**Policy and Guidelines for applying for Bursary/Free College Meals**

**YOU MUST READ THIS DOCUMENT CAREFULLY BEFORE SENDING IN YOUR APPLICATION AS IT FORMS THE BURSARY CONTRACT AND GIVES FULL INFORMATION ABOUT ELIGIBILITY AND EVIDENCE REQUIRED**

**The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund is part of the Government’s Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and is intended to help students with the *essential costs of participating in their study programme.* It is not intended to cover living costs or to supplement general household income. There is not a flat rate paid to students, instead each student’s individual need for support is assessed. The College will allocate bursary funds in-kind rather than in cash, as far as possible.**

Full details of the fund can be found here [**16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide 2024 to 2025 academic year - GOV.UK**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2024-to-2025-academic-year/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2024-to-2025-academic-year)

*YOU WILL BE SENT AN APPLICATION FORM (in the form of a Google Form) IN THE FIRST WEEK OF TERM, ONCE YOU HAVE A COLLEGE LOGIN.*

Applications are processed on a first come, first served basis and early application is advised.

**Returning students who were eligible for the Bursary last year must complete the short Google Form confirming that your situation has not changed, together with updated details around travel to and from College**. Returning students will not be eligible for bursary support unless this form is completed.

All bursary students are also eligible for Free College Meals (FCM), which is paid directly onto student ID cards, at £4 per day, which can be used to buy food and drinks in the canteen.

Applications will not be accepted if they are incomplete and/ or do not have the relevant supporting documents. Completed applications should be submitted with supporting documents **no later than the 4th OCTOBER 2024**.

No late applications will be accepted after Friday 6th December, unless there is significant change in circumstances.

**Bursary Fund -** There are two types of bursary, the Discretionary Bursary and the Defined Vulnerable Groups Bursary, the funds from both of these bursaries will typically be used by the College for:

• Educational books and equipment for students’ specific courses

• Food whilst at College

• Trips and visits that are essential to a student's programme of study

• Travel to or from College, **where the eligible student does not already receive free travel (all eligible students are expected to apply for a 16-18 or 18+ Oyster Photocard)**

• Industry or work-related placement costs

• Authorised university visits (e.g. university interviews, residentials, taster sessions)

• Digital device loan, such as an iPad or laptop

1. **Discretionary Bursary**
* For eligible learners with a household income of £30,000 or less (household income includes Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credits, but does not include Housing Benefit or childcare costs).
* Evidence of household income required is clearly outlined on the application form, but is usually most recent 3 months’ employment payslips and/or Universal Credit Award statements, or a P60.
* Free College Meals will be available to all students in receipt of the Discretionary Bursary.
* To be eligible for FCM, you have to have provided a letter/email from your secondary school confirming you have been in receipt of Free School Meals at any time since April 2019.
* **OR** your parent(s) need to have monthly income/earnings of £616.67 or less according to their most recent Universal Credit statement.
* If a student isn’t eligible in either of these ways, we will complete a manual assessment of your parent(s) annual household income will be
* Where Universal Credit is being used as evidence of household income, the last 3 months’ award statements should be provided. If your parent is self-employed they will also need to complete and submit a self-declaration form. Where a Tax Credits document is being used, please provide the complete Final Tax Credits Award Notice for 04/2023 to 04/2024. Please submit all the P60s for 04/2023 to 04/2024 for all your parent'/s’ jobs or SA302/P800Ts for 04/2022 to 04/2023 – confirmation of earnings from HMRC - if your parent is self-employed.
* If you or your parent/carer is in receipt of one of the following benefits you should be entitled to FCM: Income Support, Income based Jobseekers allowance, Income related Employment Support Allowance, Support under part V1 of the Immigration and Asylum Act, the guaranteed element of State Pension credit; Child tax credit (provided you are not entitled to Working Tax credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than **£16,190;** Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of **£7,400** pa. You may also be entitled if you received Free School Meals previously but do not meet the Universal Credit criteria.

ii) **Defined Vulnerable Groups Bursary** of up to £1,200 per year for 16-18 year olds in the following defined groups:

* In care or a care-leaver who is in financial need;
* In receipt of Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves and anyone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or a partner;
* young person in receipt of both Universal Credit **and** Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payments.

**The Vulnerable Groups Bursary is not a guaranteed bursary and the amount of financial support will depend on the actual financial need of each student in-relation to essential participation costs, with some students receiving no financial support beyond in-kind payments covering their essential participation costs.**

The Vulnerable Groups Bursary does not form part of the calculation for benefits. Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for bursaries for vulnerable groups.

Please complete the separate Vulnerable Groups Bursary Application form and submit it with the required documentary evidence (see below)

* Students in care or care leavers should provide an up-to-date letter of confirmation from social services
* Please also provide evidence of household income of your carer/guardian (again, this will usually be most recent 3 months’ payslips and/or Universal Credit award notice, or a P60)
* Students living independently should provide their Income Support/Universal Credit award notice. Students in receipt of Universal Credit will also need to provide their tenancy agreement document, a child benefit receipt, children’s birth certificates, utility bills etc. as appropriate.

*To be eligible to apply for either element of the 16 - 19 Bursary Fund, students will need to confirm that they have legally lived in the UK for the three years before their enrolment.*

Any payments made to students will cover 32 weeks of the year (starting 5 September) and be made every 4-6 weeks, dependent on College holidays. These payments are based on your overall percentage attendance for the period.

Authorised absences (“A” on a register) will be counted as absence for the purposes of Bursary payments. Students are not paid for these absences, as well any study leave or for College holidays. Payments will be paid by BACS into a bank account in the student’s name only.

**Payments are made subject to your attendance, punctuality and behaviour in College.** Poor attendance and punctuality over a four-week period could result in any payment being reduced or withdrawn in its entirety. Students are expected to attend all lessons each week on time, with a minimum expectation of 95% attendance.

**All** students who live in London are expected to apply for and use the 16-18 (or 18+) Zip Oyster photo card and applications for these should be made before commencement of timetabled lessons. Please visit <https://photocard.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/showLogon.do>

**Once eligibility is confirmed, students will be informed of this by an email to their College email address, together with any details of the award. The Bursary Contract for 2024-25 is part of the Bursary Application Form.**

Students and their families should be aware that giving false or incomplete information that leads to incorrect/ overpayment may result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered. They should also be aware that this might result in a referral to the police with the possibility of the student and/or their family facing prosecution.

All applications and supporting evidence will remain confidential through the process and in storage. All evidence and data received will conform to the College’s GDPR policy. Documentation will be kept for six years for audit purposes.

**Queries and Appeals**

It is the responsibility of the student (not the parent/guardian/key worker) to raise any concerns regarding payments. If the student wishes to appeal against any decision made by the Bursary Department please write to bursary@sfx.ac.uk All emails must have the student name, tutor group and student number in the heading.