

BURSARY SUPPORT POLICY

- 16-19 BURSARY FUND
- 19+ DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUND
- ADVANCED LEARNING LOAN BURSARY
- HE BURSARY SUPPORT FUND
- COLLEGE SUBSIDISED TRAVEL SCHEME FUND

POLICY OWNER:	Student Experience
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DATE OF REVIEW:	June 2019
DATE OF APPROVAL:	August 2019
FOR APPROVAL BY:	SLT
NEXT REVIEW DATE:	June 2020

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. Students on university level programmes and courses not in receipt of government funding are covered under the HE Bursary support sections of this policy only. Students receiving college subsidised travel support are covered under this specific section of the policy only.
- 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 31st 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.
- 1.5 There is a limited HE Bursary support fund available through application for Students studying: a BSc (Hons) Degree, a Foundation Degree awarded by Birmingham City University or the University of Derby, a Higher National Certificate or Higher National Diploma course awarded by Pearson UK. All other HE students should contact their awarding university for financial support available to them. Students will need to demonstrate that their household income does not meet their household expenditure to within £1,000 of their total income. A maximum award of £240 will be issued to a student during the academic year.
- 1.6 The College operates a subsidised travel scheme fund available **only** for those identified as a priority group who are not eligible for DLSF, such as travel for James Watt College and Centre of Sporting Excellence identified within this policy. This fund is limited and issued at the discretion of the college.

2 Responsibilities and Obligations

2.1 Staff:

- 2.1.1 Schools Liaison and Marketing (and all BMet staff) to promote availability of funds effectively, with inter-agency working with social services, foster parenting, health etc., to identify young bursary applicants before application. In addition, effective marketing via text, email, website 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 small emergency fund. Subsequently, monitor, report all aspects monthly and process third party suppliers in liaison with Data and Finance departments within budget.
- 2.1.3 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.
- 2.1.5 Data and Student Services 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 initial award notice, which will allow access to immediate services such as travel, hardship, meals and childcare support, followed by a final notification of full award. 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 taken into account.

3.1 Eligibility criteria (all students):

- 3.1.1 Students aged 16 or over on 31st 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 letter.
- 3.1.4 Experience financial barriers to undertaking learning, including low household income and be able to provide evidence of circumstances (£25,000 or less for 16-19 Bursary and Advanced

Learner Loans Bursary, £21,000 or less for 19+ Bursary (unless waged in their own right). 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 with changes possible dependent on availability of funds.

3.1.6 Maintaining acceptable levels of attendance, behaviour and achievement. This includes consideration of whether attendance has been effected by a disability. Attendance:

3.1.6.1 82% or below – no continued assistance except in exceptional circumstances assessed on individual basis.

3.1.6.2 83%-88% - assistance for one month with an attendance target.

3.1.6.3 89% or above – continued assistance for full term.

3.1.7 Vulnerable Bursary students must be in one of the following vulnerable groups and are automatically eligible for 100% contribution to trips and equipment:

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 Unemployed in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance or receiving a means tested benefit.

3.2.2 Unwaged dependents of persons in receipt of the above.

3.2.3 Students in care or care leavers.

3.2.4 Students of low income families, with household income below £15,000 and those in receipt of free meals.

3.2.5 Free travel, within the limits of the passes/monetary support available, for 16-18s James Watt College and Centre of Sporting Excellence. Funds are subject to yearly review. Students funded by free travel awards are funded at the college's discretion and awards are not guaranteed.

3.3 **Specific support available (all students):**

3.4 Travel support is issued dependent on patterns of study such as course start/end dates and study patterns. Travel support is available where the distance of travel to college is greater than 1.5 miles from the main location of study. Travel support is issued in various denominations and types as detailed in sections 3.5 and 3.6.

3.5 Travel passes are provided for learners who live within the West Midlands travel area (National Express services); administered via smart phone M Tickets. Other product types such as Swift Cards, travel pass vouchers or daily scratch cards are issued on a case by case basis.

3.6 Monetary equivalents (subject to ESFA / WMCA funding rules) are provided for learners who live outside of the West Midlands travel area (National Express services) and are required to use bus, train or metro services which are not covered under the West Midlands travel pass.

3.7 Childcare (20+) with a childminder, provider or childminder agency who is registered with Ofsted (1 child only - 2 day minimum and 4 day maximum up to £50/day. Exceptions may be made and are dependent on individual circumstances and the availability of funds).

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.

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.

3.8 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. Learners awarded free meals are entitled to a free meal at a rate of £2.41 per day. Free meal topical and seasonal offers available dependent on need and availability of funds.

- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 Trips & visits in connection with courses.
- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 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.
- 3.13 UCAS registration, university interviews and open days.
- 3.14 Printing credits.
- 3.15 Vulnerable Bursary applicants may be able to receive an allowance of £30 per week in addition to the support listed in the bursary through the Vulnerable Bursary Fund for which specific criteria apply.
- 3.16 Exceptional circumstances requirements, including safeguarding issues for students of all ages.
- 3.17 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 in person at Student Services and 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.

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 monthly 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 Services Finance Team Leader (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 Services Finance Team Leader (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.