

16 - 19 Bursary Fund Policy 2026/27

Date established:	July 2017
Updated:	Review in line with DfE Policy (July 2026)
Reviewed:	Annually or as updated by DfE
Purpose:	This policy aims to set out the position of MITSkills regarding Advice and Guidance for Learners.

Aims

MITSkills aims to provide all Study Programme (age 16-19) learners and potential learners with information on the Bursary fund. This policy will be available on our website and outlined at sign-up. We treat all applications equally and in line with our Equality and Diversity statement and policy, and where appropriate in line with appropriate legislation.

To enable this, we describe the fund and our current common application guidelines. We will always consider individual circumstances; if the learner is in receipt of support from any other third party, please disclose it.

The 16-19 Bursary Fund provides financial help for young people aged 16 to 19 who face barriers to staying in education. It is available to all 16-19-year-olds studying in school/academy sixth forms, colleges and training providers in England. There are two types of bursaries available:

Bursaries of up to £1,200 a year based on evidence of need, for courses of 30 weeks or more for the most vulnerable young people as defined by the DfE; called the DfE Priority Bursary within MITSkills.

Discretionary bursaries based on individual need, such as help with the costs of travel, equipment, or meals.

Application for a Bursary is based on need, appropriate evidence of eligibility, and use of funds. Bursaries are based on evidence of financial status, not guaranteed, and are for use to support eligible costs.

What is the 16-19 Bursary Fund?

The 16-19 Bursary Fund aims to help 16-19-year-olds overcome any financial barriers they may face to attend a sixth form or further education college.

The Bursary Fund, which has been allocated to MITSkills by the government, is made up of two parts:

1. The DfE Priority Bursary: This is an award of up to £1,200 per year (usually split into termly payments) for students who fall into one of the following groups:
 - 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

The Bursary can only be paid based on evidence of financial need in relation to your course, which relates to your course costs (such as specific equipment), travel to and from the course, or meals*, field trips or visits to universities as part of progression.

**Where help with meals is requested, learners and/or their parents/guardians or partners must be able to evidence financial need against the DfE outlined Free Meals Eligibility.*

If you are studying a course which lasts less than 30 weeks or are studying for less than 12 hours per week, then your bursary will be pro-rata, and you will receive less than the maximum £1200.

If your evidence from allowable costs is below £1200 over the academic year, your award will be less than £1200.

If your evidenced costs are above £400 per term (for example, train travel from some locations is over £500 per term), please contact the office, and we may issue a top-up payment from the Discretionary Bursary, where possible. Students receiving a Priority Bursary can also apply for support with additional costs that may arise during the academic year.

In some cases, a young person might meet the eligibility criteria for a bursary for Priority groups, but their financial needs are already met, they have no relevant costs or do not need the maximum award.

For example:

- a student attending specialist residential provision that covers their educational costs in full.
- a student taking a distance learning programme who has no financial barriers to participation (for example, they don't have any travel costs or meal costs)
- a student in the care of the local authority whose educational costs are covered in full by the local authority.
- a student who is financially supported by their partner.

2. The Discretionary Bursary: MITSkills also has money to help students who are not in the groups above but who face genuine financial barriers to attending college.

A discretionary bursary is awarded to you based on your specific requirements and cannot be awarded for costs unrelated to your programme of study, for general expenses or used as an attendance incentive. Bursaries are usually awarded for meals*, transport and/or course costs.

**Where help with meals is requested, learners and/or their parents/guardians or partners must be able to evidence financial need against the DfE outlined Free Meals Eligibility.*

MITSkills follows advice from the Department for Education when administering bursary funding.

3. MITSkills will use the following as a guide to gross income as guidance to the maximum income for those claiming bursaries. In addition, learners requesting bursary support for meals must belong to the specific groups meeting the DfE criteria for Free College Meal Entitlement guidance (see below).

All learners applying for a bursary must complete the appropriate financial declaration and application form with the appropriate evidence.

To be considered for a bursary, the learner must identify which household category they fall into. The income level is the maximum for the household for receiving a bursary and is a gross figure for income and benefits before tax, which the learner and/or parents/guardians or partners will be expected to evidence. Where the learner's household income is above these figures, then without exceptional evidence of need, we are unlikely to authorise a bursary.

