



# STUDENT FINANCIAL SUPPORT FUNDING POLICY 2022-23

**The OHC&AT Board of Trustees has agreed this Policy and as such, it applies across all College centres and settings – 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022.**

Peter Lauener  
Chair of OHC Board

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Lauener", with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

# Student Financial Support Funding Policy 2022-23

## INTRODUCTION

Orchard Hill College (OHC) is committed to providing outstanding educational opportunities for all our students.

This policy sets out arrangements for how Orchard Hill College will operate the 16-19, 19+ Discretionary and Vulnerable Bursary Fund and Free Meals Fund. Arrangements are based on the Education and Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) and Greater London Authority (GLA) guidance.

## WHAT IS THE BURSARY FUND?

The Bursary Fund is a scheme set up by the Department for Education (DfE) and funded by both ESFA and GLA. The Fund provides financial support to eligible students to help overcome their specific financial barriers to participation so they can remain in education and training.

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

There are three types of bursary: discretionary bursary, vulnerable bursary and free meals fund.

To be eligible to apply for the fund, students must:

- Be aged over 16 and under 19 as of 31 August in the enrolling academic year.
- Over 19+ up to the age of 24 with an EHCP
- Over 19+ without an EHCP.
- Have been a resident in the UK or EEA for three years preceding 31 August in the enrolling academic year.
- Meet one of the following eligibility criteria (benefits can be in a parent/carer or student's name):
  - Income support
  - Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
  - Employment Support Allowance (income related)
  - Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
  - The guarantee element of State Pension Credits
  - Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual income (as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs) that does not exceed £28,000
  - Universal credit
  - In full-time residential care
  - Low Household income (less than £28,000 pa)

- Temporary financial hardship or change in circumstances

If you do not fall into any of the categories above but are still in need of assistance, please talk to our Bursary team and we will endeavor to help where possible.

To be eligible for the vulnerable bursary, students must meet the above criteria and fall into one of the following categories:

- Be a looked after child (LAC).
- Be a care leaver.
- Be 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.
- Be 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.
- Be under the age of 19 years old, as of 31<sup>st</sup> August in the enrolling academic year.

## HOW IS THE BURSARY FUND ALLOCATED?

### Vulnerable Bursary

The Vulnerable Bursary Fund is designed to help support young people who face the greatest financial barriers to participate in education or training.

In order to apply for the Vulnerable Bursary, the College must submit a Funding Claim form to the Student Bursary Support Service (SBSS) once an eligible young person is identified. The Student Bursary Support Service, part of the ESFA/GLA, will then issue funds directly to the College.

Applications must be supported by appropriate evidence, such as:

- A letter from the DWP setting out the benefit the young person is entitled to, confirming that the terms of their benefit entitlement allow them to participate in further education or training.
- Written confirmation of the young person's current or previous looked-after status from the Local Authority which looks after them or provides their leaving care services.

Eligible students can apply for a vulnerable bursary of **up to** £1,200.

### Discretionary Bursary

Discretionary Bursaries are awards made to students by the College to help overcome the individual financial barriers to participating in education, for example help with:

- travel
- educational visits
- books and equipment
- specialist clothing; e.g.; work-related clothing
- specialist equipment

- Free Meals top up
- Student wellbeing support activities

Funding for the Discretionary Bursary is received directly by the College from the ESFA/GLA. The allocation process for these funds is as follows:

- Students that apply will be assessed individually against the criteria and will be awarded a bursary fund based on their actual financial need.
- Any unspent discretionary funding from the previous academic year will be prioritised for students based on their actual financial need in the current academic year.
- Some funding will be held back for a contingency for students whose personal circumstances may change.
- 5% of the discretionary fund will be held back to cover administrative costs.

### **Free Meals Fund**

Similar to the two Bursary Funds, Free Meals is awarded to provide free meals to disadvantaged students. As the College sites do not have direct access to their own canteen facilities, this award will be provided through cash payments, voucher schemes or similar at the discretion of OHC.

### **HOW TO APPLY**

The Application Form for the Bursary Fund Policy is at Appendix A and Financial Guidance Document is at Appendix B. Evidence of eligibility is required and should be included with the completed application form. The acceptance of an application form does not guarantee funding. The College will notify students in writing of the outcome of their application.

Please note: the College cannot accept responsibility for the loss of applications during the postal process and will be unable to backdate applications.

### **Conditions for receipt of student bursaries**

Receipt of both vulnerable student and discretionary bursaries and the free meals fund is conditional on the student meeting the bursary eligibility criteria and funding bodies' eligibility criteria as defined by the College.

Payments will be made based on students attending and engaging with their College programme.

### **Assessment and approval of applications**

Each application with supporting documentation will be assessed in strictest confidence in line with ESFA guidance.

All discretionary fund payments will be subject to review and approval by a representative of the College Senior Leadership Team (SLT). All decisions will be made through a panel meeting.

## High value equipment

We may be able to help with the cost of high value equipment such as laptops, cameras and tablets where students require them to successfully complete their programme. This will be dependent on the budget available. Decisions for equipment will be made at Panel meetings with a member of SLT.

In special circumstances, and at the discretion of the College SLT, some students may be allowed to retain their equipment at the end of the programme, where a particular need has been identified.

The College accepts no responsibility for the damage or loss of any equipment. Any repairs, replacement or insurance for these items will be the responsibility of the individual student.

## PAYMENT

Vulnerable Bursary payments will be made fortnightly to eligible students. The provider will use a BACS transfer for payment to the student's nominated bank account.

The level of support which the College can offer under the Discretionary Bursary is dependent on the funding received from the ESFA/GLA and the number of applications it receives. The College may award a bursary for spending on agreed items or may provide items, the value of which will be deducted from the bursary amount.

*Please note: Students will need to have a current bank account. If the payment is to be made payable to someone other than the student, proof of Power of Attorney must be provided.*

Secure records will be kept of all awards, receipts and payments for audit purposes for a period of six years in accordance with statutory financial regulations. An annual report on the number of awards made and the total value will be produced.

## APPEALS

If a young person or their parent/carer are not satisfied with the outcome of their application, they should appeal in writing to the Principal of the College within 10 working days, stating the reasons why. The Principal of the College will review the application within 15 working days of receiving the appeal.

The decision of the College Principal is final and will be given in writing within 10 working days of their decision.

## **POLICY REVIEW DETAILS**

*Version:* 1.2  
*Reviewer:* Sarah Webster, Charlotte Evans, Kirsty Cottrell  
*Approval body:* Family Board  
*Date this version approved:* 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022  
*Due for review:* Summer 2023