

Student Bursary Policy

July 2026



SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FOLLOWING REVIEW

PAGE NUMBER OR HEADING NAME	DETAILS OF SIGNIFICANT CHANGE	CHANGES MADE BY
Appendix 1	College Eligibility Criteria updated for 2026-27	Tracy Espinosa
Help for Vulnerable Student	Details relating to assessment for further help from the Discretionary Bursary added	Tracy Espinosa

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Equality Impact Assessment

It is proposed that this form be included in all college policy template from hereon before the contents page..

The aim of an equality impact assessment (EIA) is to consider the equality implications of any new or amended policy, procedure, practice, project, function on different groups of staff, students and visitors to the college. This EIA tool provides a simple framework that helps evaluate whether the change may inadvertently disadvantage protected characteristics and identify ways to proactively advance and promote equality.

You will need to consider each of the equations and provide information as to consideration and any changes made in relation to Equality, diversity and inclusion.

Date EIA completed.	July 2026
Name of person responsible for completing the EIA	Tracy Espinosa
Role of person responsible for completing the EIA	Student Services Manager (Engagement and Funding)
Who is affected by the policy / decision / change	All Further Education students
What's the reason for the new policy / change in policy, practice, process etc.	Update for 2026-27 academic year with updated eligibility criteria

You will need to consider whether its possible that the proposed new policy / change in policy /procedure/practice etc could discriminate or unfairly discriminate or disadvantage people. You should consider:

Who gets to participate	Who does not, or who now does not due to the changes proposed / made.
Who is at an advantage	Who is at a disadvantage, and again has this changed?
Who will benefit	Who will not benefit (or who did and now doesn't due to the changes proposed in policy
Who can access the policy	Who cannot, or now cannot.

Protected Characteristic	What degree of impact does the change have (score 1-5 with 1 the lowest and 5 the highest)	What is a potential positive, neutral or negative impact? Include what you have considered. Are there any barriers?	What action will be taken to address any negative impact or remove any potential barriers identified? Note if we are not able to resolve anything identified.	Date by when and whom will this action be taken.
Age	None			
Disability	5	Students who may have reading impairments such as dyslexia or dyspraxia may require additional support in understanding the content and how it affects them. Students who may have different level of digital skills as a result may have issues in filling out forms or using digital systems and submitting applications. Students with sight or hearing impairments.	Staff will share information with students and provide advice and guidance on the policy and processes that they may have to follow and comply with. Support will be provided utilising systems and processes. This document can be provided in different formats to support learners who may have sight impairments, or reading impairments. Students with sight impairments, the College will provide systems to help translate into digital versions so they can hear the content. Ongoing throughout the academic year.	Ongoing – throughout academic year
Gender (Sex)	None			
Gender Reassignment	None			
Marriage or Civil Partnership	None			
Pregnancy / Maternity	None			
Race	None			
Religion or Religious Belief	None			
Sexual Orientation	None			

Protected Characteristic	What degree of impact does the change have (score 1-5 with 1 the lowest and 5 the highest)	What is a potential positive, neutral or negative impact? Include what you have considered. Are there any barriers?	What action will be taken to address any negative impact or remove any potential barriers identified? Note if we are not able to resolve anything identified.	Date by when and whom will this action be taken.
Any other element that needs to be considered.	5	Students for whom English is a second language may struggle to understand this Policy, Eligibility Criteria and support provided	Appropriate action will be taken to ensure any person who discloses English as a second language are provided with adjustments to enable them to understand and be aware of processes	Ongoing – throughout academic year

Note:

1. The terms stated under protected characteristics are the terminology used in the Equality Act 2010.
2. As part of the policy approval process Executive Board will consider the EIA assessment and any potential barriers which we may not be able to overcome and whether the action proposed will mitigate sufficiently within legislation or whether we decide to not implement the new policy if the risk are significant. If the policy is approved the EIA is also approved.

Student Bursary Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

South Essex College receives allocations of funds from the Department for Education (DfE) to support eligible students to meet the costs of participating in education. The College sets its criteria for funding in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Department for Education.

Eligible students will be required to show supporting evidence that they meet the required criteria. In certain exceptional circumstances, South Essex College may exercise its ability to make discretionary awards.

These government documents can be downloaded from the websites, these are updated periodically at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-meals-in-further-education-guide/free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-guide-academic-year-2026-to-2027>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2026-to-2027>

<https://www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan/bursary-fund>

2. POLICY AIMS

This policy aims to help students, and potential students, to determine their eligibility for financial support from the College's Bursary funds, which are available to assist them with their costs to participate in further education and to detail the level of support provided and conditions the College has set for the bursary whilst complying with the eligibility conditions and funding rules set out by the Department for Education (DfE).

3. RELATED COLLEGE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

There are no related policies and procedures.

