

This policy has undergone an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA). This process considered the discriminatory or negative consequences for a particular group or sector of the community on the grounds of race, disability, gender, age, religion and belief and sexual orientation. The outcome of this EQIA is that there are no negative consequences in the case of this policy.

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## 1. SUMMARY

Shrewsbury Colleges Group recognises that the Student Bursary and Hardship Fund has an important role to play in removing barriers for some students accessing and completing further education courses. It is the aim of the College to use funds to make the maximum impact on recruitment, attendance, retention, achievement and success rates.

The fund will be distributed in a consistent and transparent way and in accordance with the guidance issued by the Education, Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

The Bursary is intended to help with the financial hardship needs of individual young people studying a programme at College. Awards from the Bursary will be used towards essential course related costs such as travel, meals at College, equipment, trips and other costs associated with learning.

Discretionary and Hardship awards will be subject to sufficient funds being available.

## 2. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

- The bursary payment is subject to attendance, punctuality and behaviour. Attendance should normally be at a minimum of 90%. Extenuating circumstances that are affecting attendance will, however, be taken into account.
- The bursary should be applied fairly and consistently.
- The process must be easily understood and accessible to young people. Tutors will provide an overview of the process to full time students and all students will be able to see Student Services staff for a one to one interview if required. The Student Bursary and Hardship Fund will be publicised via Student Services information booklets and the website.
- The process should identify eligible students in a timely fashion.
- There is a commitment to ensuring bursary funds allocated to the College are fully distributed in order to support as many students as possible, however, budgets are provided by the ESFA, and therefore, the college can only make payment if there is sufficient funds.

## 3. GENERAL ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible to apply for the Student Bursary and Hardship Fund students must be:

- Enrolled on a college which is NOT part of a government training scheme
- Aged 16 years or over
- A “home” student, i.e. having been ‘ordinarily resident’ in the British Isles or European Union for purposes other than education for 3 years prior to the commencement of the course

- In one or more of the priority groups in section 4.1 or live in a household where the income is below thresholds set annually by the College. (Details of the income thresholds can be found in section 8 page 7).
- Maintaining satisfactory attendance and progress in the professional judgement of the teacher.

Students who are resident in Wales should apply to Student Finance Wales if they believe they are eligible for Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) or Adult Learning Grant (ALG). Students who are eligible for EMA or ALG may be eligible for help with free college meals from the Student Bursary and Hardship Funds also, so can apply for the full bursary. Vulnerable Bursary students who live in Wales cannot apply for the free college meals

#### 4. THE BURSARY AND HARDSHIP FUND HAS FOUR KEY ELEMENTS

##### 1. **Vulnerable Bursaries are available for up to £1200 a year for students aged 16 to 18 (at the start of the academic year) who are:**

- Young people in care
- care leavers
- on income support (Income support is paid to young people such as teenage parents, teenagers living away from their parents and young people whose parents have died.)
- disabled young people in receipt of both Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- In receipt of Universal Credit in their own right.

Each individual student will be awarded payments based on their individual needs up to the value of £1,200 per academic year.

Each student will have their entitlement confirmed in a letter from student services once the application has been reviewed.

The number of claimed free college meals will be deducted from fortnightly payments.

Payments will be linked to attendance, achievement and behaviour.

##### 2. **16 -18 Discretionary Bursaries (Awarded to students with a household income of £16,190 or less)**

Can be awarded to any student aged 16 to 18 (at the start of the academic year) who face genuine financial barriers to staying on in education and training to help with costs such as transport, meals at College and other course related costs. (Discretionary bursaries can be awarded to students in receipt of EMA, if they don't live in Wales unless there are exceptional circumstances

### 3. 19+ Discretionary Bursaries

Provide support for students aged 19 and over at the start of the academic year (who are not eligible to apply for a 19+ loan – see below) who face genuine financial barriers to completing their course, including meals. The funding is provided to increase access, retention and improve achievement.

