

## DOCUMENT DETAILS

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Summary	The purpose of this document is to set out the Policy in relation to the Discretionary Bursary Funds for the academic year 2025/26		

## DOCUMENT CONSULTATION & APPROVAL

Consultation person / body	Date passed
Learning & Quality Committee	16.06.25

Approval body	Date approved
Board	02.07.25

## IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A significant negative impact has been identified in the following area and a full impact assessment / risk assessment is available.

Equality & diversity	No
GDPR	No
Health & safety	No
Safeguarding	No

Friendly version of policy available	No
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## POLICY CHANGES

Key updates	Impact	Section reference
Data sharing agreement with Nottingham City & County Councils to establish FSM eligibility for their students leaving year 11.	Establish eligibility, have support in place earlier, supporting retention.	3
Payment of childcare term time uplift	Remove the barrier of obtaining a childcare place required to study at college	5
Revision of low income thresholds	Raised low income threshold making more students eligible for support	3 and 4

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Nottingham College receives funds from the government discretionary learner support fund for student financial support / bursaries. The discretionary learner support fund will be referred to as 'the fund' within this document. These funds are there to help students overcome financial barriers that might prevent or make it difficult for them to study, and to make sure that everybody can learn. Any student on an eligible course can apply for student finance support and the college will assess an application based on the eligibility requirements set out in section 6.

1.2 Support is available to students studying in college who meet the eligibility criteria however, all support is subject to funds being available and it is not therefore an entitlement. The bursaries are not usually provided in cash payments but in terms of goods or services e.g. travel pass, equipment.

### PRIORITY GROUPS

Priority Group	Eligibility	Potential Support (all subject to funds being available.)
16-19yrs	Household income less than £35K	Awards for travel if live more than 1.5 miles from campus Equipment Contribution towards the cost of meals if funds allow
16-19yrs free college meals	Specific means tested benefit	Minimum of £2.58 (Government allocation) per timetabled day towards the cost of a meal
16-19yrs & vulnerable	In care / leaving care Universal Credit in student's own name	Vulnerable student bursary awards for travel Equipment Contribution to meals There is no automatic entitlement to £1,200, the amount of support will be linked to the need of the individual student.
Young carers	16-19 flagged young carer	Discretionary if travel mileage is under 1.5 miles from campus. Access to additional meal support if required
19+yrs	Household income less than £40K	Awards for travel if live more than 1.5 miles from campus Equipment Childcare Contribution to meals if funds allow

1.3 Awards made to students are **NOT** intended to cover living costs but to support with items required for college or to support them to access and participate in learning fully.

1.4 The college will use its discretion in making awards to all students so that it can best support needs and circumstances. Support will be targeted at barriers to coming to college such as travel costs, meal support, books and equipment and for adult students aged 20 and over this will include childcare costs too.

1.5 The college can only support students from the advanced learner loan bursary if they have applied for and have used an advanced learner loan (to meet tuition fee costs), approved by the Student Loan Company and meet the income threshold. This applies now to most adult students studying on level 3, 4, 5 or 6 FE courses.

1.6 Students who require PPE equipment to enable them to start attending practical classes may be prioritised for assessment first; students will not be able to enter workshops without this equipment.

## **2. GENERAL ELIGIBILITY**

2.1 These government documents can be downloaded from the websites (updated periodically) at: [16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules-2025-to-2026#Learner_support)  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules-2025-to-2026#Learner\\_support](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules-2025-to-2026#Learner_support)

2.2 The college can usually only support adult asylum seekers with a travel pass, by paying for books or equipment on their behalf, with meal support loaded onto the student ID card or supermarket vouchers, or with payments for childcare made directly to a childcare provider. There may be limited circumstances where the college is allowed to give these students cash payments as directed by the government.

2.3 Support can only be considered for any student, regardless of their priority group, if they are enrolled onto an appropriately funded course.

2.4 The college will consider any other sources of funding that students might be in receipt of when assessing support needs (e.g., the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or childcare support from tax credits).

2.5 Students will only be supported by the advanced learner loan bursary if they have an advanced learner loan approved by the Student Loan Company (studying a level 3, 4, 5 and 6 programme) where appropriate.

2.6 Students aged 19 or over on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025 may be eligible to apply for continual support from the fund (free college meals) if:

- They are continuing a programme of study they began when they were aged 16 to 18. OR
- They have an education health and care plan (EHCP) in place.