	Weekly Amount	Monthly Amount
Families with children and couples – in London	£634.62	£2,750
Families with children and couples – outside London	£576.92	£2,500
Single people – in London	£507.70	£2,200
Single people – outside London	£461.54	£2,000

Free College Meals

For those requiring support with meals, the household must fall into the groups considered eligible for free meals as per DfE guidance. Every student in receipt of Universal Credit as themselves, or their family/parents/guardian can show they are in receipt of UC, can claim. Those wishing to make a claim for meals must provide evidence of the following for themselves or for their household. Claims must be supported by evidence of parents or guardians where appropriate.

The target recipients for free meals are disadvantaged students. Free meals in further education define disadvantage as students being in receipt of, or having parent(s) or guardian(s) who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Universal Credit (All recipients qualify)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- The "Guaranteed Element" of Pension Credit
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

Learners and/or parents/guardians must identify at least one of these, apply and provide appropriate evidence (appropriate award notices and evidence of receipt).

Universal Credit Eligibility for Free meals is based on the eligibility criteria laid down by the DfE and is published in this policy for clarity and consistency.

Universal Credit

MITSkills, as the institution, must verify the eligibility of students, or their parents, who are in receipt of Universal Credit. Institutions will need to ask for a copy of their Universal Credit award notice, which includes details of their monthly earnings. Institutions will need to assess the information given to obtain an accurate proxy of the individual's current earned annual income.

A manual check will be required to determine eligibility for those students or their parents who are self-employed and in receipt of Universal Credit. Parents will need to provide evidence that:

- They are in receipt of Universal Credit by providing their Universal Credit award letter.
- They are self-employed by providing a copy of their company registration or tax return form.

MITSkills will provide a free meal for those eligible, which may be in the form of a token or voucher for an appropriate meal at the college canteen, or where exceptionally approved by payment to a learner account based on ongoing attendance in a location with no direct catering. The rate allowed by the DfE is currently

£2.66 per day per learner, but MITSkills may exceptionally fund up to £5.00 per day per learner in total where there are limited facilities, requiring learners to provide receipts by return and weekly ongoing evidence of attendance and use of extra funding as intended.

4. Are you eligible for a DfE Priority bursary?

To be eligible for a DfE priority bursary, you must be in one of the following groups and be able to provide us with the evidence listed below:

Target Group

Young People 'in care', or 'care leavers'

i.e., young people who are, or have been, cared for by the Local Authority.

Most Looked After Children have, or will have had, a Social Worker.

Evidence Required

A letter or email clearly from the local authority from your Social Worker, Key Worker or Local Authority.

Plus, evidence of current household income e.g., pay slips for you and/or your partner for three months plus/or statement of benefits for three months. For UC, 3 months' statement printed from your personal account to demonstrate total income.

Income including benefits must be below the figures given above; see section 3 above.

In receipt of Universal Credit in your own name.

A letter dated within 3 months from Job Centre Plus. This letter needs to confirm your name, address and that you receive Income Support/Universal Credit.

If you have a letter older than 3 months, please also provide a bank statement which shows a payment going into your account within the last 3 months. We cannot accept a letter older than 3 months without the support of a bank statement.

The DfE also require evidence of a tenancy agreement, Child Benefit, Birth certificates, and Utility Bills.

"UC claimants should be able to print off details of their award from their online account or provide a screenshot to the institution."

Disabled and in receipt of both Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment in your own name.

A letter(s) dated within 3 months which confirms your name, address and that you are in receipt of both benefits UC or ESA with evidence of one of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment.

or

Disabled and in receipt of both Universal Credit (limited capability for work element or limited capability for work related activity element) and Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment in your own name.

If you have a letter older than 3 months, please also provide a bank statement which shows a payment of each benefit going into your account within the last 3 months.

We cannot accept a letter older than 3 months without the support of a bank statement.

How are young people in care and care leavers defined?

For the purposes of the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund, the definitions are:

- 'In care' means children and young people looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (Section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (Section 31 of the Children Act 1989). Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 defines the term 'looked after child.'
- 'Care leaver' means either: Young people aged 16 and 17 who were previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16. A young person who is aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods of 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 18.

If you are not eligible for a DfE Priority group bursary, you may still be eligible for a discretionary bursary. Please read on to find out more. Where evidence is quoted, these are examples, but evidence can vary depending on your circumstances. Where we agree to vary evidence, we may ask for additional evidence and appropriate verification of that evidence.

5. Are you eligible for a discretionary bursary?

To be eligible for a discretionary bursary, you must be in one of the following groups and be able to provide us with the evidence listed below:

Target Group

1. You, or your parent(s)/carer(s), are in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:
Income Support
Income-Based Job Seekers Allowance
Child Tax Credits (whilst not receiving Working Tax Credits)
Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit
Universal Credit
Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
Working Tax Credit Run On (paid for the 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for WTC)

* If you live between two homes, we only need information from the person you live with for most of the time.