For students who are on courses that are fully funded or partially funded by the ESFA, help may be provided towards childcare, transport costs, or other welfare payments.

### 4. 19+ Loan Bursary Funds (Awarded to students with a household income of £21,000 or less who have successfully received a 19+ advanced learner loan)

Provide help towards childcare and travel for students aged 19 and over who are eligible to apply for a 19+ loan to cover their tuition fees (i.e. those who are enrolling on a level 3 or 4 qualification).

If a student is eligible to apply for a 19+ loan but chooses not to (i.e. they fund their own tuition fees) they will NOT be eligible to apply for help from the 19+ Loan Bursary Fund. The student must have a loans letter before any payments can be made.

For students who are on courses that are fully funded by the ESFA (and are therefore not eligible to apply for a 19+ loan) they may apply to the 19+ Hardship Fund for help with transport and childcare costs.

## 5. PROCEDURES

### All categories (i.e. Vulnerable Groups Bursary, Discretionary and 19+ Loan Bursary Awards)

- Applications should ideally be submitted using the on-line form accessed from the college website. If this is not possible, paper forms are available from Student Services, and on the College website.
- Promotion of the fund will be carried out in a number of ways to ensure the maximum number of students who need help are identified:
  - For full time courses, application forms and a link to the online application process will be made available to applicants who have received a conditional offer
  - The College will publicise the availability of the funds during induction and also to students who start their courses late
  - Teachers will identify students who experience a change in circumstances during the year that has resulted in them experiencing financial hardship

- For part time courses, the fund will be publicised when the student enrolls.
- 16 -18 Discretionary, 19+ Discretionary, and 19+ loan bursary awards will be subject to sufficient funds being available.
- Applicants must provide evidence as detailed on the bursary application form.
- The application cannot be assessed until ALL the required evidence has been submitted.
- Students can track the progress of their application through pro portal if they have submitted an on line application
- Applications will be prioritised in accordance with ESFA guidance. Each application for a bursary is judged on the basis of 'relative financial need'<sup>1</sup> and not all applications will be successful. Details of the estimated total allocation of funds for each applicant will be entered onto a database that analyses the applicants' data per the ESFA Return requirements. The estimated total allocation of funds will be monitored continuously while applications are being processed to ensure the most effective use of funds.

## 6. ASSESSMENT AND AWARDS

### Assessment

- With the exception of Vulnerable Groups Bursary, awards will be determined based on the set household income levels, please see page 8/9.
- The application will be assessed by a member of the Student Services team; online applications, the assessment form will be scanned and saved to the applicants' profile on REMS. For paper applications the outcome is recorded on an assessment form, which is then attached to the application form and scanned to REMS which is a secure electronic record system. All paper evidence is destroyed
- Applicants will be notified of the decision by email for an online application and in writing for a paper application
- Applicants may appeal against the decision. See page 11.

## 7. AWARDS

### Vulnerable Groups Bursaries

**A maximum payment of £1200 can be allocated per academic year. This does not mean applicants will receive the maximum amount. Payments will reflect individual circumstances. Payments will be made where a student's course runs for more than 33 weeks and being classed as a full time course. For shorter courses or if the course is classed as part time, a pro rata amount will be calculated.**

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<sup>1</sup> Relative financial need is calculated by setting income thresholds for the household the applicant lives in. However exceptional and changed financial circumstances which are impacting the student's ability to complete their course successfully will be taken into account.

The award payments will be divided into 19 equal payments which will usually be paid fortnightly throughout the academic year. (The payment schedule may be adjusted during the holiday periods)

In addition to the Vulnerable Groups Bursary students can also ask Student Services to:

- Pay for their travel passes (The College bus route will be awarded where one is available, and if not a Shropshire Council subsidised travel pass, Arriva Student Saver or other provider will be awarded).
- To pay for meals during the college day as applicable to eligibility. Pay a contribution towards course related trips, Kit and uniform.

