

DERBY COLLEGE GROUP POLICY



Student Financial Support Policy

Policy Number:	STS-004
Executive Owner:	Deputy CEO
Owning Strategy / Department:	Student Experience Strategy / Student Experience and Inclusion
Approval Board / Committee / Group:	Corporation/FRC/Leadership
User Group:	All DCG Student Services employees
Relevant To:	As above
Implementation Date:	May 2026
Approval Date:	May 2026
Review Period Start Date:	April 2027
Expiry Date (Next Review Date):	April 2027

Date:	May 2026
Originator:	AA/JC
Area:	Student Experience and Inclusion

POLICY – PROCEDURES – GUIDELINES – RELATED DOCUMENTS

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Policy Accountability and Implementation

Policy Title: Student Financial Support Policy
 Policy Author / Reviewers: Director of Finance
 Policy Implementation: Vice Principal – Student Experience and Inclusion
 Policy Monitoring and Compliance: Corporation
 Policy Review Timeline: Annual

Synopsis:

To support students to reduce the financial barriers that may prevent the participating in further education.

Policy Classification and Publication

Classification

- Essential Authority (EA)

Publication

- Intranet – Policy portal

Empowering/related legislative and/or authoritative references:

DFE/EMCCA Funding rules on adult education and apprenticeships
 DFE Funding rules 16-19 student funding

Impact Assessment reference: IA107 2014

Periodic Policy Review / Change History

Note: Please make it clear if change/review relates to procedures, guidelines and associated documents only or it is a rational for a new or substantive policy review

Version	Reviewed / Modified by:	Change History	Advisory committee / groups or specialists	Review / Meeting Date/s
V2	Head of Ilkeston and Student Support	Changed from Student Hardship Fund	Corporation	March 2012
V3	Head of Ilkeston and	All reference to the 24+ Learner Loan has been amended to Advanced Learner Loan	Corporation	July 2016

	Student Support			
V4	Head of Ilkeston and Student Support	<p>Amends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Learner' amended to 'student' Executive responsibilities updated to Deputy CEO – Strategy and Corporate services Introduction of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (DFE) in April 2017 which replaces the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA). All reference updated 	Corporation	July 2017
V5	Director of Services for Students	<p>Amends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsibilities around encouraging healthy eating and free school meals Section explaining new GDPR guidelines Job titles updated from Head of Ilkeston and Student Support to Director of Services for Students and Team Manager Student Support to Coordinator Student Support 	Corporation	July 2018
V6	Director of Services for Students	<p>Amends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated links to 2019/20 national policy guidance 	Corporation	September 2019
V7	Director of Services for Students	<p>Amends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated links to 2020/21 national policy guidance 'Guarantee' bursary updated to 'Vulnerable' bursary Inserted the following statement in the procedures document regarding COVID <p><i>NB Due to the current COVID pandemic and government guidelines regarding health and safety measures, the procedures may be adapted to ensure the safety of staff and students. For example, the face to face communication and events outlined in these procedures may be replaced with remote methods of communication. (pg1)</i></p> <p>Additional temporary measures have been put in place to support students whose timetables now include remote learning due to COVID-19, these include a set travel payment, and a set meal direct payment to eligible students. (pg.1)</p>	Deputy CEO Corporation	September 2020
V8	Director of Services for Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated links to 2021/22 national policy guidance Link to paper application forms replaced to link to online application form Responsibility for coordination and delivery of procedures changed from 'Student Financial Coordinator' to 'Student Financial Support and Wellbeing Team Manager' Changes made to Student Financial Support Guidelines to reflect increased threshold for eligibility in terms of household income and increased daily allowance for 	Deputy CEO Corporation	December 2021 January 2022