2. You, or your parent(s)/carer(s), are in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:
Working Tax Credit with a gross household income, see section 3
Housing Benefit or Local Housing Allowance
Council Tax Reduction Scheme
Carer's Allowance

* If you live between two homes, we only need information from the person you live with for most of the time.

Evidence Required

A letter confirming your entitlement to benefits from one of the following:
Job Centre Plus
Department for Work and Pensions
HMRC Tax Credit Award Letter for 2024/25 which shows your income from 2023/24.
You must provide the full award letter.
For UC, we request the letter of award and a printout of the last 3 months' payments from the relevant personal account.

Any letter you provide to us should be dated within the last 3 months. If your letter is older than 3 months, then please provide a recent bank statement showing a relevant payment going into your account within the last 3 months.

Any letter provided must confirm the name and address of the person receiving the benefit(s).

A letter confirming your entitlement to benefits from one of the following:
Job Centre Plus
Department for Work and Pensions
Your Local Authority
HRMC Tax Credit Award Letter for 2025/26 which shows your income from 2024/25.
You must provide the full award letter.

Any letter you provide to us should be dated within the last 3 months. If your letter is older than 3 months, then please provide a recent bank statement showing a relevant payment going into your account within the

3. You, or your parent(s)/carer(s) are not in receipt of one of the benefits listed in Target Groups 1 – 2 above but are employed or self-employed with a gross household income, see section 3

* If you live between two homes, we only need information from the person you live with for most of the time.

last 3 months. Any letter provided must confirm the name and address of the person receiving the benefit(s). We need one of the following for each parent/carer *:
The most recent 2 months' payslips.
P60 for the 2024/25 tax year
Evidence of self-employed income, e.g., tax return or accountant's letter.

4. Your parent(s)/carer(s) has been affected by redundancy in the last 12 months

Letter of redundancy from relevant employer on headed paper or with a company stamp including contact details of the employer.

5. You are a young parent

Birth Certificate of child, Child Benefit award notice, or Tax Credit award with Child Tax Credit element.

If you cannot find your Child Benefit or Child Tax Credit evidence, please note that HMRC are not currently issuing replacement entitlement letters. However, we will accept evidence showing Child Benefit payments on a bank, building society or credit union statement.

6. You are a Young Carer (this means that you live with, and help care for, someone with a disability or a long-term illness, including mental illness)

Letter from relevant Local Authority, local carers' organisation or GP
OR
Evidence that someone you live with receives Disability Living Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Universal Credit (limited capability for work element, or limited capability for work related activity element).

7. You are currently of No Fixed Abode. For example, students who are Travellers, living in emergency accommodation, homeless or insecurely housed.

Please talk to your Assessor or contact Admin at MITSkills about your circumstances.

If you are eligible, when and how should you apply?

If you are eligible for either of the bursaries described in the previous pages, please ask at your sign-up for the evidence form and the bank details form. You may of course write an application letter with the appropriate forms and send them in if you prefer not to discuss an application with your assessor/tutor; in this case you may wish to ensure the letter is tracked – see postal applicants.

Complete the forms carefully, making sure you complete all the sections. You also need to make sure you provide us with photocopies of the evidence we have asked for. Please note we prefer you not to send originals; if you send originals, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to return these to you.

You should hand in or send your completed application form and evidence to the assessor handling your sign up and retain a copy for yourself.

Postal Applications

If you are sending your application letter, evidence checklist, completed bank details form and evidence by post, you may want to get a free Proof of Posting Certificate or send by recorded delivery. MITSkills cannot accept responsibility for postal applications not received. Send applications to the address below.

Admin
MITSkills
16B Manvers House
Pioneer Close
Wath upon Deane
Rotherham
S63 7JZ

The normal deadline for applications is 31st October 2026, but if you find yourself in financial hardship after this date, it is important that you still contact your assessor/tutor. We will then look to see if we have any further funds available to help you.

If there are still funds available after 1st November 2026, we will continue to accept applications at our own discretion.

What happens after you apply for the bursary?

We will assess your application and write to you or email you with a decision. If you are successful, then the letter/email we send you will tell you what the award is for, where a DfE Priority Bursary payment is appropriate, the total value and when you can expect payment will be sent to you. However, for most Discretionary bursaries we would expect most payments to be paid on proof of evidence. For DfE priority bursary payments, we will send details of when these payments will be made to you and the month in which you can expect to receive payments. You will also be sent details about our attendance requirements as all payments are dependent on your attendance record and you displaying satisfactory behaviour during your time at MITSkills.

