



East Coast College

Bursary Policy and Procedure 2026/27

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This document can be provided in a larger font, electronically or other accessible requirement, upon request.

Bursary Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

The aim of this document is to set out the policy for the distribution of support funds to students. The use of support funds is key to the College's strategic objective to raise aspirations for students and to assist those students who otherwise may not be in a position to attend College.

The College receives support funds for 16-18 and 19+ students from the Department of Education (DfE). The College also has its own limited support fund for Apprentices and a Kirkley Pools Land Estate Fund granted annually by the Kirkley Pools Land Estate Trust. This Policy is intended to cover all of these funds and where there are differences between them this is identified in the body of the policy.

Some of the funds are received as earmarked funds and others are received as discretionary funds, where this makes a difference the criteria for each will be identified.

The Corporation and its Committees at all time will have due regard to the Seven Principles of Public Life and the requirements of the guidance set out in HMT's 'Managing Public Money.'

2. Aim

The various funds are designed to remove barriers to participation through supporting students to continue in education or training.

3. Conditions

All beneficiaries of these funds should meet eligibility criteria and conditions as laid out by the College and publicised to applicants in information packs and through the College website.

These funds should not be used to displace other types of support available to students e.g. childcare costs which can be covered via Care to Learn or Transport costs that are subsidised by the Local Authority.

Students may only be funded from the support element applicable to their circumstances:

- 16-18 students are funded through the DfE 16-19 Bursary Fund.
- Students aged 19 continuing on a study programme they began aged 16-18 (19+ continuers) and 19-23 students with an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) are included in the DfE 16-19 Bursary Fund.
- Apprenticeships are only eligible for support through the College's own apprenticeship support fund.
- 19+ students who are not in receipt of an Advanced Learner loan are funded through the DfE 19+ student support fund which now forms part of the block adult allocation.
- 19+ students who are funded through an Advanced Learner Loan (ALL) are only eligible for support through the Advanced Learner Loan bursary

4. Types of support

There are the following types of support:

- Vulnerable Bursary (16-18)
- Discretionary Bursary/student support funds (all age groups)
- Free meals in Further Education
- Advanced Learner Loan Bursary (19+ ALL recipients)
- College apprenticeship charity support (all age groups)
- Kirkley Pools Land Estate Fund (all age groups)

5. Changes to Arrangements

All arrangements are subject to change without notice if funding agency criteria are amended. At all times the funding agency rules will be the over-riding criteria applied to student support and all awards will be made subject to their regulations.

6. Review of Arrangements in Exceptional Circumstances

Funding arrangements may be subject to review in exceptional circumstances if students are unable to attend their usual programme of learning or this is adapted to accommodate on and offsite learning. The College will review the support that is provided to ensure that this is modified and appropriate in line with funding agency guidelines and College policy.

Examples of exceptional circumstances include:

- Central Government national lockdown in the case of a re-occurrence a coronavirus epidemic
- Student's personal or health circumstances preventing them attending their full programme of learning

7. Bursary Procedure

7.1 The Vulnerable Bursary (16-18 students only)

A Vulnerable Bursary is available to help students with their actual costs of participating in College. The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- in care¹
- care leavers²

¹ Those 'in care' are defined as children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (section 31 of the Children Act 1989). Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 defines the term 'looked after child'

² A Care Leaver is defined as a young person aged 16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16; or a young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16

- receiving Universal Credit (UC) or Income Support (IS) 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 addition to Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit (UC) – all benefits must be received by the student in their own right.

The maximum value that could be awarded for the Vulnerable Bursary is £1,200.00. This can be awarded to the student in part or full depending on the evidence and requirements/need of the student. A meeting will be arranged with each student to discuss personal arrangements and individual need, depending on circumstances and course requirements.

Students on a study programme that lasts fewer than 30 weeks or become eligible for Vulnerable Bursary during the year are likely to need less support than a student on a longer programme. An assessment of the level of support and financial need will be discussed in the Vulnerable Bursary meeting.

If a student's situation changes during the course of the year then their eligibility can be reassessed and the level of support offered may be increased, decreased or withdrawn completely. Additional evidence will be required to verify changes in circumstances. There is a responsibility on students to notify the College to changes in their circumstances that might affect their continued eligibility for a bursary.