4. INFORMATION

South Essex College provides information about and promotes access to financial support via information leaflets, the College website, at interviews and at promotional events i.e. open events and during enrolment.

Our Student Bursary applications are online and students can register and apply via the College Website (www.southessex.ac.uk/finance/fees-and-funding). Progressing students must reapply for funding. Students can get help to complete their application by visiting the Funding Team. Applications must be completed before students can receive help with travel. Travel is prioritised and students may receive a bus or train pass before their Application is fully processed.

Refunds will be paid to students who have funded their travel to College prior to receipt of a travel pass, evidence of travel is required. If a student is unable to fund travel to College they can request rail warrants from the Funding Team each day that they are in college. A rail warrant will be provided for their next day of attendance.

Up-to-date, valid supporting evidence must be produced at the time of application and all applications must be received by the published deadline 16th October 2026. Applications received after the published deadline may not be processed.

All students aged 16 and over and who meet the residency criteria set out in national funding guidance and are studying an DfE funded course are eligible to apply. Waged apprentices are not eligible.

Should an applicant withdraw from their chosen course of study and decide to leave College, they may be required to repay monies or return equipment supplied/bought by the support fund.

5. ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility is based on age, residence, household income and in the case of travel, distance travelled from home to campus of study. The College eligibility criteria is reviewed and updated annually based on the DfE published guidelines for that year. Full eligibility criteria and maximum levels of support is detailed in Appendix 1.

The 16-19 Bursary Fund, 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund and Advanced Learner Loans Bursaries are means-tested and applicants will be required to provide evidence to verify total household income. Students applying through the Advanced Learner Loan Bursaries for Additional Learning Support costs ONLY will not be means tested.

6. HELP TOWARDS MEETING COURSE RELATED COSTS

Assessment of the level of support needed for each programme of study will be carried out in conjunction with information supplied by direct delivery teams regarding course related costs.

A breakdown of course related costs, and how these will be awarded will be clearly detailed in our Award letters. Contributions vary across our Bursary Funds. Funds paid directly to students will be made via BACs to the designated bank account.

7. HELP TOWARDS TRAVEL COSTS

Bursary funds for students aged 16-18 will be administered in conjunction with Local Authority Transport Scheme's and Policies. In most cases Bursary funds will be used to provide additional financial support where transport costs are not met in full or present a barrier to learning.

Support through bursary funds with the cost of travel is available to students who travel more than two miles to their site of study.

Travel support will normally be in the form of a travel pass using the most cost effective form of transport, however the college will exercise discretion on this decision where another form of support is deemed more suitable.

Students eligible for local authority travel assistance can request assistance with the cost of the contribution they are required to make.

8. HELP TOWARDS MEALS

Students aged 16-18 or aged 19-25 with a valid EHCP at the beginning of the academic year who live in a household that is in receipt of one of the benefits below are entitled to free college meals on days they attend study or activity that is part of their course. (i.e. work experience):

Eligible benefits

- Universal Credit
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

Households in receipt of Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or the guarantee element of Pension Credit may also be entitled to a meal.

A student is only eligible to receive a free meal when they, or a responsible adult on their behalf, have made a successful application to the College.

Meals provided will not exceed a maximum value of £4 per day and will be supplied through the college's catering outlets. Alternative arrangements will only be made for students who are studying off site (collaborative provision) or in exceptional cases. Students eligible for a Free College Meal **only** will be awarded the full £4 which includes the bursary top up.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/free-meals-in-further-education-guide/free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-guide-academic-year-2026-to-2027>

9. HELP TOWARDS CHILDCARE COSTS

Students aged under 20 at the start of the academic year can apply for support with childcare costs through the Care to Learn scheme which is administered by the College.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-to-learn-guidance/care-to-learn-academic-year-2026-to-2027-conditions-of-grant-funding>

Students aged over 20 can apply for support with childcare costs through the Discretionary Learner Support Fund / Advanced Learner Loans Bursary.

Where funding is awarded towards the cost of childcare with an registered provider. Funds will be paid to a third party only. The third party must be registered with OFSTED.

The amount of funding available for childcare through the Discretionary Learner Support Fund / Advanced Learner Loans Bursary is limited and there is no guaranteed entitlement to the funds.

Students are normally expected to use their free childcare funding towards the cost of the childcare. This will be covered in the application form sent to the Childcare Providers to complete. The College may waive this rule in exceptional circumstances for childcare funded through the Discretionary Learner Support Fund /Advanced Learner Loans Bursary.

Students on IS/JSA or ESA are to be supported with returnable/refundable deposits for childcare; these monies will be paid directly to the childcare provider. These are to be returned when the student leaves college.

10. HELP TOWARDS COURSE FEES

There are limited funds available to assist with the cost of tuition fees for 19+ learners who are not fully-funded for their course costs.

