Bursary policy

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Associated documents:	
Links to:	
• Behaviour Policy • Attendance Policy	

Academy Transformation Trust Further Education

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Introduction

The aim of this document is to set out the policy for distribution of support funds to learners. The use of support funds is key to Academy Transformation Trust Further Education's (ATTFE) strategic objective to raise aspirations for learners and to assist those learners who otherwise may not be in a position to attend learning programmes.

ATTFE receives support funds for 16-19 learners and 19+ learners. 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.

1 Aim

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

2 Conditions

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

These funds should not be used to displace other types of support available to learners e.g. childcare costs which can be covered via Care to Learn, or transport costs that are met by the local authority.

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

- 16-19 learners funded through the16-19 Bursary
- 19+ learners who are not in receipt of an Advanced Learner Loan (e.g., their learning is funded through DFE) may be eligible for discretionary learner support fund which now forms part of the block adult allocation
- 19+ learners who are funded through an Advanced Learner Loan (ALL) are only eligible for support through the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary.

3 Types of support

There are the following types of support available:

- Vulnerable Bursary (16-19)
- Discretionary Bursary (16-19)
- Care to Learn Bursary (16-19)
- Discretionary Learner Support (19+)
- Advanced Learner Loan (ALL) Bursary (19+ ALL learners).

Free School Meals for 16-19-year-old learners are detailed in Appendix 1.

4 Changes to Arrangements

All arrangements are subject to change without notice if DFE criteria are amended. At all times the DFE 2026-27 rules will be the overriding criteria applied to learner support and all awards will be made subject to their regulations.

Section 1: 16-19 Learner Bursary

Introduction

This section sets out the financial support available through, and eligibility for, bursary funding for 16-19-year-old learners attending ATTFE study programme.

Aims

It is the policy of ATTFE to optimise the use of 16-19 Bursary funding to provide support to those young people facing the greatest financial barriers to continuing in education. ATTFE is committed to ensuring the fund is used to support financially disadvantaged young people to achieve their learning aims.

Criteria and Eligibility for the 16-19 Bursary Fund

There are three types of 16-19 bursaries:

1. **A vulnerable** bursary of up to £1,200 a year for young people in one of the defined vulnerable groups.

2. **Discretionary** bursaries that are awarded to meet individual needs, for example, transport, meals, books, equipment and curriculum-related activities.

3. **Care to Learn bursaries.** This covers childcare costs for students aged under 20 at the start of their course.

Vulnerable Bursary

Young people in the defined vulnerable groups are eligible for a bursary of up to £1,200 if their course lasts for 30 weeks or more and is full-time. This is assessed on each learner's individual needs in addition to meeting the eligibility criteria detailed below. This in turn means that the funding applied for, needs to reflect actual participation needs and this must be accurately evidenced. For returning learner's the requirement to assess yearly actual needs will still apply.

The defined **vulnerable** groups are:

- Young people in care.
- Young care leavers. The definition of a Care Leaver or 'former relevant child' according to the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 is: Any 18-21 year old (or until the end of an agreed programme of education or training) who has been looked

after for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14 and who is still looked after or recently left care. Therefore, any 16-19-year-old accessing learning at ATTFE will be classed as a care leaver if they were in care for 13 weeks (not necessarily consecutively) or more since the age of 14.

- Young people getting income support or the equivalent Universal Credit (UC) in their own right.
- Young people getting Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right.

If a learner becomes eligible during the year the payments will be pro-rata to the number of whole weeks remaining in the academic year.

No flat or fixed rate payments will be made without reflecting the actual costs that the learner faces and supporting evidence is produced.

Vulnerable bursaries will be pro-rata for any courses that are less than 30 weeks.

If a learner's situation changes during the academic year then their eligibility can be reassessed and the level of support offered may be increased, decreased or withdrawn completely. **There is a responsibility on learners to notify ATTFE to changes in their circumstances that might affect their continued eligibility for a bursary.**

Learners 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. ATTFE will implement all changes required by the DFE to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of the funding.