		<p>college meals in line with national increase in cost of living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes made to Student Financial Support Procedure to reflect transition from paper to online application process 		
V8.1	Director of Strategy, Policy and Planning <i>on behalf of</i> Director of Services for Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amendment to guideline only relating to financial income eligibility allowances increasing to £25,500. 	CFO	July 2022
V9	Director of Services for Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy Document section 11 – updated all gov.uk guidance document links to 2022-23 versions. Amended next expiry date to July 2023 so updated policy is in tandem with the academic year. Implementation date will be September 2023 Produced Guidelines for 2023-2024 to be approved in November 2022 and implemented September 2023. The earlier timeline has been introduced so that new eligibility criteria can be promoted to students applying for the academic year 2023-34. Two guidelines in operation now – 2022-23 guidelines and 2023-24 guidelines. The eligibility thresholds for 2023-24 academic year have been changed for 16-18 Discretionary Bursary, 19+ Student Support Fund and Advanced Learner Loans, to an income of under £31,000 net, to receive financial support for travel expenses or with net earnings less than £25,500 to receive for all other qualifying financial support. Previously net earnings of less than £25,500 for any financial support from these funds was they criteria. Added the line 'DCG reserves the right to change the eligibility income thresholds subject to the availability of funds' to the 2023-24 guidelines. 	CFO	September 2022
V10	Director of Services for Students	<p>Minor amends</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Updated links in the policy document in relation to 2023-24 national policy guidance documents (section 11) Student Financial Support Guidance Document amend– the following information has been added in the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary section (in accordance with government guidance document) <p><i>Current eligibility for free meals only requires a single check of household income for each phase of education (primary, secondary or 16 to 19). In making decisions about bursary awards, in accordance with government</i></p>	Director of Finance	September 2023

		<p>guidance, DCG can now exercise discretion as to whether checks are carried out annually or just once at the beginning of a student's study programme. Where DCG decides not to carry out annual checks of bursary fund eligibility, DCG will ensure a signed and dated (hard copy or electronic) self-declaration form is obtained from the student to confirm that their household circumstances has not changed.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Financial Support Procedure amend– the following information has been added; <p>Students applying for the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary, who are successful in their application for financial assistance, will continue to receive support with travel, meals on site, mandatory trips and course materials throughout their study programme without the necessity to reapply at the beginning of each academic year. They will be sent a short online form before the summer break to ask if they intend to return and to ask for confirmation that their financial situation hasn't changed. This will remain the case until they reach the age of 19, at which point they would need to apply for help from the 19+ support fund.</p>		
V11	Director of Finance	<p>Significant update to consolidate policy and guidelines into one document to include thresholds.</p> <p>Sections added.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eligibility (previously Guidelines) • GDPR (previously Guidelines) • Appeals Process (Previously Procedures) <p>Minor updates to eligibility, dates and associated links to applications and guidance updated to 2024-25 guidance.</p> <p>Updated to reflect revised management responsibilities following structure changes</p>		June 2024
V12	Director of Finance	<p>Updated to reflect latest published guidance</p> <p>Revised thresholds for Adult bursaries – all aligned to household income below £25,000</p> <p>Reference to ESFA replaced with DfE</p>	FRC Corporation	12 May 2025 22 May 2025
V13	CFO Vice Principal: Student Experience and Inclusion	<p>General update of job roles and terminology</p> <p>Included a section under discretionary funds – specifically relating to travel</p> <p>Removed the section on residential bursary</p> <p>Updated the value of funded college meal allowance from £4.20 to £4.25</p> <p>Updated to reflect change to procedure due to implementation of 'Pay My Student' system</p>	FRC Corporation	6 May 2026 21 May 2026

1. Policy Statement

Derby College Group (DCG) is committed to supporting students to reduce the financial barriers that may prevent students in participating in further education. DCG has used its allocation of student support funding to create a student support fund that will help with the costs associated with studying; this includes:

- The Vulnerable Bursary and Discretionary Bursary for students age 16-18
- Further Education Free Meals
- Adult Skills Support Funding for students age 19 and above.
- The Advanced Learner Loan Bursary for students aged 19 and above
- Care to Learn Scheme
- DCG is also committed to providing information, advice and guidance to support students' access and apply for centrally allocated funding.

2. Definitions

Student Support Funding is allocated by DCG to provide financial help for students whose access to, or completion of education, is inhibited by financial constraints or barriers.

