

Background and types of bursaries

Publicly funded sixth forms in the UK are given funding each academic year to help provide support to those whose access to education is likely to be affected by financial constraints. The funding is provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the purpose of the financial allocation is for providers to distribute funding on an individual needs basis in order to support specific students and close the gap in attainment between those from disadvantaged and more affluent backgrounds.

The current annual funding allocation given to providers is referred to as the 16-19 Bursary Fund and it was first introduced during academic year 2012/13 in replace of the previous Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Principally, the 16-19 Bursary Fund focuses financial support for the most disadvantaged 16 to 19 year olds in education; those most in need of help in meeting the costs of staying in education beyond GCSEs and completing either A levels, BTEC courses and / or GCSE resits. This includes the cost of transportation to and from the education establishment, meals during the working day, books, equipment, clothing to comply with any dress code set by the establishment and the cost of educational visits, such as field trips, that are integral to the completion of courses.

The annual financial allocation given to providers by the ESFA is used to fund two types of 16-19 bursaries:

-The Vulnerable Group Bursary: this provides up to £1,200 of financial support per academic year for individuals in one or more of the defined vulnerable groups (*see below*).

-The Discretionary Bursary: This is an additional bursary for those who face significant financial constraints, but do not belong to one of the defined vulnerable groups. Providers are permitted to set their own eligibility criteria and financial support decisions for this bursary, as long as it meets key conditions set by the ESFA. The requirements and conditions can be found [here](#). As such, the specific eligibility criteria and associated policies for the Discretionary Bursary at Forge are unique to our sixth form and they have been devised in considering the needs of our sixth form and the nature of the local community that we serve.

The Vulnerable Group Bursary

Eligibility for the Vulnerable Group Bursary

To be eligible for the Vulnerable Groups Bursary, a student must meet the following eligibility criteria:

Criteria 1	Be an ordinary resident in the UK
Criteria 2	Be at least 16 years of age and under 19 years of age on 31/08/22 <u>OR</u> be over 19 years of age on 31/08/22 and be continuing courses they began aged 16 to 18 <u>OR</u> be over 19 years of age and have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
Criteria 3	Meet one or more of the following conditions: - Be in care, or be a care leaver -Be in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves and anyone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner

	- Be in direct receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit
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Evidence of eligibility for the Vulnerable Group Bursary

Any student who feels they are entitled to the Vulnerable Groups Bursary, must provide evidence that this is the case. The following outlines evidence that could be submitted by a student:

Student Group	Accepted Evidence
Students in care or care leavers	Written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority - this is the local authority that looks after them or provides their leaving care services. The evidence could be a letter or an email but must be clearly from the local authority
Students in receipt of income support (IS)	A copy of the IS award notice. This must clearly state that the claim is in the student's name/confirm they are entitled to the benefits in their own right. The evidence must not state any conditions that prevent them from participating in further education or training. For students in receipt of UC, a document such as a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a child benefit receipt, children's birth certificates, utility bills and so on
Students in receipt of universal credit (UC)	A copy of the UC award notice. In addition, a document such as a tenancy agreement in the student's name, a child benefit receipt, children's birth certificates or copy of a utility bill must also be provided.
Students receiving Employment Support Allowance (ESA) Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payments (PIP)	Evidence of receipt of ESA, DLA or PIP must be provided

Support for students entitled to the Vulnerable Group Bursary

Those eligible for the Vulnerable Group Bursary receive up to £1,200 of financial support per academic year. The actual amount allocated is ultimately dependent upon the specific needs of the student. To determine these needs, those applying for the bursary are asked to attend a meeting with a member of the sixth form pastoral team shortly after submitting a bursary application form. During the meeting financial needs are assessed by ascertaining details on:

- Weekly and monthly living costs
- The cost of using public transport to and from the Academy (*if applicable*)
- IT access in the home
- The cost of any material, books or equipment that would support learning and progress in the courses being undertaken
- Any needs with regards to meeting the sixth form dress code
- Any other financial commitments of the student.

Once financial needs have been assessed, those eligible for the Vulnerable Group Bursary will receive a pro-rata payment into their personal bank account each half term throughout the academic year. For example, a student deemed eligible for a full £1,200 annual bursary will receive a payment of £200 each half term.

On the lead up to each payment, those in receipt of the Vulnerable Group Bursary will be asked to attend a short meeting to help prioritise their financial needs at that point in the academic year and gain support with budgeting. In addition, a student in receipt of the Vulnerable Group Bursary can request either a monthly or weekly payment, rather than a half termly payment, if they feel this would assist with their budgeting.