Care to Learn Bursary

This provides support with the cost of Ofsted-registered childcare for 16-19 aged learners. This may be available to any learner up to the age of 20.

Discretionary Bursary

Discretionary bursaries are targeted at learners most in need of financial help for items like transport, books, equipment and curriculum related activities.

Bursary applications are invited from eligible free school meal registered learners, subject to satisfactory attendance, behaviour and performance

or:

A learner's family is in receipt of means tested benefit.
A learner's family has a combined annual income of £30,450.00 or less excluding non-means tested benefits.

Eligibility

To be eligible to receive a bursary the learner must be aged:

Over 16
Under 19 at 31st August

Also:

Learners must meet the residency criteria set out by the DFE (a person who has been resident in the UK and Channel Islands for the three years preceding the 1st September).

If a learner reaches age 19 during their programme of study, they can continue to receive the bursary to the end of the academic year in which they become 19, or to the end of the programme of study, whichever is sooner.

Application process

The appropriate staff will review the application, supporting evidence and any other personal circumstantial evidence and notify the learners of the outcome within two weeks of receipt of the applications.

All study programme learners will be issued with an application form and strongly encouraged to apply.

No applications will be considered after October unless the financial or other relevant circumstances have changed, or unless the learner has been a 'late starter'. If a learner applies and is accepted for Bursary by October half-term, the payments will be backdated to the start of term. Any applications accepted after October half term will normally be backdated to the date of receipt of the application.

Appeals

The learner or their parent/guardian/carer have the right to appeal against the decision made about their application. The appeal should be in the form of a letter to the Head of Study Programmes who, with the Bursary Panel will consider and respond to the appeal within 5 working days of receipt.

Bursary Payments

Payments will be made to or for learners for eligible items/expenditure according to their assessed financial need, which will be different for individual learners depending upon their personal, family and domestic circumstances.

Eligible items and expenditure may include:

- Travel to and from the place of learning and/or associated placement/work experience
- Equipment and items needed for the learner's course

- Necessary clothing, kit or uniform
- Costs associated with securing onward positive destinations for a learner e.g., interview costs (travel) for progression work or learning
- Support for curriculum-related external trips and visits, and extra-curricular activity
- Hardship payments, assessed on a differentiated individual learner basis, if financial need and learner attendance, attitude and behaviour as referenced below meet requirements.

The attendance of learners potentially in receipt of Bursary support for eligible costs will be monitored to substantiate any payment. Attendance, notwithstanding exceptional circumstances or notified absence for good reason, must be 95%+ for all elements of the study programme including maths and English and where relevant enrichment, placement, work experience and any other elements.

ATTFE will provide free minibus transport wherever possible for its learners undertaking a course in another part of north Nottinghamshire away from the learner's home address.

For learners who live more than 3 miles from their place of study or placement where ATTFE minibus transport is not possible, public transport [e.g., bus ticket] travel costs per day of attendance will be reimbursed upon production of valid receipts regardless of circumstance. However, learners are expected to use the minibus services provided wherever possible and ATTFE will not normally reimburse other travel costs under these circumstances.

Bursary Panel

The panel will consist of the Head of Study Programmes, the Principal of Further Education, and a member of the ATTFE Governing Body.

General conditions

Applications to the 16-19 Bursaries will be accepted from August 2026 until October 2026.
Applications will not be accepted after this time unless a learner's circumstances or family financial circumstances have changed.

Learners must complete the relevant application form in full and provide evidence as relevant and as requested.

ATTFE reserves the right to request repayment of all or part of any payment received and/or return equipment provided if a learner withdraws from their course.

Where a learner's circumstances change in-year and they become eligible as a vulnerable learner, they may receive a pro-rata amount of the vulnerable learner bursary, which will be from the date the learner became eligible to the end of the academic year.