3. Principles

The Student Financial Support Funds must be administered in accordance with specifications laid down in the DFE guidance documents (see appendix). The administration of the funds must take into account any changes outlined in the guidance and implement them accordingly. Some areas of funding are ring-fenced and can only be used for those purposes, whereas other categories can have funds vired between them. Each academic year the Student Support Funds will be renewed and at the end of each year, any unspent funds may be returned to the relevant funding body.

- All students will have the opportunity to apply for the Student Support Fund. Funding is publicised through a range of sources both written and verbal.
- Student support funding/bursary is a finite fund and is distributed on a first come first served basis, however the Vulnerable Bursary and Further Education Free Meals funding is awarded according to need.
- As long as students still meet the eligibility criteria, and funding is available, they will receive support for the duration of their course.

- Student support funds/bursary must be used to help pay for course related costs, such as books, equipment, trips and travel.
- Students have the right to appeal decisions regarding student support applications.
- There are robust measures in place to actively manage the risk of fraud, documentation will be required as proof when applying for a bursary. Students are required to provide their own bank account details where possible.
- DCG reserves the right to withhold payments if students withdraw early from their course, whatever the reason.
- Students are required to meet specific levels of attendance and behaviour in order to continue to receive the support fund/bursary. Part of any financial assistance provided may be repayable in these circumstances. DCG can determine the amount requested to be repaid.
- Support is only available to students who have no outstanding debt with DCG.

4. Scope and Limitations

The Student Support Funds are available to 16-18 and 19+ students enrolled on Further Education courses full-time or part-time, starting from the beginning of the academic year in September, who meet the required eligibility criteria.

If the eligibility criteria are met, students will receive financial support to help pay for course related costs such as, books, equipment, trips and travel where appropriate. DCG will, wherever possible, make these payments on the student's behalf.

Further Education Free Meals Funding has a set eligibility criterion. This is available for students aged 16-18 years old at the start of their course or students aged 19-24 years old with an Education, Health and Care Plan. Support for meals is fixed at £4.25 per day per student from this fund and subject to regular review.

The Care to Learn Fund is a childcare support scheme which is targeted at students up to 19 years of age. The fund supports the financial cost of childcare provision up to a maximum weekly allowance.

5. Eligibility

The eligibility criteria for Student Support Funds are set in the DFE guidance documents, or as defined and approved by DCG in this policy. In summary they are as follows;

16-18 Discretionary Bursary

To qualify for support, students aged 16-18 on 31st August 2026, or aged 19-24 and with an Education, Health and Care Plan must meet the residency requirements outlined in the DFE guidance document and cannot be waged apprentices, prisoners on day release or overseas students. Students also need to meet the income criteria, as follows:

- A dependant of someone on Income support
- A dependant of someone on Jobseeker's allowance or Employment Support Allowance
- A dependant of someone claiming the guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- A dependant of someone whose household income is under £31,000 net, to receive financial support for travel expenses or with net earnings less than £25,000 to receive for all other qualifying financial support (For example, course expenses, trips, equipment etc)
- Can demonstrate that they are currently facing financial hardship with household income under £31,000 net, to receive financial support for travel expenses or with net earnings less than £25,000 to receive for all other qualifying financial support. (For example, course expenses, trips, equipment etc)
- A dependant of someone in receipt of Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa

Travel

Students may be eligible for travel support if they meet the household criteria and live more than 1.5 miles from the college which they are studying (measured using google maps walking direction). Should a bus pass be lost there will be a replacement fee of £15.00. Should a train pass be lost, the college is unable to replace this, and it should be reported as lost to National Rail – following their policies.

Travel support may be provided in the form of a bus pass or train warrant. Students are encouraged to apply for a b-line card, which are free and gives students £1.50 maximum single fares on local buses throughout Derby and Derbyshire [see website for more information: [b_line_discount_travel_card - Derbyshire County Council](#)]

Free College Meals

Current eligibility for free meals only requires a single check of household income for each phase of education (primary, secondary or 16 to 19). In making decisions about bursary awards, in accordance with government guidance, DCG can now exercise discretion as to whether checks are carried out annually or just once at the beginning of a student's study programme. Where DCG decides not to carry out annual checks of bursary fund eligibility, DCG will ensure a signed and dated (hard copy or electronic) self-declaration form is obtained from the student to confirm that their household circumstances have not changed.