2.7 The college is unable to support 19+ students who live within a devolved authority of the UK. A list of the devolved areas can be issued upon request: [Complete ASF postcode dataset - GOV.UK](#)

## **3. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

3.1 Where a 16–18-year-old student has progressed from 2024-25 study programme and previously submitted correct income evidence, they are not required to provide this information again for the 2025-26 application cycle.

3.2 A data sharing agreement exists between the college and the local council. This enables access where applicable to data that the college can cross-reference to help support a seamless process.

- 3.3 Support is based on an income assessment and a student's household income should be less than £35,000 gross for the tax year up to 5<sup>th</sup> April 2025 (for 16-19 study programme).
- 3.4 Students will be required to provide parent / carer / partner / own income evidence. The following list shows examples of acceptable evidence but is not an exhaustive list:
- Tax credit award notice for the current year (2025-26) showing the income for 2024-2025.
  - Benefit evidence (dated no more than six months prior to the application date if applying in July or August, or three months if applying in September onwards). For Universal Credit, a recent full statement not just a summary is required.
  - Recent pay slips or P60 from April 2025.
  - An official letter from an employer stating gross salary on company letter headed paper.
  - Other relevant income evidence.
  - If circumstances change mid-year, an application can be reassessed on production of up-to-date income evidence.
- 3.5 Students applying for childcare support will need to show evidence proving guardianship such as a child benefit letter showing the student's and the child(ren)'s name, or the tax credit award notice or birth certificate / passport or Home Office documents.
- 3.6 Students aged 16-19 who fall into one of the vulnerable student bursary groups will need to show appropriate evidence such as:
- A letter setting out the benefit to which the student is entitled e.g., Income Support, Universal Credit, Employment and Support Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, or Personal Independence Payment.
  - For students in receipt of Universal Credit, they must also provide a document such as a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a Child Benefit receipt, children's birth certificates or utility bills.
  - Written confirmation (official email is acceptable) of a student's current or previous looked after status from the local authority which looks after them or provides their leaving care services.
- 3.7 If a student is identified as 'vulnerable' they will be supported from the vulnerable student bursary (VSB) (pro rata for part time students). Travel costs will be supported from the VSB award, usually by way of an appropriate travel pass, in addition to essential course costs / meals as appropriate. Wherever possible, cash awards will not be made, but payment in kind will be offered such as a travel pass or equipment / kit for the course. If the student is not entitled to free college meals as they are in care / leaving care, they can choose to have meal voucher costs taken away from their bursary award.
- 3.6 Any trips planned by the curriculum that will add value to the college experience and where these are not provided in full by curriculum, the costs will be deducted from any remaining VSB awards should they attend the trip.
- 3.7 If students aged 19 (age as of 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2025) are living with parents and are in receipt of benefits such as Universal Credit, the college will still consider them to be independent, and will not require their parents' income details. Students aged 19 (age as of the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2025) or over and living with parents / carers, may also be assessed independently if they are working and receiving a wage. This wage must be a minimum of £7,800 (£150 p/w) income per annum. If they do not earn this amount or have no income at all, they will be assessed on their parents' / carer's income. By

providing their parents income details they are declaring that they have no earned income / benefits to use for assessment purposes.

