

Title	New City College 16-19 Bursary & Free Meals Guidance 2025-26
Last Updated	June 2025

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of the bursary, allocated to the college by the Department for Education (DfE), is to support students to meet the essential costs of participating in education.
- 1.2 The criteria and procedures operated by the college for allocating bursary funds are based on DfE guidance (see Appendix).
- 1.3 The college assesses the actual course related financial needs of individual students in addition to eligibility when awarding bursary funding. The amount of support will vary from student to student.
- 1.4 Students will be required to show supporting evidence that they meet the required criteria. Copies are securely retained for audit purposes.
- 1.5 Payments are conditional on students meeting agreed standards of attendance and behaviour.
- 1.6 Bursary awards only cover one academic year and students must reapply for support on an annual basis.
- 1.7 The availability of bursary awards is subject to the amount of funds allocated from the DfE.

2 ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- 2.1 Students must meet the following criteria to be eligible to apply for bursary support:
 - Be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2025
 - Satisfy the residency requirements in the DfE funding regulations for post 16 provision.
 - Be on an DfE funded course
 - Have household income of under £35,000.
- 2.2 Waged apprentices or students on higher education courses are not eligible to apply.
- 2.3 Accompanied asylum-seeking children may only receive support in kind, not cash payments.
- 2.4 Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children are the responsibility of the local authority and are treated as looked after children. They are eligible to apply for a Vulnerable Bursary where they have a financial need for support with their educational costs.

3 BURSARY FUNDS AND AWARDS

3.1 There are two types of bursary funds:

- 16-19 Discretionary Bursary Fund
- 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary Fund

3.2 If students meet the eligibility criteria, then an assessment of their actual financial needs takes place. Both types of bursary funding are designed to help students overcome the individual financial barriers to participation they face, and the college must ensure the funds go to those who genuinely need them. No student will automatically be awarded an amount of funding without an assessment of the level of actual financial need they have.

3.3 How much bursary students receive depends on:

- individual circumstances
- individual financial need: for example, what course related costs students tell us they need help with on their bursary application
- programme length for pro-rata payments
- meeting agreed standards of attendance and behavior
- the amount of funds available

There are awards for travel, Oyster card application fees, college essentials (stationery etc), and compulsory kit, uniform, UCAS, equipment and books. There are also awards for trips and extra-curricular activities where these are compulsory to the course. Further support may also be available, for example for travel to university interviews and industry placements. Bursary funds cannot be used to support living costs or household income.

3.4 Travel awards are limited to term time and timetabled days at college only. Support with travel depends on actual need and the distance students live from the college. Applicants may be requested to provide receipts to prove their cost of travel. If awarded, it may be a contribution towards the travel costs, paid monthly, and the amount may change subject to available funds.

3.5 Some awards will be made in kind and some will be payments into bank accounts. Students must only use any money received from the bursary on the support that has been identified as necessary to help them participate in education.

3.6 Students aged 19 or over are eligible to receive support from the 16-19 Bursary if they are continuing on a study programme which they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) aged up to 25.

3.7 The DfE do not expect students on distance learning provision to need help from the bursary fund because they do not have the kinds of costs the bursary is intended to cover (travel, equipment, and uniforms, for example). In the rare instances where the College identifies such a student does require financial help, we will provide support in kind.

4 FREE MEALS

4.1 Students will be eligible to receive free meals on the days they are scheduled to attend college, provided their parent(s)/carer(s) have a total household income of £35,000 per year or less (including Universal Credit payments) and **MUST** be in receipt of a means-tested benefit, such as those listed below:

- Universal Credit (provided you have an annual earned income of no more than £7,400, as assessed by earnings from up to three of your most recent assessment periods)
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guarantee element of Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you're not also entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190)
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for four weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

5 VULNERABLE BURSARY

5.1 Students who meet the criteria and have a financial need can apply for bursary and free meals for vulnerable groups. The defined vulnerable groups are:

- In care
- Care leavers
- Receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit 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 or Personal Independence Payments in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance or Universal Credit in their own right.

5.2 The Vulnerable Bursary is to help meet the essential costs of participating in education, not to support living costs or household income. Assessments are based on individual need for support with educational financial needs and individual income sources.

5.3 Students could receive up to £1,200 per academic year under the Vulnerable Bursary. However, meeting the criteria for a Vulnerable Bursary is not a guarantee that funding will be given. Students in this vulnerable group are not automatically entitled to a bursary if they do not have educational financial needs and/or their educational financial needs are covered from other sources. It is possible that no award may be granted or a partial award given.