This funding is discretionary and finite, and is allocated on a first come, first served basis.

DCG reserves the right to change the eligibility income thresholds subject to the availability of funds.

Financial assistance for 'in learning' support can be provided where no alternative source of funding can be accessed in order to ensure necessary adjustments are made under the Equality Act.

Further Education Free Meals

To be eligible for this support the student needs to be:

- Aged 16-18 on 31st August 2026, or aged 19-24 with an Education, Health and Care Plan
- Resident in the UK
- Undertaking an eligible course recognised by the DFE
- Meet the financial eligibility criteria

The income criteria are that the student or their household be in receipt of the following:

- Income Support
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under part IV of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (not working Tax credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit.
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa.

The following groups of students are not eligible for Free Meals:

students aged between 14 and 16 as of the 31st August 2026

students aged 19 or over at the start of their study programme, unless they have an EHCP

apprentices, including those with an EHCP

16-18 Vulnerable Bursary of up to £1,200 a year

To qualify for support, students must be aged 16 to 18 and meet the residency requirements outlined in the DFE guidance document and cannot be waged apprentices, prisoners on day release or overseas students.

The vulnerable bursary provides funding of **up to £1,200 per year**, based on individual financial need and attendance. The maximum amount is **not an automatic entitlement**.

Students must be aged 16-18, and meet the following criteria:

- In Care /A Care Leaver
- In receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit (in the student's own name) and financially supporting themselves
- A student in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and also Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit in the student's own name

The full Vulnerable Bursary payment is based on a course lasting a minimum of 30 weeks in the Academic Year. If a student's course is less than 30 weeks, or they apply

part way through the academic year, a pro-rated figure will be paid. All payments are discretionary depending on attendance. This funding is available to access at any point through the Academic year.

19+ Adult Skills Student Support Fund

To qualify for support, students aged 19 and above must meet the residency requirements outlined in the DFE guidance document and cannot be waged apprentices, prisoners on day release or overseas students and must be enrolled on a course which is being funded or co-funded from the Adult Skills Fund. Students also need to meet the income criteria, as follows:

- In receipt of Income Support
- In receipt of Job Seekers Allowance
- In receipt of Employment Support Allowance
- Supported under part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act, and legally resident in the UK for 6 months
- In receipt of the guaranteed element of the State Pension
- Have an income of under £25,000 annual gross salary to receive financial support for travel and all other qualifying financial support.
- Can demonstrate that they are currently facing financial hardship.

This funding is discretionary and finite, and is allocated on a first come, first served basis.

DCG reserves the right to change the eligibility income thresholds subject to the availability of funds.

19+ Advanced Learner Loan Bursary

To qualify for support, students must have an advanced student loan agreed by the Student Loan Company and that has passed the liability point, and need to meet the income criteria, as follows:

- In receipt of Income Support
- In receipt of Job Seekers Allowance
- In receipt of Employment Support Allowance
- In receipt of the guaranteed element of the state pension

- Have an income of under £25,000 net, to receive financial support for travel expenses and other qualifying financial support
- Can demonstrate that they are facing financial hardship
- In receipt of Universal Credit with net earnings less than £7,400 p.a., to receive financial support for travel expenses and other qualifying financial support

DCG reserves the right to change the eligibility income thresholds subject to the availability of funds.

Care to Learn Scheme

To qualify for Care to Learn support the young parent must be under 20 years old on the date they start their study programme. Young parents who become 20 years old during their study programme can continue to receive funding until the end of that specific programme.

Student must be the main carer for the child (and meet criteria for age and residency); the student's study programme must have some direct public funding and their childcare provision must be registered with Ofsted. To receive C2L, the young parent, their education institution and their childcare provider must all meet the eligibility criteria in full.

Details of the scheme eligibility are available at <https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn>
Payments are made directly to the chosen childcare provider.

