

16 to 19 Bursary Fund Policy 2026 - 2027

Introduction

This policy outlines the guidelines for the management and allocation of the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary Fund and the 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary Fund for the 2026/2027 academic year.

These funds are provided to the College by the government and are aimed at supporting learners who are experiencing financial difficulties with essential costs associated with their studies. This could include transport, books, equipment, free meals, specialist clothing, travel to placement and university open days, and other essential course-related costs.

Funds are limited and targeted at those most in need. Funds are allocated on a first come, first served basis. All requests for funding will be considered although it may not always be possible to help. If the funding is exhausted, the College reserves the right to close the fund. Throughout this form the word 'student' will be interchangeable with the word 'learner', both referring to the individual undertaking the programme of study.

Eligibility and Conditions

Eligibility: Learners are eligible to apply for funding if they meet the requirements as stated in the [16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide: 2026 to 2027 - GOV.UK](#) issued by the Department for Education (DfE). Eligibility to funding does not give the individual the right to funding as funding is not an entitlement.

Conditions: Assistance awarded to a learner will always be conditional on behaviour, commitment to the course and maintaining an **acceptable attendance rate**. Colchester Institute reserves the right to remove (or reduce) support due to students' misbehaviour, attendance, fraud or if the reputation of the College is brought into disrepute.

If the learner does not meet the conditions or withdraws from the course then they may be requested to return equipment and any cash awards they have received.

Awards will be made in accordance with the published guidance from the DfE. While it is recognised that learners face financial pressures, funding is not a right and the College has a duty to make sure that funds are awarded fairly and to the learners most in need.

Application Process

Applicants must complete the relevant online application form, and clearly identify the support that they feel they need to achieve their course of study.

Students aged 19 who started a two year programme before their 19th birthday should apply for funding from the 16-19 Bursary Fund. Additionally, students who are aged 19 to 24 at the 31st August 2026 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) should apply for funding from the 16-19 Bursary Fund.

Applicants must demonstrate their financial need by providing the income information and supporting evidence as detailed in the application form. Each application for financial assistance will be considered by a College Student Finance Advisor and decisions will be made based on the information provided and the eligibility criteria for the different types of awards. These are detailed in the following sections.

For courses starting in September 2026, online bursary applications will be open in July, and all applications should be submitted by 1st November 2026. Applications received after this date will be considered on a pro-rata basis subject to need and availability of funds. During busy periods, it can take up to 15 working days to assess your application, and we may contact you for further information.

If your application is successful, we will tell you what you have been awarded and how the award will be made (i.e. bus ticket, train ticket, uniform order, etc.). If an award is a cash award (BACS Payments) we will advise when you can expect to receive any payment.

If your application is unsuccessful, we will write to you explaining why.

Free Meals in Further Education (Statutory Meals)

If you are students aged 16-18 (under 19 years old on 31st August 2026), students aged 19 and on the second year of a 2 year course, or those aged 19 to 24 with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), you might be eligible for statutory meals at college if you or your parents are in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

The current funding allocation is **£2.66** per student per meal. To ensure adequate meal provision, the College tops up this amount to **£6.00** per meal from the discretionary bursary budget, regardless of the student's eligibility for the discretionary bursary support.

16-19 Bursary Funds **(Learners under 19 years of age at 31st August 2026)**

The 16-19 Bursary fund has **two** elements:

1) 16-19 Discretionary Bursary

Open to students whose household net income plus benefits is below **£35,000**. Awards will be targeted towards students who face the greatest financial barriers to participation to cover course related costs including transport, books, equipment, free meals, specialist clothing, travel to placement and university days, and other essential course related costs.

Additional information required for the 16-19 discretionary award

Learners **MUST** provide in date evidence of their/their household income for their application to be considered. The income can be one of the following:

- Employed and no benefits claimed (annual take home pay totalling no more than £35,000)
- Employed and on Universal Credit (annual take home pay + UC payments totalling no more than £35,000)
- Income Support
- Jobseeker's Allowance (income based)
- Employment and Support Allowance (income related)
- Pension Credit
- Unemployed and on Universal Credit (UC payments totalling no more than £35,000)
- Unemployed (no benefits claimed)

2) 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary

An award of up to £1,200 a year for young people in the following defined vulnerable groups:

- Young person receiving Income Support (IS) or Universal Credit (UC) because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting someone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner
- Young person receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right
- Young person looked after by a Local Authority (in care) on voluntary basis (section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (section 31 of the Children Act 1989)
- Young person who is a care leaver:
 - * 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

The vulnerable bursary is awarded to help students in paying for course related costs, such as books, travel, equipment, specialist clothing, essential trips, free meals, DBS and stationery.

Please note: that the full £1200 vulnerable bursary is not automatically given if there is no financial need. Awards will be based on the amount that you need to participate in education. There is a possibility that the outcome of your application will be an award of less than £1200 or no award if you do not have any relevant costs. Awards from this bursary cannot be used to support living costs.

Additional information required for the 16-19 vulnerable bursary

For students who are in care or care leavers, written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status is required from the relevant local authority – this is the local authority that looks after them or provides their leaving care services. The evidence could be a letter or an email but must be clearly from the local authority.

For students in receipt of UC or IS, a copy of their UC or IS award notice is required. This must clearly state that the claim is in the student's name/confirm they are entitled to the benefits in their own right. The evidence must not state any conditions that prevent them from participating in further education or training.

For students in receipt UC/ESA and DLA and PIP, a copy of their UC award notice from DWP and evidence of receipt of DLA or PIP are required.

Travel

As funding is provided by public money, we are required to ensure support given provides the best value for money. Travel support may be in the form of a bus pass, train pass or BACS payment, and cost maybe a factor when assessing a travel award.

(No travel award will be made if the learner lives less than 1 mile away from the College)

Students also have the option of applying to Essex County Council for Post 16 Travel Assistance:

<https://www.essex.gov.uk/school-transport/post-16-transport>

Payment by BACS

Where a payment is made by BACS, the student MUST provide receipts for items/tickets purchased. Failure to produce receipts may result in the student being asked to return the BACS payment and may also affect future funding. BACS payments may also be available to unaccompanied asylum-seeking child (UASC) to support transport costs when no other means are available.

Students qualifying for awards in term 1 will continue to be supported in terms 2 and 3 **providing the learners are working towards achieving their qualification and keeping good attendance rates.**

Important: The college support fund will not make any reimbursements for items purchased prior to your form being assessed, unless authorised by the Senior Student Finance Advisor.

Estranged learners

Learners who are estranged from the family home can find information regarding benefits that they may be eligible to receive on the Turn2Us website (www.turn2us.org.uk). The Student Welfare team can signpost students to additional sources of help.

Awards for living costs are not available from the 16-19 Bursary Fund as living costs are outside the scope of the fund. The Student Welfare Team can signpost students to additional sources of help.

Childcare for students under 20

Applications for childcare must be submitted to the College in person on a separate paper form.

Appeals

Learners can appeal against decisions made by the College Fund Administrators in writing to the Head of Student Services to student.finance@colchester.ac.uk. If you are still unhappy with the decision, you can raise a complaint following Colchester Institute's Complaint Procedure [Concerns and Complaints Form - Colchester Institute](#).

Please note: Applications for financial support are valid for one academic year only. Should you return to College in September 2027 and still require financial assistance, a new application form must be completed and up to date supporting evidence supplied.

For all applicants, please be aware that if you (your parents) are in receipt of benefit from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and you received an award from the bursary fund, it is your responsibility to inform the DWP about this award, because DWP may decide the learner support payment may impact those benefits.

(All figures are correct at the time of publishing)