At the Bursary Panel's discretion, the above criteria may be waived in the event of learners facing a unique financial barrier to learning. Each case will be considered individually, and further information may be required to support the application. Where a learner is enrolled on a course of less than 30 weeks, the Vulnerable Bursary will be adjusted to an appropriate pro-rata amount.

Payments

Where expenditure or cost is reimbursed to a learner, this will be paid by BACS directly into the learner's bank account. Wherever possible ATTFE will make purchases (e.g., kit/equipment/clothing/uniform) on behalf of the learner through its own purchasing system, using the Bursary funding to do so.

Good attendance by learners is a condition of eligibility for Bursary support. Learners will need authorised absence letters or doctor's notes to account for any missed attendance. Payment is also subject to satisfactory behaviour, attitude to learning, participation in class and learning activities, and completion of classwork and homework.

SECTION 2: Advanced Learner Loan (ALL) Bursary

Introduction

The ALL Bursary is available to learners aged 19+ who are on a Level 3+ courses that are funded by a loan from the Student Loans Company (SLC).

Eligibility

Learners may apply if their household income falls within the range as shown below.

Household Income (including benefits)	Percentage of approved additional costs to be paid	Payment per term	Minimum attendance required
Less than £ 33,000.00	100%	£370	85%
£ 33,000.01 – £ 39,999.99	50%	£160	85%
£ 40,000.00 and above	25%	NIL	Not applicable

Payment

Payments will be made to the learner's bank account directly by BACS transfer as shown above.

Applications

Learners should apply using the application form provided and provide in full all information and supporting evidence that is requested.

Applications for childcare support through the ALL Bursary will be assessed separately. In usual circumstances, where childcare support is approved the full cost will be met for the first child supported, and 50% of the cost for 2nd and subsequent children. In usual circumstances, learners who receive childcare cost support will not also receive the personal Bursary payment as above.

ATTFE cannot consider, approve or make payments for any ALL Bursary application until the SLC has formally approved the learner's loan application. In usual circumstances, payment of the Bursary can only be made from the date of loan approval by the SLC.

SECTION 3: Discretionary Learner Support (dLS)

dLS is available to support learners aged 19+ on courses funded through direct allocation to ATTFE.

dLS support can cover the cost of co-funded course fees (e.g., the learner's contribution); travel; books, materials and resources; examination and assessment fees; childcare; and other elements.

If a learner wishes to claim dLS to cover their co-funded fee contribution, they will need to indicate this on ATTFE's enrolment form at Section F: Assessment of Fees, as unable to cover the tuition fees for their course and wishing to apply for discretionary learner support for this (last tick box on Adult Enrolment Form).

dLS is designed to support learners who are experiencing identified financial hardship and every application will be considered on an individual basis.

dLS payments are not a personal 'Bursary' but valid costs as above will be reimbursed to eligible learners on production of receipts/evidence of expenditure.

dLS contributions towards course fee costs will be based upon an assessment of the learner's financial situation to determine that financial support is required.

dLS can contribute towards the co-funded element of a learner's course fees, if a learner is not fully funded under the Funding Guidance from time to time in force. This applies if an individual learner's annual income is less than £30,450.00 per annum based on self-certification of this circumstance.

Appendix 1

Free School Meals for 16-19-year-old learners

FE learners aged 16-19 are entitled to a Free School Meal (FSM) on each day of their attendance at ATTFE, or on placement/work experience. Eligible learners who become 19 years old during their study will continue to receive FSM until the end of their course. Learners aged 19-24 with Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are eligible for FSM.

Payment

Wherever possible ATTFE will provide a Free School Meal, up to the value of £3.20 per day of attendance, on its premises.

Eligibility

Free meals in further education defines disadvantage as students being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits.

- Universal Credit
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

A student is only eligible to receive a free meal when they, or a responsible adult on their behalf, have made a successful application to the college.

Households in receipt of Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or the guarantee element of Pension Credit may also be entitled to a free school meal.