20+ Student Support Fund – childcare support

To qualify for support, students aged 20 and above must meet the residency requirements outlined in the DFE guidance document and cannot be waged apprentices, prisoners on day release or overseas students and must be enrolled on a course which is being funded or co-funded from the Adult Skills Fund. Students also need to meet the income criteria, as follows:

- In receipt of Income Support
- In receipt of Job Seekers Allowance
- In receipt of Employment Support Allowance
- Supported under part 6 of the Immigration and Asylum Act, and legally resident in the UK for 6 months

- In receipt of Guarantee element of the State Pension
- Have a household income of £25,000 gross annual income
- Can demonstrate that they are currently facing financial hardship
- In receipt of Universal Credit with gross annual earnings less than £7,400 pa

Students must also provide evidence that they have financial responsibility for the child for whom they are claiming financial support, such as a birth certificate, passport or other government documentation.

All childcare providers must be OFSTED registered and will be requested to provide their OFSTED registration number. Any children supported must first access National Childcare Funding, as appropriate.

This funding is discretionary and finite, and is allocated on a first come, first served basis. **DCG reserves the right to change the eligibility income thresholds subject to the availability of funds.**

6. Responsibilities

The Vice Principal of Student Experience and Inclusion is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of the arrangements covered by this Policy.

The Head of Student Development, Pastoral and Financial Support Manager and the Student Financial Support Team are responsible for the co-ordination and delivery of the procedures covered by this Policy.

7. Implementation Arrangements

All new employees are made aware of the Policy and procedures during the formal employee induction process. Updated and amended procedures are disseminated and reinforced in training sessions and team meetings.

Employees and students have access to this Policy on the DCG intranet.

DCG will continue to work with internal and external partners to ensure that information, advice and guidance regarding the Student Support Fund is holistic and

made available to prospective and current students including students accessing off site programmes of study.

8. Monitoring and Review

The Student Financial Support Policy is subject to regular review. The Policy and the implementation arrangements which underpin it will be formally reviewed on an annual basis. This review will take into account the views of employees and students and relevant local and national planning and guidance documents. DCG reserves the right to make whatever changes it deems appropriate.

Managing the risk of fraud

It is a requirement to actively manage the Fund as securely as possible, and to take measures to reduce the risk of fraud. These include:

- Means testing – either internally, or by checking appropriate government guidance documents.
- Involvement of programme tutors and databases to confirm attendance.
- Involving the Senior Management Team/Governors in ensuring that robust arrangements are in place.
- Following established college financial regulations.
- Ensuring that students in receipt of childcare funding can prove that they are the main carer for the child requiring support.
- Full regular internal and external audits, and random checks to identify any areas of concern.
- Provision of a full annual report of spending patterns.
- Establishing that there is specific financial need for each student applying for support.

9. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Guidelines

GDPR is retained in domestic law as the UK GDPR and sits alongside the Data Protection Act 2018. This legislation outlines the requirements on data protection and privacy for individuals within the UK. All personal data collected in regulation to Student Financial Support will be stored in accordance with the GDPR regulations.

10. Appeals

Students who do not agree with the decision can access the appeals process by submitting a written request to the Deputy CEO, DCG, Roundhouse Road, Pride Park Derby DE24 8JE.

The request will be considered by the Student Support Fund Appeals Panel which is carried out by the Vice Principal of Student Experience and Inclusion and the Pastoral and Financial Support Manager who will not have been involved with the initial assessment.

In all cases the student will receive a decision within 10 days of the appeal submission. If the student, then considers that they have been unfairly treated by the DCG Appeals Panel a separate appeal can then be made to the Governors.

11. Procedures

Application guidance and associated procedures can be found in the [Student Financial Support Procedure](#) document.

12. Templates / Forms

The Student Financial Support Application Form is now online, and can be accessed through Pay My Student by following this link: [Derby College Online Student Portal](#)

13. Related Documents

[16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

[Free meals in further education funded institutions guide: academic year 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

[Care to Learn academic year 2025 to 2026: conditions of grant funding - GOV.UK](#)

[Adult education and skills funding allocation guidance: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)