- 3.8 Nottingham College will not include Disability Living Allowance / PIP when assessing income of disabled students (the mobility component, however, will be considered where an application for travel support is requested).
- 3.9 If students are applying as financially independent but have dependants, an additional £1,000 per dependant can be added to the income threshold. If they are dependent upon parents / carers, £1,000 extra per additional dependant can be added to the income threshold. At the college discretion this will be capped at a maximum of £3,000 however, if the student is assessed as independent but living with parents / carers there will be no allowance made for additional siblings living in the parental home.
- 3.10 Students may be eligible for funding from an external source e.g., funding through the Job Centre; the college expects students to access the external fund before any support from the fund will be considered. Funding which is provided by an external source e.g., DWP or mobility component of DLA, may be taken into consideration when making any financial award for travel. Where a student has a restricted concessionary travel pass, the college may offer additional support to cover this shortfall.
- 3.11 All awards are made subject to the availability of funds allocated at the start of the academic year by the funding agencies / government. Awards will be made on a first come first served basis and there is no guarantee that late applications will be funded. Students should aim to submit their application with full supporting evidence as close to their enrolment date as possible; applications will be assessed in date received order. There are therefore no guarantees that awards will continue to be made due to budget restrictions. The method of awards may also be adjusted, for example cash to travel tickets or canteen support to supermarket vouchers. Prior to commencing a course at Nottingham College, consideration should be given to whether students can continue to study if the funding is limited / capped.
- 3.12 Should the funding guidance change mid-year, this policy may need to be amended to reflect these changes. This may affect the support that is provided.
- 3.13 Appeals will be assessed by a panel, which may include student business managers, team leaders and assistant principal (student support). The student finance service will aim to complete 90% of appeals within 20 working days of receipt, when received by the department with all evidence. Appeals will be automatically rejected if students do not provide adequate evidence to support the appeal. The appeal panel's decision is final, and no further appeal will be accepted without additional evidence. Previous successful appeals do not guarantee continued support in subsequent years.
- 3.14 Where the student's appeal is for travel support, letters from GP surgeries without any supporting evidence from consultants or confirmation of hospital treatment will not normally be accepted as appeals evidence.
- 3.15 Any short-term mobility impairments will be looked at on an individual basis with the appropriate supporting documentation where appeals are for travel support.
- 3.16 The college reserves the right to request the return of any equipment or travel pass provided by the college should the student withdraw before the end of their programme or if it remains the property of the college such as a laptop. If a student does not return the item to college within a reasonable period, then they may be invoiced for the associated costs. If a student has been allocated a loan laptop, they will be required to

return it at the end of the agreed period. If the laptop is not returned it may affect their ability to receive support in future years. The student's details may also be passed onto a debt collector to retrieve the costs of replacing the laptop. Students will be expected to take appropriate care of their loan laptop. If a laptop is returned damaged or without its original charger the student may face disciplinary action. Any costs to repair / replace the laptop may be passed onto the student.

#### **4 COURSE FEES FOR 19+ STUDENTS**

- 4.1 Where other fee waivers do not apply and where a 19+ student enrol on a co-funded course and is eligible for student funding, with a household income of less than £40,000 gross, they will be entitled to full fee waiver on production of the required household income evidence and completed application. Support will be considered on a first come first served basis subject to budget restrictions, potential increased employability chances and barriers to progression.
- 4.2 To be eligible for this fee support, all other fee waiver options must be considered initially. These include, but are not restricted to, remittance on a means tested benefit (Income Support, Universal Credit, JSA), low-income student (earning threshold gross income of less than £25,000) and full level 1 or 2 remission. Any increase to the lower income earning threshold set by government will be mirrored in our own LSF fee remission thresholds.
- 4.3 The 19+ advanced loan bursary cannot be used to fund tuition fees. Students studying on a course of level 3 or above who are not aged 19-23 and not eligible for the first level 3 entitlement or Free Courses for Jobs fee waiver will not be supported with fees from the fund and instead will be required to self-fund or apply for the advanced learner loan for fee support.
- 4.4 The fund can be used to support exam and registrations fees and accreditation fees / professional membership fees and any fees / charges payable to external bodies for any student who is in financial hardship, and in receipt of means tested benefit or low income.

#### **5 COLLEGE RELATED CHILDCARE PROVISION**

- 5.1 Students will be expected to fully use all other forms of support available to them first before seeking support from the fund from college. They must provide proof of guardianship when requesting childcare. This can be in the form of a current child benefit letter, all pages of means tested benefit or tax credits award notice with the child's name included or birth certificate.
- 5.2 The college will consider applications in date received order and by place availability within the chosen setting. This will continue until funds have been exhausted.
- 5.3 Students should not place their child in any setting until confirmation has been received from the student finance team that funding has been approved. Students should make provision for the care of their child(ren) during the first few weeks or have the means to pay for the care in a setting during this time. If students are eligible for support, then reimbursement or payment to settings of any fees will take place once the application has been fully assessed. These costs will usually be backdated to the beginning of the term of which the childcare application was submitted. Any reimbursements or payments will be made in line with the bursary policy and availability of funds.

