Creating Tomorrow College

Celebrating Differences As Strengths

Bursary & Free Meals in FE Policy

About this document:

Purpose & Scope:

This policy sets out the financial support available in 2024/25; the eligibility criteria and the conditions for continuous receipt of Bursary support for students attending Creating Tomorrow College

Complied by: Asia Malinowska	Date: September 2026
Review Cycle: (annually, 2 years, 3 years): annually	Review Date: September 2027

Wellbeing in our Trust

We may all be affected by poor physical and mental health at times during our lives and it is important the appropriate support is available in a timely manner.

Health and wellbeing is everyone's responsibility and we encourage an open and honest culture whereby anyone can discuss any issues they may have.

The Trustees of Creating Tomorrow take the health and wellbeing of all employees seriously and are committed to supporting our staff. The Trustees ensure that support for staff is available through:

- Effective line management
- Commitment to reducing workload
- Supportive and professional working environments
- Employee support programs
    - Health Assure (confidential counselling support available through Perkbox account).
    - Education Support: telephone number 08000 562561 or website www.educationsupport.org.uk

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Induction and Overview

Bursaries are designed to help eligible students aged 16-24 who have an EHCP and / or from low-income households to meet the costs incurred in attending and actively participating in college and undertaking all compulsory elements of a study programme.

Creating Tomorrow College administers the Bursary Fund awarded within the Education Skills Funding Agency's (EFA) 16-19 Bursary Fund Guidelines. For more information you can visit: www.gov.uk/1619-bursary-fund

The bursaries available include a bursary of up to £1,200 a year made available to the most vulnerable young people and also a discretionary fund for schools, academies and colleges to distribute. Each institution can set its own eligibility criteria for the discretionary bursaries and the terms and conditions under which it is awarded.

Creating Tomorrow College has clear and transparent processes including an appeals procedure.

Bursary Categories

Two types of bursary are available to young people aged 16-24:

<u>Vulnerable Young People Bursary</u>

A bursary of up to £1,200, is available to students who are aged under 19 on the 31st August 2024 and who also fit one of the criteria below:

- In Local Authority care or have left care.
- In receipt of Income Support in their own name
- In receipt of Universal Credit in their own name.
- Receive both Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) (or Universal Credit in place of ESA), and either Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in their own name.

Evidence to support the application will be needed such as:

- A letter setting out the benefit to which the young person is entitled.
- Written confirmation (letter or email) of current/previous 'Looked After' status from the relevant Local Authority.
- Leaving Care Review Document.

Discretionary Bursary

This bursary is awarded to meet individual needs / circumstances and covers the costs associated with attending and participating in College life and undertaking all compulsory elements of a study programme.

To qualify for this bursary, students must be from a household with an income:

Household income	Approach
Under £28,000	Priority consideration
£28,000–£35,000	Eligible subject to assessed participation need
£35,000+	Exceptional consideration based on specific participation barriers / demonstrated financial hardship

or in receipt of a means-tested benefit. However, all applications from outside of these guidelines will be considered to allow some flexibility on individual circumstances.

Residency requirement: Must have resided legally in the UK/EU/EEA for at least three years before the study programme start date.

In addition to the above bursaries the following is also available:

Childcare Support

Students under 20 with children can apply for childcare support through Care to Learn (C2L), covering up to £180 per week per child if the provider is Ofsted-registered.

Bursary Payments

Applicants must be under 25 on 31st August 2025 and should be from a household with an income:

Household income	Approach
Under £28,000	Priority consideration
£28,000–£35,000	Eligible subject to assessed participation need
£35,000+	Exceptional consideration based on specific participation barriers / demonstrated financial hardship

- Evidence of meeting the criteria must accompany the application such as:
- P60 from the latest tax year (or the most recent three payslips)
- Tax return from latest tax year (if any member of the household is self-employed) or an accountant's letter confirming annual income.
- Award letter for any other benefits e.g. tax credits

The College will award funds broadly under the following categories relating to essential costs to enable student's participation in their Study Programme):

- Clothing (PPE or uniforms), books and course equipment
- DBS costs
- Essential trips/visits
- Work Experience or Work placement related costs
- Transport (not replacing the local authority statutory transport duty). The first £1000 will be the responsibility of the student and the bursary panel will take a view on payments towards the balance.

