



Learner Bursary Policy 2022/23

Version	2022/23
Approved by	Senior Leadership Team
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Updated by	Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Resources

1. INTRODUCTION

Sandwell College receives allocations of funds from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and WMCA (West Midlands Combined Authority) to support eligible students to meet the costs of participating in education. The College sets its criteria for funding in accordance with the guidelines provided by the ESFA/WMCA.

Eligible students will be required to show supporting evidence that they meet the required criteria. In certain exceptional circumstances, Sandwell College may exercise its ability to make discretionary awards.

2. GENERAL INFORMATION

- Sandwell College provides information about and promotes access to financial support via information leaflets, the College websites, posters, at interviews and at promotional events i.e. open events and during enrolment.
- The Welfare Team is based at Central Campus on floor three in the HUB and at Cadbury campus. If you have any questions or need further support, please visit the team or contact via telephone or email address:

Campus	Telephone	Email
Sandwell College – central campus (includes Central St Michaels and learners from all campuses except Cadbury)	0121 667 5073	welfare@sandwell.ac.uk
Cadbury college	0121 458 3898	welfare@cadbury.ac.uk

- Progressing students must reapply for funding. Evidence of entitlement is needed each academic year.
- Bursary application forms are available online to all learners with an active college login and email address. Links and QR codes are included in on the college website and on posters around the campuses, and learners are invited to apply for bursary by text and letter as relevant. The online application forms are clear and easy to follow and students can get help to complete their application by visiting the Welfare Team. The online bursary application forms can be completed on mobile devices, a learner's own IT equipment or college computers which are available to learners on the bridges and in the HUB on floor three at Central Campus, in the library at Central St Michaels campus and at Cadbury college campus.
- Online applications are the preferred option, however for learners who have difficulty accessing the online form, paper forms are available from tutors in ESOL, VAS or from the Welfare Team.
- Up-to-date, valid supporting evidence must be produced at the time of application and all applications must be received by the published deadlines. Applications received after the published deadlines may not be processed.

- Waged apprentices are not eligible.
- Should an applicant withdraw from their chosen course of study and decide to leave College, they may be required to repay monies or return equipment supplied/bought by the support fund.
- An award notification letter to learners confirming award from the Bursary Fund and how this will be provided. Please keep this for future reference.
- No awards will be made until a learner is fully enrolled on their course (awards cannot be made when a learner's enrolment status is "provisional").
- All awards are subject to acceptable behaviour standards and meeting attendance criteria as set out in the award letter.
- If your application is not successful you will be notified by letter. You will then need to decide if you are able to enrol to your course without financial support from the Fund.
- You have the right to appeal if your application is refused or your award is withheld. You must submit your appeal, in writing (by letter or email), within 10 working days of the date of your refusal letter. Additional information will be required to support your appeal.

3. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Eligibility is based on age, residence, household income and previous level of qualification and in the case of travel, distance travelled from home to campus of study. The College eligibility criteria is reviewed and updated annually based on the published guidelines for that year. Full eligibility criteria and maximum levels of support are included on the college website.

The 16-19 Bursary Fund, 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund and Advanced Learner Loans Bursaries are means-tested and applicants will be required to provide evidence to verify total household income. Students applying through the Advanced Learner Loan Bursaries for Additional Learning Support costs ONLY will not be means tested.

4. 16-19 BURSARY AWARDS

a) BURSARIES FOR STUDENTS IN DEFINED VULNERABLE GROUPS ("Vulnerable Learner Bursary")

The bursary for vulnerable groups can pay up to £1,200 per year to a student, if you are in one of the groups that have been defined by the government as being a 'vulnerable group of students' and meet the eligibility criteria. This includes young people who are living apart from their parents and are looked after (in care) or have recently left care (Care Order in force), and are:

- in receipt of Universal Credit in their own right (with a tenancy or dependent child)
- disabled and in receipt of both Employment & Support Allowance (Universal Credit) and Disability Living Allowance (Personal Independence Payments) in their own right (not parents)

You will need to provide up to date evidence to confirm receipt of your Benefit, or a recent letter from Social Services confirming your care status.

Monthly payments – paid in arrears directly into your bank account. You will be issued with guidance notes to explain the procedure in case of authorised absences. You will need to provide your bank account details.

b) FREE MEALS IN FURTHER EDUCATION

Students are entitled to free college meals if they live in a household that is in receipt of one of the benefits listed below and

- i) they are aged 16-18
 - ii) 19 on the second year of a level 3 programme; or
 - iii) aged 19-25 with a valid EHCP at the beginning of the academic year
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- Income Support
 - Income based Jobseekers Allowance
 - Income related Employment Support Allowance
 - Support under part IV of the immigration an Asylum Act 1999
 - The Guaranteed Element of 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.
 - 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 government provide free meals funding for days learners attend study or activity that is part of their course. (i.e. work experience) at £2.41 per day. The college has elected to top this funding up utilising discretionary bursary funds to £3 per day, five days per week (except holidays) for all learners eligible for free meals. Meals will be supplied through the college's catering outlets. Alternative arrangements will only be made for students who are studying off site (collaborative provision) or in exceptional cases.

c) 16-18 DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUND

Any learners with a household income of less than £36,000 will be eligible to apply for discretionary support. This may include assistance in terms of Trips, Equipment and Books, Chromebooks and the Senior Welfare Officer Discretionary Fund.