- 5.4 The fund will only support childcare for timetabled hours plus reasonable travel time to and from college; Google maps may be used to confirm the distance and travel time. The support will be 100% up to the capped levels. Any costs over the caps will be liable by the student.
- 5.5 Where the costs of the childcare provision are less than £10 per week the student will be required to pay these costs and claim a reimbursement. The receipts will need to be provided and will be cross referenced against college attendance before being processed for payment.
- 5.6 Children aged two (in some circumstances), three (the term following their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday) and four are entitled to up to 30 hours free childcare a week. Wherever possible we would expect students to use these hours while studying at college. Consideration will be taken as to how individual nursery settings distribute their nursery education funding.
- 5.7 The funds will contribute towards meals, snacks, drink, and any other charges that fall below the agreed childcare cap levels. Students would be liable for any charges over the agreed cap amounts. Any changes to sessions required must be notified in advance and in writing to the student finance team.
- 5.8 Nottingham College ordinarily places a limit on the amount of support it can provide each year for childcare costs. At the start of 2025-2026 there will be a cap of £80 per day, £50 per half day, £10 for breakfast club sessions, £15 for after school clubs' sessions and £8 per hour for childminders. The college reserves the right to review this cap in line with cost of living rises in the current financial climate so as not to disadvantage student's mid-way through their studies. These caps will be reviewed on an individual basis with each childcare provider and approved by the student business manager and team leader, this will always be considered within budget restrictions.
- 5.9 Students must provide details (school holiday calendar or letter / text from school) of any inset days or school holidays where childcare support will be required which fall outside of the college terms. This evidence is to be provided at the beginning of each term but ideally at the start of the academic year, so that funds can be allocated. If students do not provide this, the college cannot guarantee that funds will be available, due to budget restrictions. Additional childcare support may also be provided to cover exam and revision classes that fall outside of the usual timetable. This will need to be confirmed by the students eILP or curriculum staff.
- 5.10 Where childcare settings are charging additional charges such as retainers and registration fees & term time uplifts these may be considered if non-payment would result in a student not being able to attend or progress.

## **6 COLLEGE RELATED TRANSPORT COSTS**

- 6.1 Travel costs will only be considered if the student lives over 1.5 miles from the college campus at which they study. There may be some exceptions where support can be considered even though the student lives closer than 1.5 miles e.g., the student has a medical condition that makes walking difficult (evidence would be required as per appeal requirements) or the student is a carer and needs to be able to get home quickly (referrals should be made via wellbeing mentors).
- 6.2 Students who have a concessionary travel pass (covering all hours) will not normally be eligible for transport costs. Consideration for travel support may be given for example, where the student cannot use their concessionary pass before 9.30am, which would prevent them from attending a morning class.

- 6.3 The most cost-effective transport should be accessed by the student and in many cases the support provided will take the form of a pre purchased travel pass for timetabled days from one of the transport operators in the East Midlands area.
- 6.4 Students who choose to study at Nottingham College and travel from out of the local area may have their travel awards capped to reflect the local travel costs. Special consideration may be given to students studying courses that are unique to Nottingham College and not offered closer to the student's home address. Where a student's travel costs are higher than the local travel pass providers due to distance, the college will need to see evidence for e.g., current tenancy agreement or utility bill. The travel cost cap will be £1,500 for the academic year. The college is unable to support any student who lives within a devolved area. A list of the devolved areas can be provided upon request. At the time of this policy being written, the local councils were in consultation to decide whether Nottingham/shire will become a devolved area.
- 6.5 Payments for travel outside of travel pass routes will be made on a regular basis via bank automated credit system (BACS) directly into the student's bank account. This payment may clear at varying dates which is out of the college's control. The student must therefore be able to cover their travel costs until payment clears. Nottingham College reserves the right to award travel support in other forms, for example pre-paid travel tickets.
- 6.6 Students wishing to travel by car will be paid 45p per mile and 24p per mile for students using a moped. This support is likely to be capped at an agreed amount of £1,500.
- 6.7 Taxi support for students aged 19+ will be considered where there are mitigating circumstances. This support may come in the form of prepaid taxis on college account. Disability benefits will be taken into consideration before any awards are made. This support may also be capped and not cover the full cost of all journeys. It may also be offered on a temporary short-term basis.
- 6.8 Taxi support for students aged 16+18 will only be considered once the student has been declined special transport support from their local authority and followed their appeal processes. The student business manager / team leader will discuss any requests and additional support needs with the assistant principal for student support / LSA team leader prior to any support being offered. This support may also be capped and not cover the full cost of all journeys. It may also be offered on a temporary short-term basis. This support may come in the form of prepaid taxis on college account.
- 6.9 The car parks at Nottingham College incur a charge if used. These charges will not be covered by the fund. If any parking tickets are issued due to the student not displaying the appropriate permit and paying the relevant fee these will not be covered through the fund. The car parks that students can use at Nottingham College for a charge are ~~Highfields~~, Basford and Ruddington campuses.
- 6.10 The fund will not cover any penalty fines that students may receive by not paying the appropriate fare on public transport.
- 6.11 Nottingham College may consider funding travel costs under exceptional / emergency circumstances. Household income evidence should be sought but a discretionary award can be made in an emergency where this is not possible, for example safeguarding issue. A referral through a tutor or wellbeing mentor is also required. Referrals should be made to the student business manager / team leader. The support may be in the form of daily travel tickets, subject to availability and