If you are unsuccessful, we will write to you explaining why.

We use your address on your application to confirm to you by letter or email address you provide on the front of the application form to contact you, so you must check this regularly.

Your bursary will cover (subject to meeting attendance and behaviour requirements and supplying evidence within identified timescales):

Course Charges – we will cover these in full based on the course(s) you enrol on.

Travel – to receive support with travel costs, you must not be in receipt of local authority support, and you must live over 2 miles away from the delivery site. We use the “as the crow flies” distance on the website below to calculate the distance from delivery to your home address. You may want to check this yourself, so you know in advance whether you can apply for travel.

<https://www.freemaptools.com/distance-between-uk-postcodes.htm>

We will not fund travel for students who live within a 2-mile radius of the delivery site unless there are exceptional or medical circumstances which will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

If you are awarded help with travel, we will calculate your award based on the cheapest and most reasonable form of public transport available to you and will also expect you to take advantage of any discounts or subsidies available to you. The award you are given may not cover 100% of your costs. Students will be expected to send evidence of tickets purchased.

Course-related trips – When you apply for your bursary, you may not know which trips you want to go on. Unfortunately, it is not possible to guarantee funding for all trips as the budget is limited, and many trips are not compulsory. If you are interested in going on a trip, then you should speak to your assessor/tutor as soon as you are aware of the dates, location and price. We can then see if we have funds available to contribute towards the cost. For some trips, we may only pay for the trip deposit, and you should expect to meet any costs above this amount yourself.

Sports Kit – only for those taking sports courses. This is paid on proof of purchase along with approval from your assessor/tutor. MITSkills will pay up to a maximum of £150 on approved kit for those qualifying for a bursary.

Calculator – only for students studying Maths. We will pay up to a maximum of £20. You will need to provide the receipt for your calculator to receive a refund from us.

Travel to job/apprenticeship interview – as above. Maximum of two interviews and payment by refund on production of tickets and/or interview letter. This will be dependent on the budget we have available at the time.

Enrichment activities – if there are costs involved in you participating in MITSkills timetabled enrichment activities, then we may be able to help you with this. This will be dependent on the budget we have available at the time. We will only support activities which have been organised by MITSkills and relate to your course.

High value equipment – due to a limited budget, we cannot support students with the cost of high value equipment such as laptops and cameras. If this is appropriate for course support purposes and a barrier to learning, MITSkills, following DfE guidance, may supply equipment where this is required (Where this occurs, the equipment will belong to MITSkills and is to be returned at the end of the course) learner will be required to sign an equipment loan agreement. It can include the equipment being kept on our site.

Evidence of purchase – Receipts for approved travel costs must be sent in monthly, unless otherwise agreed. All receipts for other approved items must be sent in within one month (30 days) of purchase; do not keep them until the end of your course.

Your bursary will not cover:

Books – if your course requires a core textbook or reading material, this will be provided for you; we will therefore not support students with the cost of textbooks.

Attendance bonuses/incentives – all DfE Priority Bursary payments to you are based on you achieving a minimum of 90% overall attendance prior to each payment and displaying satisfactory behaviour during your time at MITSkills. There have been some funds in the past which rewarded students with additional monies if they held good attendance levels throughout the academic year, but we do not operate our bursary fund in this way.

General living costs – e.g. mobile phone bill, accommodation, utility bills, gym membership, club memberships, social/sporting activities unrelated to your college course(s).

Petrol – if you are eligible for support with travel to and from college, your award will be based on the cheapest and most reasonable form of public transport available to you. We will only contribute towards petrol costs for job interview transport costs as described above.

Car parking – where there is no student parking on-site. If you choose to travel by car, we will not contribute towards the cost of metered parking.

Small items of stationery – e.g. pens, paper, folders.

Assessment and Examination Fees – normally, students whose attendance falls below 90% by the time examination or assessment entries are made will be required to contribute towards the cost of assessment. The bursary fund will not cover this cost for you.

Printing - We will not pay for additional printing. We encourage students to carefully consider what needs to be printed, to cut down on waste.

Travel - Travel is paid on the cheapest bus route to college, from your local residence to the college; this is taken to be where you stay between days of the course. Travel, outside of 1 hour or 40 miles, whichever is the greater, will only be paid under exceptional circumstances.

Your bursary may cover:

Issues to do with Food Poverty – in the case of the learner - if you as an individual are in food poverty over and above the Bursary Application, please contact us detailing your exceptional circumstance as we may be able to help.

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