Students will only be supported where alternative means of financial support are not available and exceptional circumstances can be evidenced.

In exceptional circumstances the College bursary funds may also help with exam fees. Each application will be considered on its own merit within the college criteria/budget constraints.

Students who are eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan are unable to apply for financial support with course fees.

11. HELP FOR VULNERABLE STUDENTS

Students aged 16 – 19 in defined vulnerable groups will be entitled to a vulnerable bursary of up to £1200 (pro-rata according to length of course and hours of attendance). The defined vulnerable groups are:

Students in the care of the Local Authority including unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
Students leaving care.

Students living independently and in receipt of Income Support or the equivalent Universal Credit

Students in receipt of both Disability Living Allowance (or the new Personal Independence Payment) and Employment Support Allowance (or Universal Credit as a replacement for ESA).

Students who believe they qualify for the bursary are required to provide evidence of their care status or benefits as above to support their application.

Students will be awarded only the amount of support they need to participate based on an assessment of the types of costs they have and will not be automatically awarded £1,200. If there is no actual financial need and/or those needs are already being met elsewhere, for example by the local authority, no award will be made.

Students who require more help may be awarded additional support from the discretionary bursary if they meet the eligibility criteria for that bursary. Students in residential care meet the eligibility criteria based on the Personal Allowances paid to them and therefore individual

assessment is not necessary. We will allow a buffer of up to £300 for students who fail to provide HHI where awards exceed £1200.

Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for the vulnerable student bursary.

12. HELP TOWARDS ADDITIONAL LEARNING SUPPORT NEEDS (ADVANCED LEARNER LOAN STUDENTS ONLY)

Support through bursary funds with the cost of Additional Learning Support needs is available to students who are formally assessed by the college as needing support with learning. Awards are available each academic year to a maximum award value of £1500 per student however the College reserves its right to consider exceptional levels of need/circumstances.

13. EMERGENCY FUND

Emergency Funds to meet unexpected financial crises are available. Funds can only be accessed in the case of extreme hardship. The College will not assist with prior debt i.e. debts accumulated prior to enrolment or during the first College term.

14. ALLOCATION

In all cases, the application will be judged on its individual merits as outlined in the DfE guidelines. The amount awarded will be specific to each individual application. Applicants will be advised in writing of their full award.

If attendance falls below 100% awards may be withheld. Where a student's attendance is below 50% for 2 consecutive weeks, all payments will be withheld until the student reengages with the Funding Team.

15. APPEALS

If any student is dissatisfied with the decision regarding their award, they can appeal in writing to the Student Services Manager (Engagement and Funding). Letters can be handed to a Funding Administrator or emailed to Funding@southessex.ac.uk. All appeals will be acknowledge within 5 working days with a final outcome within 10 working days from the date of receipt.

16. POLICY REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed by the Student Services Manager (Engagement and Funding).

Appendix 1

College Eligibility Criteria 2026-27

Household income (HHI) is defined by support fund with priority given to students with income falling on and below the threshold set each academic year

- The College may choose to use discretion where household income exceeds this amount but a need for support is identified

Maximum levels of support for 16-19 students:

Age	Level of Income	Equipment/Course cost % of contribution (see section 6)	Travel
16 - 18	Income under £35,000	A contribution to course costs of £100, £200 or £300 – contribution is determined by actual course costs	100% (not exceeding £2500)

In addition to travel and Equipment/Course cost contributions, Further Education Free Meals are available to 16-19 students who meet published criteria in section 8 of this document.

Maximum levels of support for students aged 19+:

Age	Level of Income	Equipment/Course cost % of contribution (see section 6)	Travel	Course Fees	Learning Support	*Childcare
19+ FT	**Income under £40,000	100%	100% (not exceeding £2500)	Exceptional Circumstances 50% with possible top up of 40%. 10% student contribution at enrolment	0%	£4.50 per hour capped at £45 each day
19+ PT	**Income under £40,000	100%	100% (not exceeding £2500)	Exceptional Circumstances 50% with possible top up of 40%. 10% student contribution at enrolment	0%	£4.50 per hour capped at £45 each day
Advanced Learner Loans recipients	**Income under £40,000	100%	100% (not exceeding £2500)	0%	Maximum award of £1500 per year	£4.50 per hour capped at £45 each day

* We will allow for a maximum of 1 hour per day travel between College and Childcare provider and use timetabled hours to calculate the daily rate giving consideration to ½ day, whole day rates. Support can cover meals including breakfast and afterschool and preschool clubs as well as day nurseries, pre-schools and childminders. Holidays will be covered with the exception of the long summer holiday.



Senior Leadership Responsibility	Jane Belcher, Interim Director of ALS, Safeguarding and Learner Wellbeing
Policy Author	Tracy Espinosa
Roles Responsible for Reviewing	Student Services Manager (Engagement and Funding)
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