Students can re-apply for a bursary if their circumstances change throughout the year or if they had a previous award withdrawn.

Criteria for the Vulnerable Bursary are determined by the DfE, the College will implement all changes required to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the funding.

At present there are no vulnerable elements available to any student aged 19 or over, if these are introduced then the College will amend this policy to comply with the terms and conditions imposed by the DfE.

Students receiving vulnerable bursary support may also receive additional support from the discretionary element of bursary funding if need is identified.

7.2 Discretionary Bursary

Discretionary bursary will be paid to 16-18 year old students from funds received from the DfE. 19+ students may apply for discretionary student support from the relevant funding stream. Apprentices are not eligible for discretionary student support.

Discretionary student support will be awarded as a full or part contribution towards the cost of the following types of expenditure, where students are unable to meet those costs through any other means. Qualifying expenditure is defined as anything identified by the College as a barrier to success and progression. Examples of qualifying expenditure are as follows:

- Transport

- Meals support including Free College Meals (see section below)
- Equipment, materials and uniform subject to course requirements
- Educational visits or work-related activities which are a compulsory part of the course curriculum
- Childcare support for all students. Young parents up to the age of 20 can apply for Care to Learn funding.
- Loan of a laptop
- University interviews
- Emergency meal and travel support (for students in severe hardship)
- Other expenses may be awarded to support participation relating to a student's study programme.
- Course fees support – for students aged 19+ studying under a level 3 qualification. This element is strictly limited by DfE regulations for support in exceptional circumstances for learners who need financial support to start or stay in learning where other funding options are unavailable.

The bursary fund cannot support students with learning support or pastoral care services, for example counselling, extra-curricular activities that are not essential to the student's study programme or living costs support.

In order to assess ability to meet the costs of expenditure, the College will request information relating to all aspects of household income. Information supplied may be verified with relevant agencies such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Applicants may also be requested to provide information about other funding students might be receiving to support these activities, e.g. Local Authority support for transport or childcare support. Failure to supply requested evidence of income may invalidate the application.

Support will be awarded by receipt of a completed application including required evidence of household income or qualifying benefits by date order received. Support will be prioritised to students with household earnings under a net income of £30,000 a year (£37,000 gross income) or receiving qualifying benefits. Household income will be calculated by using take-home pay figures in addition to the amount of Universal Credit (UC), after deductions.

Students with a household income which does not fall within the £30,000 net income threshold may be funded at the College's discretion if sufficient funds are available, dependent on individual need and circumstances. Exceptions will be authorised by the Head of Finance.

If need is identified by the College's safeguarding and wellbeing team, a student's application may be supported at the College's discretion by a statement detailing circumstances and support required.

If a student's situation changes during the year then their eligibility can be reassessed and the level of support offered may be increased, decreased or withdrawn completely. Additional evidence will be required to verify changes in circumstances. There is a responsibility on students to notify the College to

changes in their circumstances that might affect their continued eligibility for a bursary.

Students can re-apply for a bursary if their circumstances change throughout the year or if they had a previous award withdrawn.

7.3 Free Meals in Further Education

From 1st September 2014 the Government introduced Free Meals in Further Education. This provides a fixed amount for all eligible 16-19 and 19-23 EHCP students to have a free meal in College. This allocation will be separate from the other support funds identified above. The College will ensure that it complies with all terms and conditions for this support fund.

Students are required to apply for free meals and provide evidence annually to check eligibility.

The College campuses are located in deprived areas, across two counties. To enable the students to have access to breakfast a hot meal, the College will top-up the free meal value to a maximum of £7.00 per day from the relevant discretionary funds. Funds are loaded onto the student's lanyard card to use in the college canteens and any remaining balances are reset at the end of each day. Only spend amounts are recorded against the relevant funds.

Students eligible for free meals will be provided with supermarket vouchers for any days they are offsite. Supermarket vouchers are issued in denominations of £5 per day. Students are expected to notify Student Finance when offsite placements or arrangements have been made to allow time for vouchers to be issued in advance.

