Student does not meet the eligibility criteria as set out in the Government Guidance
- Student does not provide the complete mandatory supporting evidence required
- Student does not meet the College standards in terms of attendance and behaviour
- No financial need for funding can be evidenced for the learner

Application appeals and complaints

Students have the right to informally appeal a decision or make a complaint. This must be made in writing to The Financial Support Fund Manager here:

E: Financialsupportfund@blc.ac.uk

Students have the right to formally appeal a decision or make a complaint. This must be made to the University of Derby using information on the following link:

<https://www.derby.ac.uk/about/academic-regulations/complaints-procedure/>

Cashless Payments

The college policy is to operate a cashless payment system where possible for all Students, the table below shows how this applies to the Financial Support Fund payments:

Support Type	Cashless Payment Procedure
Transport- Bus Pass	Internal Transfer from Financial Support Fund to Transport department
Meal support	Students studying onsite at Buxton and Leek - issued with a meal card for use in the cafeterias
Meal support offsite	Agreements in place with BFC
Childcare	Childcare provides invoices to the college directly
Equipment	Internal Transfer from Financial Support Fund to the relevant department

Kit/ Uniform	Internal Transfer from Financial Support Fund to the relevant department
UCAS	Internal Transfer from Financial Support Fund to the relevant department
Essential Field Trips	Internal Transfer from Financial Support Fund to the relevant department
Tuition Fees	Internal Transfer from Financial Support Fund to the relevant department
Exam Resit charge	Internal Transfer from Financial Support Fund to the relevant department

Key Information for All Student Support Funds

- Awards are made on a first come first served basis
- When the Funds have been exhausted, no further awards will be made
- Each application is considered individually and assessed against the relevant eligibility criteria
- Awards are designed to contribute towards the main costs incurred by students but may not cover all requirements.
- External transport awards will use the AA mileage calculator @ 45p per mile expense/ local bus company websites to estimate costs
- Learners who are made awards towards External Transport will be expected to complete the PayMyStudent Travel Questionnaire in which they will evidence the full cost of a weeks travel through receipts. This will need be re-approved on a termly basis.
- Learners who are made awards towards External Meal Support will be expected to complete the PayMyStudent Meal Support Questionnaire in which they will evidence the full cost of a weeks meals through receipts. This will need be re-approved on a termly basis.
- Any student found to have made a false claim will be subject to the College's Disciplinary Procedure or referral to Police in extreme cases.
- Buxton and Leek College reserves the right to invoice students who leave College before completing their studies for repayments of any funds allocated to them. The student will also be asked to return any items of equipment, uniform or protective clothing.
- Initial assessment of applications and all ongoing support will include an overview of attendance and behaviour. If a student fails to meet College standards for attendance (85%) and behaviour, a review would be triggered through the Learner Journey Team to determine whether further financial support should be reduced or stopped.

- Direct Bursary Payments will be made once a learner has enrolled, has been fully assessed for Bursary and attended their course for a minimum three week period (in cases of hardship, learners will be looked at on an individual basis)

- If an award is to be paid by BACS transfer, the account must be in the student's own name.

- The college will operate a student hardship fund at its discretion for all students subject to residency and course eligibility

- A review of remaining funds will take place at regular intervals throughout the academic year– should learners not have been assessed eligible for certain elements of an award at the beginning of the year – this will be reconsidered should we have funds remaining to do so