

# Bursary Support Policy

- 16 – 19 Bursary Fund
- 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund
- Advanced Learning Loan Bursary

|                       |                             |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Policy reference      | POL-245                     |
| Policy area           | Student Policy              |
| Policy owner          | Kay Burton-Williams         |
| Policy author         | Kay Burton-Williams         |
| Level of consultation |                             |
| Approval level        | SLT                         |
| Review date           | 20 <sup>th</sup> March 2024 |
| Approval date         | 20 <sup>th</sup> May 2024   |
| Next approval date    | 19 <sup>th</sup> May 2025   |

## **1. Policy Statement**

- 1.1 Bursary Support Funds are designed to help support people who face the greatest barriers in education or training post 16; and are available to provide financial support for learners with a specific financial hardship, which may prevent them from taking part or continuing in learning. A key Government priority is to eliminate the attainment gap between socio-economic groups and to ensure every young person is able to participate. Thus, a range of schemes are available to support costs associated with learning for those who are eligible.
- 1.2 BMet's Bursary Support Policy will ensure equitable access and administration of the funds within guidelines, to maximise support for students facing financial hardship as a barrier to learning. The policy is designed to ensure that funding reaches those students who are most in need of financial support and thus, assessment is individual, and awards are made on actual financial need.
- 1.3 The Bursary and DLSF sections of the policy apply to all who study on a Further Education course funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) or West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) at BMet and all staff involved in the administration of the funds.
- 1.4 There are three types of ESFA / WMCA funded Bursary Funds. Each fund contains specific categories of support as detailed in sections 1.4.1, 1.4.2, and 1.4.3.
  - 16-19 Bursary Fund (ESFA)
  - 19+ Discretionary Bursary Support Fund (ESFA/WMCA)
  - Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund (ESFA)
- 1.4.1 16-19 Bursary Fund includes both Vulnerable and Discretionary Bursaries, hardship, equipment, Care to Learn (C2L) and Free Meals (FM). Students aged 19 or over on 31<sup>st</sup> August prior to the start of the academic year with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) or those who began a study programme aged 16-18 (19+ continuers) are eligible to apply to this fund.
- 1.4.2 19+ Discretionary Bursary Support Fund, which includes hardship, equipment and 20+ childcare funding. Care to Learn (C2L) provides funding for childcare to support students under the age of 20.
- 1.4.3 Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund, includes hardship, equipment and 20+ Childcare.

## **2 Responsibilities and Obligations**

### 2.1 Staff:

- 2.1.1 Student Finance, Student Experience, Schools Liaison, Inclusive Support and Marketing teams (and all BMet staff) to promote availability of funds effectively, with inter-agency working with safeguarding partners, local authority, social services, parents/carers etc., to identify vulnerable learners before application. In addition, effective marketing via website, text, email, and prospectus.
  - 2.1.2 Student Services to provide and assess applications fairly, subject to policy and guidelines (responding within 10 working days); and arrange distribution of bursary award, including a emergency funds. Student Finance subsequently, monitor, report all aspects monthly and process third party suppliers in liaison with Data and Finance departments within budget.
  - 2.1.3 Student Finance / Student Services to hold weekly case conference to review requests for exceptional circumstances support. All awards are subject to availability of funds.
  - 2.1.4 Curriculum to provide details of organised trips and visits and equipment requirements at the start of each academic year to Student Finance.
  - 2.1.5 Data and Student Finance to submit funding body returns, report appropriate learner support fields on the ILR and appropriate underspends (if any) in adherence with guidelines.
- 2.2 All students are required to complete a bursary application and provide appropriate evidence of household and personal income eligibility at the time of application, with a signed declaration. Learners will receive an award notice, which will allow access to services such as travel, hardship, meals and childcare support, this may be followed by a final notification of further awards based on individual needs. Learners are expected to notify of any change of circumstances affecting their award and are responsible for notifying the Department of Work and Pensions of income that may affect their benefits.
- 2.3 All awards are subject to periodic review and students may be asked to provide evidence as to the use of funds awarded to support continued eligibility to funds.

## **3 Procedure/Compliance Obligations**

All students are entitled to apply for Bursary Support funds. Each application will be assessed equitably and subject to guidelines and availability of funds and other agency support for learners considered.