Meal support will be prioritised to students eligible for free college meals. For 16-18 students who do not qualify for free meals, support through the discretionary bursary funds may be requested by providing a written statement detailing reasons on their application. 19+ students will only be supported in exceptional circumstances on assessment of individual need.

For eligible students studying with one of the College's sub-contracted educational providers, meal support arrangements will be agreed on an individual basis with the venue, dependent on location and facilities available, adhering to the funding guidelines.

8. Key Criteria

Any student studying on campus or at one of the College's subcontracted educational providers, enrolled on an appropriately funded course can be considered for discretionary student support, if it is deemed by the College that the fund will help support their learning or will avoid them withdrawing from college. Support in all cases will be awarded subject to the availability of funding and the level of award will be dependent on need.

Students on full cost courses are not entitled to financial support under funding agency guidelines.

Equipment and Laptops

Equipment, materials and uniforms are agreed individually by course requirements with the teaching areas. Where possible, items will be purchased on the student's behalf or voucher codes issued.

When applicable, equipment purchased from the fund should be returned by the student when their need is finished and this equipment will be utilised to support future students.

Exceptional support with clothing or equipment can be requested to enable students to continue to participate and will be assessed on individual need.

Laptops will remain the property of the College and are loaned out for agreed periods to enable students to study off campus. All students are required to complete an application and sign a separate declaration, confirming to return the device in good working order. Failure to return equipment could result in the student being invoiced for a replacement.

Transport

Support with transport costs will be prioritised for students living 2 miles or more from College but at the College's discretion this will be waived for students, where deemed necessary.

The College will pay the cheapest mode of transport or the best value option. Transport will be capped at £35 per week, any exceptions to be authorised by the Head of Finance.

The College has free on-site parking for students studying at Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft campuses. A contribution towards parking may be considered for students attending The Place if alternative transport options are not available.

Childcare

All applications for childcare support are to be submitted to the College, including applications for Care to Learn from academic year 2025-26 onwards.

Care to Learn funding is available to students under the age of 20. Applications will be assessed in line with the Care to Learn grant funding guidelines.

Childcare support for students aged over 20 will normally be limited to £4,000 per student. For students with two or more children, a maximum of £6,000 could be awarded after taking into account any government funding. Students may be required to cover any additional childcare amounts over these limits, including consumables and food costs.

Exceptions will be authorised by the Head of Finance.

9. Application Process

All students must complete an application on the relevant online or paper application form.

All applicants will be required to provide evidence to verify their eligibility for support.

Where required, evidence of income will include any source of household income from employment, investment and benefits. This information will be self-declared but also evidenced by P60s, wage slips, Universal Credit statements, confirmation letters of benefits from the job centre or DWP, or a Self-Assessment Tax Return form or certified accounts for those self-employed.

All students will need to make an application for support annually, providing updated household income evidence.

For students in care or a care leaver, written confirmation of their current or previous looked after status from the relevant local authority is required.

10. Assessment

Applications will be assessed by staff employed by the College in accordance with funding agency guidance. The Finance Business Partner or/and Head of Finance, will approve awards before applicants are notified of the decision. Awards from the Apprenticeship Student Support fund will need to be approved by the Trustees of the fund.

Documentary evidence to support applications will be checked and copies retained by the College for audit purposes.

The College aims to inform all applicants in writing of the outcome of their application within 14 working days from receipt of the fully completed documentation. During periods of high demand, for example, enrolment and the beginning of term, assessments could take longer to complete.

The team will assess the eligibility of each application and make decisions on the level of award to be given. They will also decide the type of support to be offered (in kind or cash) and the frequency of the payments to be made. Payment arrangements can be reviewed when either requested by the applicant or if the College feels it appropriate to do so in order to support continued participation in learning.

Positive assessments will be made in date order received after the applicant has been fully enrolled on their course.

19+ students must have course fees paid or funding agreed before any bursary funds can be awarded.

11. Payments

There will be a presumption that support will be provided in kind or payments will be made for specific goods or services (e.g. uniform or transport), direct to the supplier.

Where a cash payment is deemed to be necessary the preference will be to make payments by BACS directly into the student's bank account. Refunds will only be paid with evidence of a receipt or invoice. If payments are agreed for travel, the first payment will be made in advance followed by weekly payments based on attendance.