Students' receiving the student bursary must keep receipts of their purchases and submit receipts to the Academy finance office.

Applying for the Vulnerable Group Bursary

A student can apply for the Vulnerable Group Bursary as soon as they've applied for a place in sixth form, have attended their interview and have received a letter to confirm they've been awarded a place. Application forms can be collected from the Sixth Form Centre. Completed application forms, along with evidence to confirm edibility, should be submitted direct to the Academy finance office.

The Discretionary Bursary

Eligibility for the Discretionary Bursary

The Discretionary Bursary at Forge is for those who face significant financial constraints, but are not eligible for the Vulnerable Group Bursary as a result of not belonging to one of the defined vulnerable groups. To be eligible for the Discretionary Bursary, a student must be facing financial barriers to participation and need some financial support to help stay in education.

The Discretionary Bursary has three tiers at Forge, based on total annual household income. Each tier gives students access to a different level of financial support. The tiers and associated levels of support are set out below:

Tier	Total Annual Household Income	Financial Support
Tier 1	£10,000 or less	-Full reimbursement of termly public transportation costs if the student lives 2 or more miles from the Academy. -Opportunity for students to submit requests at 3 points during the academic year for financial support to cover costs associated with their education, such as the cost of public transport to and from the Academy, business dress, learning materials, equipment, books and educational visits integral to courses such as field trips etc.
Tier 2	£10,001 to £18,000	Tier 2 students will be able to submit requests at 3 points during the academic year to obtain financial contributions to cover costs associated with their education.
Tier 3	£18,001 to £20,000	-50% reimbursement of termly public transportation costs if the student lives 2 or more miles from the Academy. There are no half termly payments or contributions towards additional costs for tier 3 students.

Please note: At Forge we have a separate Learning Bursary for sixth form students, which all students are entitled to irrespective of the level of household income. This is funded from the annual Academy budget rather than ESFA funding and therefore gives all students access to funding to support their education, including additional support for those in receipt of the Vulnerable Group Bursary and Discretionary Bursary. Further details can be found in our Learning Bursary Policy.

Evidence of eligibility for the Discretionary Bursary

The parents of those who feel they are entitled to any of the tiered levels of support provided by the Discretionary Bursary, must provide evidence of household income. Evidence could include:

- A copy of the most recent P60
- Last payslip of the tax year
- Income support or Universal Credit award note
- P60U or a letter from Jobcentre Plus letter confirming benefits received
- DWP letter confirming benefits received

Claiming for contributions towards the cost of education.

Students' in receipt of tier 1 and 2 support can claim for financial support to cover costs associated with their education at three points during the academic year; October, January and May. At each point a financial support request form must be completed, outlining the financial support required at that particular point in the academic year and an approximate amount for each individual cost.

Support request forms can be collected from the sixth form centre and should be submitted to a member of the sixth form pastoral team for approval. An amount to cover all approved costs will then be paid directly into the student's bank account. It is possible for a student to request reimbursement of a cost that has been previously incurred. For example, a student who buys a termly travel pass at the start of the academic year could claim back the cost of this when submitting their first financial support request form in October.

Students' claiming for contributions towards approved costs associated with their education must keep receipts of their purchases and submit receipts to the Academy finance office. Failure to do this will result in future claims not being approved.

Applying for the Discretionary Bursary

A student can apply for the Discretionary Bursary as soon as they've applied for a place in sixth form, have attended their interview and have received a letter to confirm they've been awarded a place. Application forms can be collected from the Sixth Form Centre. Completed application forms, along with evidence of household income, should be submitted direct to the Academy finance office.

Standards required to ensure Discretionary Bursary support.

All forms of support associated with the Discretionary Bursary are dependent on a student meeting agreed standards relating to attendance, homework and behaviour. Any student who does not meet these standards is likely to have half termly payments delayed (*in the case of tier 1 students*) and financial support requests unapproved for tier 1 and 2 students.

The agreed standards are as follows:

- Attendance must not fall below 95% overall or for individual subjects (including enrichment qualifications and non-qualifications) without legitimate reason
- No concerns raised by staff with regards to failure to complete homework and / or commitment to private study
- Appropriate behaviour maintained at all times
- Punctual attendance to morning form time and all lessons.

Half termly payments and contributions towards costs are also subject to availability of funds.