**8. DISCRETIONARY BURSARIES (STUDENTS AGED 16-18)**

<b>Expense</b>	<b>Household income £26,000 and below</b>	
Travel (for students who live more than 2.5 miles walking distance from the College only).	<p>Shrewsbury Colleges Group has several buses covering different locations and students who use these buses will have their travel paid in full.</p> <p>Where a student is not on a college bus route, other travel via Shropshire Council subsidised passes, Arriva Student Saver, Arriva Trains, other local providers will be considered and a contribution may be made. Only in <b>exceptional</b> circumstances will consideration be given to funding other forms of travel.</p>	
Meals at College	Meal from College to the value of £3.20 plus breakfast club if required for all days the student is in College.	
<b>Expense</b>	<b>Household income £16,190 and below</b>	<b>Household income between £16,190 and £26,000</b>
Kit/Uniform	100% of the cost of purchasing mandatory kit and uniforms	50% of the cost of purchasing mandatory kit and uniforms
Trips (Mandatory Course Trips)	100% of the cost of the trip Deposit only paid for residential trips	50% of the cost of the trip, individual requests for 100% payment will be considered on a case by case basis Deposit only paid for residential trips
University Open Days, Interviews and Auditions	100% of the most cost effective travel	100% of most cost effective travel
Additional Exceptional Costs	These will be considered on an individual basis	These will be considered on an individual basis

**9. DISCRETIONARY BURSARIES AND LOAN BURSARIES (STUDENTS AGED 19+)**

<b>Expense</b>	<b>Household income £21,000 and below</b>	
Travel (for students who live more than 2.5 miles walking distance from the College only).	Shrewsbury Colleges Group has several buses covering different locations and students who use these buses will have their travel paid in full. Arriva Student Saver, Arriva Trains, other local providers will be considered and a contribution may be made. Only in exceptional circumstances will consideration be given to funding other forms of travel.	
Childcare	Students aged 20 and over can apply for help with childcare for up to 2 children. Normally 100% of the costs up to a maximum of £160 per week per child will be awarded from the Student Bursary and Hardship Fund. Childcare providers will be notified by email of levels of support, payment terms and term dates. Only payable for days attendance at college and placements.	
Meals at College	Meal from College to the value of £3.20 plus breakfast club if required for all days the student is in College.	
<b>Expense</b>	<b>Household income £16,190 and below</b>	<b>Household income between £16,190 and £21,000</b>
<b>Kit/Uniform</b>	<b>100% of the cost of purchasing mandatory kit and uniforms</b>	<b>50% of the cost of purchasing mandatory kit and uniforms</b>
Trips (Mandatory Course Trips)	100% of the cost of the trip Deposit only paid for residential trips	50% of the cost of the trip Deposit only paid for residential trips
University Open Days, Interviews and Auditions	100% of most cost effective travel	100% of most cost effective travel
Additional Exceptional Costs	These will be considered on an individual basis	These will be considered on an individual basis

## 10. 19+ DISCRETIONARY FUNDS

**Students aged 19+ who live in a household where the income is below £21,000 will be eligible to apply for help towards the following (Subject to government allocation):**

- 1. Travel.** Assistance will be given towards travel costs based on the most cost effective and practical method of travel to College. This will usually be in the form of travel passes for public transport. Only in **exceptional** circumstances will the funding of alternative methods of transport be considered. Where it has been agreed that it is appropriate to pay mileage expenses, these will be paid at a rate of 20p per mile. This rate will be reviewed annually.
- 2. Childcare.** Students aged 20 and over can apply for help with childcare for up to 2 children. Normally 100% of the costs up to a maximum of £160 per week per child will be awarded from the Student Bursary and Hardship Fund. Childcare providers will be notified by email of levels of support, payment terms and term dates.