5.4 The College must have proof that students meet the criteria for the bursary for the vulnerable groups. Students should be in receipt of the specified benefits in their own name or fully meet the definitions for in-care/care leavers, with evidence of their

care status from the Local Authority. Students in receipt of their own Universal Credit must also supply a tenancy agreement or a child benefit letter or a utility bill in their own name.

6 DISCRETIONARY BURSARY

6.1 Students with a household income of up to £35,000 are eligible to apply for a Discretionary bursary. Parents/carers must be in receipt of one of the following Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) benefits or Inland Revenue Tax Credits:

- Income Support
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit (showing combined income below £35,000)
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- DWP Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit (showing combined income below £35,00)

6.2 Evidence of household income must be produced. Universal Credit statements are the preferred and most effective form of evidence to support a bursary application. Other forms of evidence such as a copy of a letter or bank statement showing receipt of benefit can be accepted. Payslips or an original letter on parents' employers' headed paper can also be accepted. Evidence must be dated within 3 months of the date of application. If no benefits are claimed, evidence of earned income must be supplied. This should be copies of payslips for 3 previous months, a P60 for the previous April, an original letter on employers' headed paper showing yearly income or a Self-Employed Tax Return document. Benefit documents and pay slips must be dated within 3 months of the date of application.

6.3 The amount received will be dependent on the number of qualifying applications received and the amount of funds available.

6.4 Payments cannot be backdated for periods before the application was submitted.

7 CARE TO LEARN

7.1 C2L (see Appendix) provides funding for childcare to help young parents (defined as those aged under 20) continue in education after the birth of a child. The scheme provides funding for childcare whilst the young parent is engaged in a study programme and is not able to provide care for their child. It can also help the young parent with any additional travel costs involved in taking the child to the childcare provider.

7.2 To be eligible, the young parent's study programme must have some direct public funding and their childcare provision must be registered with Ofsted.

7.3 To receive C2L, the young parent, their education institution and their childcare provider must all meet the eligibility criteria.

7.4 Young parents must complete and submit a new application online via the secure Pay My Student portal each academic year even if their study programme runs for more than one year.

7.5 The bursary fund may be used to provide exceptional further help with childcare costs for those young parents in receipt of Care to Learn, whose costs exceed the scheme's weekly maximum rates. Only childcare provision eligible under the C2L scheme rules can be used. Evidence must be obtained to show that the maximum

amount is being paid under C2L to confirm that a top up is required. Any top up paid must be made in line with the C2L guidance and paid directly to the childcare provider, not to the student.

8 APPLICATIONS PROCESS

- 8.1 Students are advised to apply as soon as they have enrolled on their study programme. Applications for bursary are made [Online](#) via the secure Pay My Student portal. There are links on the website, ProPortal accounts, the MyNCC App and the student VLE under Information \ Welfare, Bursary and Childcare.
- 8.2 Applications for the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary close on 31 January 2026. The college will retain a small emergency fund to support students who face exceptional circumstances during the year due to a change in their situation which then impacts on their ability to participate in education.
- 8.3 Applications are reviewed by a member of the Bursary Team. Once assessed, students receive an email with the outcome of the application, how payment will be made and terms and conditions.
- 8.4 Students can log into the Pay My Student portal to see the progress of their application and correspondence. The college will only use students' college email addresses for bursary communications. We may also send text messages.
- 8.5 Students can get in touch with the Bursary Team by emailing bursary@ncclondon.ac.uk or by seeing the Bursary Assistant at a counter service session at their campus.

9 PAYMENTS

- 9.1 Awards are dependent on students meeting agreed standards of attendance and behaviour.
- 9.2 Most awards are given as one-off payments, except for travel awards which are paid in monthly instalments.
- 9.3 Payments will be made by direct bank transfer; the bank account must be in the student's name. In some cases, such as students with learning difficulties, we can pay to a parent's/carer's bank account. Students who are not eligible for cash payments will be offered in kind support through alternative means where possible.

10 APPEALS

- 10.1 Students who are dissatisfied with the decision regarding their application or payment, are encouraged in the first instance to discuss the issue with the bursary staff via the bursary email address for their campus or at the campus counter service session.
- 10.2 If a student remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they can appeal the decision by emailing bursary@ncclondon.ac.uk. Students should state clear reason(s) for their appeal and produce supporting evidence if needed. The appeal will be considered within two college working weeks by two Managers not involved in the initial decision-making process.

APPENDIX

1. DfE funding guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2025-to-2026>
2. Free Meals in Further Education guide
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68416b27578282a4b102c065/Free_school_meals_-_guidance_for_local_authorities_maintained_schools_academies_and_free_schools.pdf
3. Care to Learn Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-to-learn-guidance/care-to-learn-academic-year-2025-to-2026-conditions-of-grant-funding>