Free Meals in FE

Students qualifying for a bursary may also be eligible for subsidised meals for the days they attend college. Subsidised meals will be awarded at £2.61 per meal and in most circumstances will relate to lunch provision.

These are targeted at disadvantaged students. "Disadvantaged" is defined as students in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to 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 (after tax and not including any benefits) to be aligned and amended in accordance with Government guidance.

*Under the new FSM rules, FSM will include all families on Universal Credit

*Transitional protection arrangements:

Eligibility checks will not be required for any student already receiving free meals at any point between 1 April 2018 and March 2026 or until the end of the study programme they are enrolled on at this point (until June 2026). This will apply even if the household earnings rise above the new threshold during that time.

Free Meals in FE at Creating Tomorrow College will take the form of digital vouchers for supermarkets. The choice of supermarket will be at the discretion of the college.

Applications, Assessment & Outcome

All applicants will need to complete an application form for each academic year they study at Creating Tomorrow College to evidence that they meet the eligibility criteria – the only exception are students continuing to receive free meals who were in receipt between 2018-2023*. There is no deadline for when an application can be made; however, allocations of funds are subject to availability.

In line with the ESFA guidelines, the College will retain 5% of its allocation for administration purposes. It will also retain funds for ‘in year’ applications.

In all cases, an application form will be completed and the necessary evidence provided.

The application will take no longer than 8-10 working days (during term time) to process, upon receipt of the required evidence. Outside of term time, processing time may be longer.

An assessment is made based on a completed and signed declaration from the student and parent / carer (dependent upon age and circumstance of student) detailing income from employment and/or benefits along with supporting evidence of all declared income.

When calculating household income, we take into account all income and means-tested benefits, including, but not limited to:

- Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income Support
- Pension Credit
- Housing benefit
- Council tax support
- Social Fund
- Universal Credit
- Tax credits (Child and Working)
- Child maintenance

The College does not take into account non means-tested benefits, including:

- Attendance allowance
- Carer’s allowance
- Child Benefit
- Disability Living Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- State Pension

For UC (Universal Credit) we will review the 3 most recent monthly award statements – with the take-home pay figure in addition to the amount of UC after all deductions to give a total monthly income. Using 3 months statements will act as a guide to the household income for a quarter of a year. We will then estimate assumed income for a full year on this basis.

This guide includes an example of a UC award notice. The notice shows the 2 highlighted figures – one for take-home pay; one for the amount of UC after deductions – this will form part of the evidence in assessing a monthly total.

The number of dependent children will be taken into consideration. The College will take account of this information in the assessment of need, as the College recognises the additional household costs incurred.

Where a student is identified as eligible for a defined vulnerable group bursary, but their financial needs are met, or they do not have any financial need, this may result in no award, or only a partial award being made. This will be made clear to the student and can be revisited at any time during the academic year.

If the application is unsuccessful, or only successful in part, the applicant / family will be made aware of the outcome in writing within 15 working days (term time). Outside of term time, processing time may be longer.

Receipt of the bursary will be conditional on the young person regularly attending college. The bursary panel will take a view on the conditions applied to any decision based on personalised factors.

Affecting Other Benefits

Be aware that being in receipt of a bursary does not affect the award of other means-tested benefits paid to families, such as IS, Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit or, generally, UC.

Payment of Funds

Where possible, funds will be used to directly procure the agreed service or item(s) (including college uniform) on behalf of the student. For awards such as clothing and equipment, the college will identify the appropriate items and purchase on behalf of the student. If the college is unable to source appropriate clothing or equipment then a voucher to the agreed amount will be provided.

The college reserves the right to adapt payments frequency based on individual circumstances and the items/service being purchased.

Where the vulnerable bursary is awarded in full or pro-rata, this will usually be paid in equal amounts over a consecutive 10-month period, starting in September, if applicable.

Support

If you require support and guidance to complete your application then please contact the College Operations Manager via email at bursary@creatingtomorrowcollege.co.uk

Appeals Process

All applicants have the right to appeal a decision and must submit a letter to the Operations Manager within two weeks of receiving their decision letter.

The Appeals Panel will be made up of three staff members including one member of the Senior Leadership Team, none of whom have previous involvement in the decision regarding the award.

All decisions regarding the appeals will be communicated within a working week of the Appeals Panel meeting and this decision is final. However, this should not stop a student from submitting a further application should they feel they have sufficient change of circumstances during the year.