### **For students who are not fully funded by the ESFA:**

- 1. Trips** – Each trip will be assessed on its relevance to the course. When the trip is approved for assistance, the level of contribution to be given will be determined based on the cost of the trip and the number of students eligible for help.<sup>2</sup>
- 2. Books, kit, uniform, equipment and materials.**  
For relevant **full** time courses students will be encouraged to apply to the Radbrook Foundation Charitable Trust for assistance<sup>3</sup>. Help may be given towards any remaining costs (i.e. after the amount awarded by the Foundation has been deducted) as follows:
  - For households with an income of £16,190 or less, 100% of the costs of mandatory books, kit, uniform, equipment and materials
  - For households with an income between £16,191 and £21,000 50% of the costs of mandatory books, kit, uniform, equipment and materials. Individuals can request student services to consider more in exceptional circumstances.
- 3. Fees, exam and registration costs.** Help may be given towards fees, exams and registrations for funded courses, subject to funds being available. However, only the first chargeable occurrence will be paid. Re-sit charges will be considered on an individual basis.

## 11. 19+ LOAN BURSARY FUND (Subject to change due to government allocations)

Students aged 19+ who are:

- In receipt of a 19+ loan to cover their level 3 or 4 qualification tuition fees and live in a household where the income is £21,000 or below will be eligible to apply for help towards the cost of childcare, (up to a maximum of £160 per child per week) for a maximum of 2 children.
- Travel will usually be in the form of travel passes for public transport. Only in **exceptional** circumstances will the funding of alternative methods of transport be considered. Where it has been agreed that it is appropriate to pay mileage expenses, these will be paid at a rate of 20p per mile. This rate will be reviewed regularly. Bursary funds will not be released until confirmation has been received that the student has their learner loan in place.

## 12. PAYMENT

- Payments will be made direct from Shrewsbury Colleges Group to a third party wherever possible. (e.g. bus passes, childcare and equipment).
- **Fortnightly** Vulnerable groups Bursary payments will be made by BACS transfer into student's bank account. Cash payments may be made if the student is unable to obtain a bank account.
- If students are eligible for free meals, they can collect a meal token from the Student Helpdesk at each campus.

### Payment Criteria

- Where attendance or behaviour proves to be unsatisfactory<sup>3</sup>, monies may be withheld. If attendance drops below 90% payments will require authorisation and confirmation of satisfactory academic progress from the Tutor and Student Services Team Leader.
- If students receive a warning or sanction under the formal disciplinary procedures future payments will be affected.
- If students have received financial assistance and leave before the completion of their course they may be required to repay all or part of the discretionary bursary.

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<sup>3</sup> Student Services will undertake an initial check of registers (including behaviour register markings) and also check the student's disciplinary record. Where they believe payment should be withheld due to attendance and behaviour issues, they will consult with the relevant Tutor or Student services Team Leader who may override the decision based on known mitigating circumstances.

### 13. Exceptions from standard levels

Exceptions from standard levels can apply when personal circumstances or academic need suggest that a higher level of support is required and this is supported by professional recommendations from tutors or external bodies. Bursary levels will be determined at the discretion of Student Services staff.

### 14. Appeals Procedure

- If the applicant does not agree with the panel's decision, they should give notice that they wish to appeal via the Student Services team.
- The applicant must give notice of their appeal within 10 working days from receipt of the original decision.
- The applicant will be asked to state the reasons for disagreeing with the decision and why it is unfair.
- A panel will be convened within 20 working days. The panel will consist of members from the Senior Leadership Team or College Management Team and the Student Services Team Leader.
- The applicant will be asked to attend a meeting of the panel and may wish to be accompanied by a friend / representative.
- The panel will review the action taken by Student Services in the original decision.
- The applicant will be notified of the panel's decision in writing within 5 working days.
- The decision of the panel will be final.

### 15. Linked Documents

This policy is followed in conjunction with:

*Student Conduct Policy*

*Prevent Strategy*

*Free School Meals Policy*

*Student Fitness to Study Policy*

*Safeguarding Policy*

*Quality Handbook*

*Looked After Young People Policy*