Childcare will be paid direct to the childcare provider on receipt of an invoice. Only in exceptional circumstances will a childcare refund be issued to the student.

For 19+ students, cash payments or transfer of funds to a bank account may be taken into account as income by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). It is recommended that applicants seek individual advice from the special benefits advisor at the Job Centre before accepting any cash payments.

Where a student has submitted an application for either the vulnerable or discretionary bursary, they may be awarded provisional/emergency support pending the approval of that application. Provisional/emergency payments will only be made where absolutely necessary and where a preliminary review of the student's application indicates that they meet eligibility criteria for one of the types of support.

12. Participation

Payment of bursaries and student support will be conditional upon a range of factors. This will include regular attendance, satisfactory behaviour and completion of coursework, assignments and formal assessments.

All students are expected to maintain a minimum level of attendance in accordance with the College policy to continue to be eligible for support. Attendance will be monitored regularly. Authorised absence will be classified as attendance. Expected attendance is 100% and if it falls below 90% then support may be reduced accordingly. Support could be fully withdrawn if attendance regularly falls below expected levels.

Travel

For students in receipt of a termly travel pass, if attendance falls below 60% the following terms pass may be withheld and support changed to weekly payments, based on attendance.

Travel payments are paid weekly in advance. At the beginning of each term, payment will be paid in full so not to disadvantage students from participating but then subsequent weeks will be based on attendance and deductions made if necessary. Payment will be made in full for attendance over 90% and payment withheld if attendance falls below 60%. Deductions will be made for attendance between 60%-90%.

13. Appeals

Applicants may appeal in writing against the decision on awarding of support by emailing the Head of Finance at studentfinance@eastcoast.ac.uk

14. Data Protection

All partners under this Policy agree to share data and information in order to verify a person's eligibility and to verify the position for any student that moves between providers during the year.

The information contained within the application will be treated as confidential and only shared where necessary to progress an application.

Hard copy information and information stored electronically associated with applications, decisions and panels will be kept to satisfy funding agency and College audit expectations. Any personal information that is kept will be kept securely and for a period of 7 years.

East Coast College has produced a privacy notice for students which is in accordance with the GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. The privacy notice is available on request and can be found on the College website at www.eastcoast.ac.uk/legal. If you have any questions about this notice or the ways in which we use your personal information, please contact our Data Protection Officer at Rotterdam Road, Lowestoft NR32 2PJ or dataprotection@eastcoast.ac.uk

15. Reporting

Use of the funds will be reported periodically throughout the year to the Senior Leadership team. At the year end the College will report the use of the funds in accordance with funding agency requirements. The use of the funds will also be audited at year end if required by the funding agency.

Use of the Apprenticeship Support Fund will be reported at least annually to the College Corporation through the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Use of all funds will be analysed for equality and diversity information and reported accordingly.

16. Administration Costs

Up to 5% of the discretionary bursary allocations are permitted to be used for administration costs. The amount spent on administration costs will be recorded within the individual funds, these include, discretionary 16-19 bursary, free meals in further education, 19+ bursary and 19+ ALL bursary.

17. East Coast College Apprenticeship Support Fund

The East Coast College Apprenticeship Support fund is funded from monies donated to the College. Students are assessed using the same criteria as the Discretionary Learner Support Fund and awarded support based on need. Due to the limited nature of the fund, awards from this element are strictly limited and as a consequence the maximum award is £1,200, although most awards will be considerably less than this amount.

18. Kirkley Pools Land Estate Fund

This is a grant awarded by the Kirkley Poor's Land Estate trust to the College to support students for the relief of need, hardship or distress living within the boundary of the ancient Parish of Kirkley. Students are assessed using the same criteria as the Discretionary Learner Support Fund and awarded support based on need. An annual reconciliation of spend is reported to the Kirkley Pools Land Estate Fund Trustees.

19. Equal Opportunities

All aspects of the applications process and associated decisions will be managed with due regard to equal opportunities legislation and the College's Equality and Diversity policy.

East Coast College's recent or forthcoming publications can be transcribed into alternative formats or languages, upon reasonable request.