arrangements with local transport providers, or food vouchers. The team have no access to petty cash.

## **7 COLLEGE RELATED EQUIPMENT**

- 7.1 These costs are supplied by each curriculum area via the head of faculty and will be approved by the student business manager / team leader prior to the start of the academic year for fair and consistent awards to be made.
- 7.2 Students who are required to purchase essential equipment to support their learning, should be notified at the application stage of the recruitment process. The college may charge for this equipment, which can be kept by the student; in some cases, the payment will be made to an external recommended supplier which has been sourced for best quality and price. The student may also have the option of borrowing the clothing or equipment free of charge if it is required to comply with health and safety regulations.
- 7.3 Where the curriculum staff have confirmed that a laptop would be beneficial for their courses, eligible students may be able to access a loan device daily to use in college. Students taking resitting maths GCSE will be prioritised. Students must state on the application form that they require access to a loan device.
- 7.4 Students may be required to pay for other non-learning associated costs (e.g. library fines). These costs are not eligible for support in the first instance. An appeal may be submitted to apply for help with these costs however, any funding would be subject to the availability of funds and the priorities for funding being fully met by the budget at the time of application.

## **8 TRIPS**

- 8.1 All trip support is subject to funds being available. Trips that are deemed an essential requirement to pass the course and have passed the relevant risk assessments will be covered by the fund for eligible students. Trips to foreign countries will not be supported if the same content can be found in England for a much cheaper cost.
- 8.2 Where a student is progressing onto university, the college may contribute towards the costs of travel to a maximum of £200. The proof required will be personal interview invitation letters / emails and valid travel documents. Support will only be provided for the student and not additional family members who may wish to attend the interview. The college can also support the cost of the UCAS admin fee for students who can evidence they have applied / how much they have paid.

## **9 FOOD SUPPORT**

- 9.1 For students aged 16-19, where the household income is from certain income-based benefits or is less than £16,190, and their family is in receipt of Child Tax Credits only or the student is receiving Universal Credit (applied after 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018) and has a household income of less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits received), they will be awarded a free meal for every timetabled day for the duration of their programme of study. Students will receive a minimum of £2.58 per day. This will be redeemed through the college ID card at the café till. Students who study at sites where there is not a college canteen will be provided support via an alternative method, e.g. supermarket vouchers. [Free meals in further education funded institutions guide: academic year 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#)

- 9.2 Students will be supported in an appropriate way for days they attend work placement, working with the work placement team to ensure this is in place.
- 9.3 The college will consider a contribution support for students who are not entitled to free college meals where funds are available. This is not mandatory support but a discretionary contribution. This may be issued via the college ID card system at the café tills or supermarket vouchers.

## **10 INDUSTRY PLACEMENTS FOR 16–19 YEAR OLDS**

- 10.1 For students who are expected to attend an industry work placement as part of their programme of study, the college will assess their eligibility in line with this policy and ensure that travel support is provided. The student finance team will work alongside the work placement team/curriculum to identify students who require this additional support.

## **11 EXCEPTIONAL HARDSHIP CIRCUMSTANCES**

- 11.1 Should a student find themselves in severe exceptional financial hardship, support may be requested via an appeal letter / email. This application must be supported by the student's wellbeing mentor or tutor.
- 11.2 If a student needs emergency hardship funding this need will be assessed by a student business manager / team leader, working in collaboration with the student's wellbeing mentor and tutor where appropriate, to ensure that the student can continue on-programme, until any longer-term welfare issues are addressed. Travel support and meals in the college café may be provided until longer term solutions are found. The college will work with external agencies to ensure that students receive all the support available to them.