

Growth Company Education & Skills 16-19 Bursary Policy

Introduction

The Growth Company aims to support young people to participate in programmes regardless of their financial situation and circumstances. Our Study Programmes operate an 'open door' policy for all young people that meet Department for Education (DfE) eligibility requirements.

Policy

This policy relates to all learners at The Growth Company attending a Study Programme funded by the DfE, subject to meeting eligibility criteria detailed in this policy and as required by the funding agency. This policy covers bursary funding which is designed to help learners who face the greatest barriers to continuing in education or training post-16. The Growth Company will ensure that all applications for the Bursary funds are considered on the same basis irrespective of age, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, belief or faith.

The Growth Company administers three types of Bursary Fund in line with the DfE 16-19 Bursary Fund Guidelines.

The Growth Company also pays Travel Costs (see below).

Receipt of any bursary will be conditional on the young person meeting agreed standards of attendance and behaviour (Learner Agreement / Code of Conduct)

The Bursary Funds comprise of:

16-19 Vulnerable Bursary:

Young people in defined vulnerable groups are eligible for a Bursary of up to £1,200 (pro-rata for courses lasting less than 30 weeks a year). The Bursary is provided by the Department of Education. The Growth Company will support young people to apply for this Bursary subject to the supply of the evidence requirements.

16-19 Discretionary Bursary:

This may be awarded on an identified need basis and at the discretion of the Growth Company. Discretionary Bursary payments are made by different institutions to young people in ways that best fit the need and circumstances of their learners. Our payments are targeted towards those young people who face the greatest financial barriers to participation in learning. Institutions are free to determine the assessment criteria for eligibility for discretionary bursaries and frequency of payments, subject to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Free FE Meals:

Free FE Meal allowance to the value of £2.61 per day of timetabled study for learners will be provided to learners, subject to the eligibility criteria described below.

16-19 Vulnerable Bursary Fund

The 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary Fund (criteria are determined by the Department of Education)

A payment of up to £1,200 will be made available for the following groups of learners to help with the cost of travel, living costs, lunch, equipment and other course related costs.

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- in care
- care leavers
- receiving Income Support (IS), or Universal Credit (UC) because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner
- receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right

Supporting evidence for the Vulnerable Bursary must be collected and retained by The Growth Company.

Payments will be made on a weekly basis and pro rata for programmes lasting less than 30 weeks.

Free FE Meals

Learners apply through the Bursary Fund application form and must meet the following criteria as set by the DfE to receive free meal payments.

Free meals in FE defines disadvantage as students being 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 His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- UC with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 for each year (after tax and not including any benefits they get)

Discretionary Bursary

To receive a discretionary bursary learner's must:

- Be enrolled on a Study Programme
- Learners living with their family whose family are in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit
- Learners living with their family whose family are in receipt of Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living allowance (or Personal Independence Payment, PIP)
- Learners who have previously been entitled to free school meals
- Learners who may need support to be able to access and maintain their programme as a result of particular financial hardships/lack or any alternative support

The DfE rules state: Institutions make discretionary bursary awards to students to help them overcome the individual barriers to participation which they face. This means to help with the cost of travel or to buy essential books, equipment or specialist clothing (such as protective overalls, for example). These are items the student would otherwise need to pay for in order to participate.

Institutions are free to determine which young people should receive discretionary bursary payments and how much they should receive, subject to the requirements of equalities legislation which means they must not discriminate against their learners, either directly or indirectly, based on their protected characteristics. They are also subject to the public sector equality duty in section 149 (1) of the Equality Act 2010. The Growth Company will assess each young person's actual personal circumstances/need for financial support before determining whether to make an award.

Discretionary support is assessed against household income and personal circumstances. Learners under 19 and living at home and/or supported by parents/guardians are assessed against their own and their parents'/guardian's income, except in exceptional circumstances. Means testing will be rigorous but not excessive and all reasonable attempts will be made to gain evidence household income. The cooperation or otherwise of parents/guardians will not be as a discriminating factor.

At the appropriate Managers' discretion, the above criteria may be waived in the event of:

- a learner facing a financial barrier as a result of high household income where a parent/guardian declares they are not supporting the learner financially
- a student facing a unique financial barrier to learning

(e.g. When assessing the need for financial support The Growth Company will also consider exceptional circumstances, such as where a young person is providing care to a sick or disabled relative).

Application for a Bursary

Learners may start at any time during year and need to complete a Bursary Application Form as quickly as possible, ideally before their first day. Applications for the Vulnerable Bursary will be accepted throughout the academic year. Applications for the Discretionary Bursary will be considered throughout the academic year or until the funding has been fully allocated/The Growth Company is not able to top up the fund through its own resources.

Learner must complete the Bursary and FE Free Meals form through the enrolment process in Maytas Hub. This form is checked and approved by the appropriate manager. Evidence to support the vulnerable bursary must be uploaded to Maytas.

The Growth Company reserves the right to defer or cancel payments in the event of unsatisfactory student conduct, attendance or punctuality or in the event of being made aware of a change in circumstances which has resulted in a learner no longer satisfying these eligibility criteria.

Payments will be paid weekly in arrears by BACs into the learners' bank account. Alternative arrangements will be made in the exceptional circumstances where the learner does not have a bank account.

Payments must not be made through petty cash, except in exceptional circumstances with permission from the appropriate manager. If payments are made through petty cash, these must not be duplicated by BACS payment.

Travel Costs

Learners within Greater Manchester aged 16 and 17 are eligible for the Our Pass for free bus travel across Greater Manchester (<https://ourpass.co.uk/>), the Growth Company will pay the £10 registration fee for learners to obtain the pass if required.

Complaints

A Complaints procedure is in place to cover all aspects of learners Study Programmes. If a learner is dissatisfied with their assessment, then they can appeal in writing to the appropriate Manager. Queries or disagreements over agreed standards of attendance and behaviour should also be raised with the appropriate Manager.

Procedure

1. All applicants must complete an application form (Appendix 1)
2. Applications are available from any Training Centre, Sector based delivery team, GM Skills Centre throughout the year and raised at initial interview
3. All relevant questions on the form must be completed and the form must be signed through the Maytas Hub forms as part of the enrolment process.
4. To avoid delays all evidence requested should be provided on the first day or as soon as possible
5. All learners with applications to the Bursary Fund must have a bank account as payment must be made directly into the bank. Emergency payments or payments pending bank accounts being processed will be made in exceptional circumstances subject to Manager approval.
6. All applications will be assessed as detailed in the application form
7. Decisions on the level of financial support offered to applicants will be made by Centre Managers
8. Awards will be paid by BACS direct to the learner each week on Friday for the proceeding week. Learners must be set up in Unit 4 as suppliers to process payment.
9. The Growth Company reserves the right to defer or cancel payments in the event of unsatisfactory student conduct, attendance or punctuality or in the event of being made aware of a change in circumstances which has resulted in a learner no longer satisfying these eligibility criteria.
10. Payment requests must be submitted to finance within the timescales they have stipulated to be processed for the weekly payment run, using correct cost and product codes so that payments can be identified.



11. Back dated payments for late applications or incomplete applications will only be made at the discretion of the Growth Company. Payments should only ever be backdated for up to 4 weeks.
 Funds are limited and once they have been allocated in full The Growth Company reserves the right to close the fund.

Appendix

Bursary Fund/ FE Meals Application Form (built into Maytas Hub)

Review / updates

Type	Date	Version control
Review	October 2025	Version 6