### **3.1 Eligibility criteria (all students):**

- 3.1.1 Students aged 16 or over on 31<sup>st</sup> August prior to the start of the academic year (and under 19 for free meals other than 19+ continuers and EHCP students).
- 3.1.2 On a publicly funded ESFA / WMCA course subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality provision.
- 3.1.3 Meet all criteria, including residency, for funding. Asylum seekers and refugees will need to provide a copy of Home Office evidence of residency status.
- 3.1.4 Experience financial barriers to undertaking learning, including low household income and be able to provide evidence of circumstances. £35,000 or less for 16-19 Bursary, £30,000 or less for 19+ and Advanced Learner Loans Bursary, Free meals are available for households who are in receipt of specified benefits (as per ESFA funding rules); household income for those in receipt of Child Tax Credit must be below £16,190 and for those in receipt of Universal Credit below £7,400.
- 3.1.5 Attending a minimum of 2 days study per week with changes possible dependent on availability of funds.
- 3.1.6 Maintaining acceptable levels of attendance/engagement, behaviour and achievement. This includes consideration of whether attendance has been affected by a disability. Termly Attendance:
  - 3.1.6.1 59% or below – no continued assistance except in exceptional circumstances assessed on individual basis.
  - 3.1.6.2 60%-79% - assistance for 4 weeks with an attendance target
  - 3.1.6.3 80%-86% - assistance for 8 weeks with an attendance target.
  - 3.1.6.4 87% or above – continued assistance for full term.
- 3.1.7 Learners eligible for Vulnerable Bursary funding must be in one of the following vulnerable groups and are automatically eligible for 100% contribution to trips and equipment. Learners must be able to demonstrate individual needs and if awarded may be eligible for up to £1200 per academic year:
  - 3.1.7.1 In care or a care leaver.
  - 3.1.7.2 In receipt of Income Support/Universal Credit (UC) in their name.

- 3.1.7.3 In receipt of Employment Support Allowance, UC and Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payments in their name.

## 3.2 Priority groups

In the event of limited availability of funds, priority will be given to the following groups:

- 3.2.1 Students in care or care leavers.
- 3.2.2 Vulnerable learners including those with safeguarding cases.
- 3.2.3 Students of low income families, with household income below £20,000 and those in receipt of free meals.
- 3.2.4 Unemployed in receipt of a means tested benefit.
- 3.2.5 Unwaged dependents of persons in receipt of the above.

## 3.3 Specific support available (all students):

### 3.3.1 Travel

- 3.3.1.1 Travel support is issued dependent on patterns of study such as course start/end dates and study patterns. Travel support is issued in various denominations and types as detailed in sections 3.5 and 3.6
- 3.3.1.2 Travel products are provided for learners who live within the West Midlands travel area (National Express services); administered via smart phone M Tickets or Swift Card. Travel products are available covering bus, train and metro services and are issued based on individual need.
- 3.3.1.3 Students that reside outside of the National Express boundary will be eligible for an Arriva bus pass subject to geographical restrictions.
- 3.3.1.4 Monetary equivalents (subject to ESFA / WMCA funding rules) are provided for learners who live outside of both the West Midlands travel area (National Express services) and Arriva geographical area. Students are required to use bus, train or metro services which are not covered under the West Midlands travel or Arriva pass.

### 3.3.2 Free Meals

- 3.3.2.1 Free Meals (FM) issued dependent on venue facilities available. FM are provided for 16-19 bursary fund students who are eligible to free meals funding (as per ESFA funding rules) item [3.1.4](#). In

addition, learners who are not eligible for FM funding are eligible for the college meals scheme through the 16-19 Bursary fund. Learners awarded free meals/college meals scheme are entitled to a free meal at a rate of £4 a day.

- 3.3.2.2 Free meal topical and seasonal offers available dependent on need and availability of funds. Meals are accessed using student ID cards at catering outlets on college premises. Alternative methods of administering meals support may be used such as vouchers and BACS payments, if onsite catering is not available or where students are studying remotely or undertaking work placement.