Senior Welfare Officer Discretionary Fund

The discretionary fund can be provided to any learners who have a need that cannot be met from other means. Type of support could include:

- Being provided with Free Meals despite not automatically eligible.
- Assistance with housing costs if homeless or facing the threat of homelessness.
- Provision of emergency travel assistance.

- Any unforeseen clothing, housing or other costs.
- To support learners who are at risk of dropping out of education and may require individual incentives.
- Any other costs deemed by Welfare staff to be necessary due to individual circumstance.

Trips and Visits

- Eligible 16 - 18 learners are eligible for support for essential trips and/or visits.
- Welfare funding officers will give assistance to course tutors to ensure that all required information is available to ensure assistance is given to all eligible students.
- The maximum payable per student for a residential visit is £300.
- Where the student requires additional help, a carer to attend for example, this will be considered upon receipt of appropriate written support from the tutor. Only one overseas trip can be funded per student per academic year.
- Any student not attending a trip/visit once costs have been paid will be expected to refund the payment unless an acceptable reason can be given.

Equipment and Books

- 16 - 18 learners are eligible for support for essential equipment (including uniform) and books.
- Costs will be met for those that qualify, to a maximum of £200 per student per year for general course equipment, books and uniforms.
- Amounts per course are agreed with team leaders who supply the welfare department with appropriate lists and costs.
- Costs in excess of the maximum limit will be assessed on an individual basis.
- Procedures are in place to recover equipment if the student leaves the course prior to completion.
- Items requested by students that have not been verified as essential by the relevant course tutor will not be awarded.
- Where possible BACS payments will be made payable to the supplier. Students may be reimbursed directly for essential equipment if this has already been purchased. However there will be no reimbursement payments made during the first half term and only upon production of an itemised receipt.

Chromebooks

- 16 - 18 learners are eligible for the provision of a Chromebook (or equivalent) if this supports their studies at college. Applications for a chromebooks are either via the main bursary application form or by following the links/QR codes on the college websites.
- Learners can only receive one chromebook during their studies at Sandwell College and prior year/s bursary award information will be checked to ensure this criteria is adhered to.
- Learners are expected to look after and maintain their chromebooks and no replacements for lost or damaged equipment will be made without a written appeal.
- Learners are expected to follow IT policies including the Acceptable Use policy.
- Full Chromebook usage requirement are included on the college website.

Special Needs Travel Assistance

- The special need travel assistance is for the cost of taxis (for special needs learners who cannot access public transport and who are not eligible for funding through their Local Authority). This travel assistance can include the cost of a bus pass for learners who are confident in using public transport.
- Tutors provide a projection of travel costs for each learner.
- All learners or their parents/guardians need to complete the Learner Support Fund application form with evidence of their benefits including any mobility component of their Disability Living Allowance (DLA).

d) CARE TO LEARN (CHILDCARE FOR LEARNERS UNDER 20)

- Students aged under 20 at the start of the academic year should apply for support with childcare costs through the Care to Learn scheme for up to four dependent children. Funding Team staff can help with applications to Care to Learn.
- Students aged over 20 can apply for support with childcare costs through the Discretionary Learner Support Fund / Advanced Learner Loans Bursary.
- Where funding is awarded towards the cost of childcare with a registered provider. Funds will be paid to a third party only. The third party must be registered with OFSTED.
- The amount of funding available for childcare is limited and there is no guaranteed entitlement to the funds.
- Students are to use their free 2 and 3 year old childcare funding towards the cost of the childcare. This will be covered in the application form sent to the Childcare Providers to complete.
- Students on IS/JSA or ESA are to be supported with returnable/refundable deposits for childcare; these monies will be paid directly to the childcare provider. These are to be returned when the student leaves college.

5. 19+ BURSARY AWARDS

Applications are means tested and we have an upper household income of £30,000 for up to one dependent child (this is increased by £1,000 for each subsequent child they are responsible for, up to a maximum of four children).

Support is available towards tuition and examination fees (not available for Advanced Learning Loan learners), child care and some equipment, trips, books and travel. Eligible learners will also receive a hardship bursary that can be used by learners to help towards the cost of attending college.

Suitable evidence of income is required, dated within 6 weeks of the bursary application, such as:

- State benefit letter dated within the last 6 weeks – all pages;
- 2022-2023 Tax Credit letter – all pages;
- Latest Universal Credit Statement showing any deductions – all pages;
- Support under part VI of the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999 (copy of both sides of Application Registration Card (ARC card) and ASPEN Card including a recent receipt; or
- P60 (April 2022) or 3 consecutive wage slips (showing name and address) from who you live with if you are not in receipt of any of the above.

Discretionary 19+ Hardship Awards

- The discretionary fund can be provided to any learners who have a need that cannot be met from other means. Type of support could include:
 - Being provided with Free Meals despite not automatically eligible.
 - Assistance with housing costs if homeless or facing the threat of homelessness.
 - Provision of emergency travel assistance.
 - Any unforeseen clothing, housing or other costs.
 - To support learners who are at risk of dropping out of education and may require individual incentives.
 - Any other costs deemed by Welfare staff to be necessary due to individual circumstance.

Applications must be received before the termly deadline (as advertised on the college website and application forms). Any application received after the deadline will be assessed for the next termly bursary if applicable.