### **3.3.3 Childcare**

- 3.3.3.1 Childcare (20+) with a childminder, provider or childminder agency who is registered with Ofsted maximum up to £70/day. Exceptions may be made and are dependent on individual circumstances and the availability of funds. Multiple children can be supported within the £70/day value, this is inclusive of afterschool and breakfast clubs. Childcare support is provided for days / periods where timetabled / planned activities are due to take place.
- 3.3.3.2 It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that free government childcare funding available for 3-4 year olds is fully utilised prior to applying for support from the college. This is subject to any Government changes in support schemes.

Childcare through Care to Learn (C2L) is available for students aged 19 or under at the start date of the course by direct application to [www.gov.uk/care-to-learn](http://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn).

### **3.3.4 Equipment, Trips, Registrations and Resource**

- 3.3.4.1 Books and equipment including IT which may be specified to be returned for use by future students, but must be provided for equity in line with BMet Bring Your Own Device scheme. Purchase of essential text books for applicants; books will be the property of the Library and be loaned to students.
- 3.3.4.2 Trips & visits in connection with courses at 50% support of total cost (100% for Vulnerable bursary students).
- 3.3.4.3 Essential Kit and Equipment in connection with courses at 50% support of total cost (100% for Vulnerable Bursary students). This excludes items that are loanable from the college.
- 3.3.4.4 Course fees where learners are assessed as disadvantaged, including those who have been provided fee remission on the

basis of unemployment benefits. Course fee support is excluded from the 2 day study criteria rule item 3.1.5.

3.3.4.5 19+ Course related costs not covered in the funding rate or loan, including accreditation and professional membership fees and any fees or charges due to external bodies.

3.3.4.6 UCAS registration, university interviews and open days.

3.3.4.7 Printing credits.

3.3.5 Vulnerable Bursary applicants may be able to receive additional support (for specific identified needs) in addition to the support listed in the bursary through the Vulnerable Bursary Fund for which specific criteria apply.

3.3.6 Exceptional circumstances requirements, including safeguarding issues for students of all ages.

3.3.7 Priority will be given to the assessment of awards covered within section 1.4 for travel, childcare and free meals support at the point of application.

#### **4. Exceptional support**

Students in receipt of Bursaries as listed in section 1.4, who have financial support needs above and beyond the standard offer (as listed in section 3.3) can make an exceptional support request. All requests must be made through Student Services, which will be considered by a panel. All supporting information must be provided at the time of the application. The decision of the panel will be communicated within 10 working days of the request being received.

##### **4.1. T Level – Extended work placement support**

Students who are undertaking CDF or T Level placements are eligible to apply for exceptional support where the household income is greater than the 16-19 Bursary threshold of £35,000. All cases will be considered on an individual basis and criteria such as the household income, expectations of the extended work placement, attendance and academic performance will be considered by a panel. Applications for support should be submitted using the Bursary application form. All supporting information must be provided at the time of the application. The decision of the panel will be communicated within 10 working days of the request being received.

#### **5. Compliance / Appeals**

It is the responsibility of the designated staff identified in section 2 to ensure that the correct procedures are followed, the policy is adhered to, monthly monitoring takes place and records are available for audit. In addition, to submit 6 month returns, report appropriate learner support fields in the ILR and appropriate underspends, if any, in adherence with guidelines. If monitoring reveals student non-compliance, payments will cease.

In the first instance resolving queries and complaints is the responsibility of Student Services staff. Appeals regarding awards made which cannot be resolved by Student

Services staff should be made in writing within 10 working days of the date of the original decision. All appeals must be made in writing to the Student Finance Manager (StudentFinance@bmet.ac.uk) who will respond to the appeal within 10 working days. Appeals made outside of these time frames will not be considered.

Appeals regarding exceptional support applications (section 4) must be made in writing to the Student Finance Manager (StudentFinance@bmet.ac.uk) within 10 working days of the decision of the panel. Appeals will only be considered if there is new supporting information that was not submitted within the original application. Appeals made outside of these time frames or that do not provide additional information will not be considered. The decision of the appeal panel is final and cannot be further appealed.

Appeals and complaints which cannot be resolved, concerning failure to comply with policy or published procedures should be made in accordance with BMet's complaints and compliments policy. Please note that appeals regarding financial awards made or declined cannot be considered within the Customer Complaints & Compliments Policy.