



**SMC Student Fees
and
Financial Support
Policy
2021/22**

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1. Introduction

St. Mary's College are committed to operating in an ethical and principled way.

By honouring and practicing our values we will maintain a climate of trust and mutual respect.

St. Mary's College aims to ensure fees charged in relation to learning are:

- Responsive to the Education, Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding and fee assumptions.
- Maximise fee income yet remain competitive.
- Simple to apply and easily understood.
- At least cover all costs where learning aims are full cost recovery.

We aim to provide information, advice and application guidance relating to the following Government funded initiatives in order to help support the financial costs of participating in learning:

- 16 - 19 Guaranteed Bursary.
- 16 - 19 Discretionary Bursary.

Compliance: Legal, Statutory and Internal Regulations

The Student Fees and Financial Support Policy is underpinned by the following legal / statutory / internal regulations:

- ESFA Funding Guidance and Regulations
- Freedom of Information Act 2000
- Local Authority Funding Guidance
- St Mary's College Financial Regulations
- St Mary's College Freedom of Information (Publication) Scheme
- St Mary's College Equality Policy & Procedures
- GDPR 2018
- Equality Act 2010

Scope:

The Student Fees and Financial Support Policy applies to all students wishing to participate in a study programme that is not eligible to be fully funded by a funding body and / or students meeting the eligibility criteria for any funding initiative available to St. Mary's College and repeals all previous policies in relation to fees, financial support, bursaries, grants and loans.

Specific accountabilities of parties are:

- The Business Manager holds ultimate accountability to ensure Government funded initiatives are applied in accordance with current ESFA Funding Guidance and College Policies and Procedures.
- The Business Manager has responsibility to ensure the Fees Policy meets contractual guidance and is applied accordingly.
- The Business Manager has responsibility to ensure that the Bursary and Free Meals procedures and protocols are applied, monitored and revised as required.

2. Student Fees Policy

Administration Charges

Type of Funding	Administration/Registration Fee
Fully funded	None
Co-funded	Course registration/exam fee
Full cost recovery	None

Tuition Fees

Learning Aims Funded by the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

- Fully funded study programmes only apply to individuals under 19 or individuals aged 16-24 with a Learning Difficulty Assessment (see Fee Remission).
- The tuition fees for other study programmes / individuals will be determined by reference to the fee element of the ESFA Funding Formula. For 2021 / 2022 the tuition fee assumption is 50% of the learning aim funding. Any deviation from a 50% contribution must be agreed by the Executive.

Learning Aims Funded on a full cost recovery basis

- The tuition fee for each learning aim will be determined using a formula approved by the Principalship. Any deviation from the formula must be agreed by the Executive.

Examination Fees

- All students resitting examinations will be charged an examination fee.
- Former students are accepted as external candidates where the College is able to offer examination entry for a current subject. Such entrants will be subject to an examination administration fee of £40 (or more if appropriate) plus the appropriate Awarding Body examination fees.

Fee Remission

Learning Aims Funded by the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)

No compulsory tuition, enrolment, registration or examination fees shall will be charged to:

- Students aged 16 years and under 19 years of age on 31st August 2021.
- Students aged 19 years of age or over on 31st August 2021 on a continuing programme of study where that programme of study commenced before the student reached 19 years of age.
- Students aged 16 -24 years on 31st August 2021 with a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) and have additional Learning Support (ALS) needs over £6,000.

Note: A programme of study comprises all of a students' activities that lead to a set of outcomes agreed with the individual student as part of their initial advice and guidance.

Learning Aims Funded on a Full Cost Recovery Basis

- Tuition fees will be charged in all cases. Remission will not be applicable.

Instalments

Students may pay fees by instalments. The threshold to be able to pay by instalments is £200.

- Total fees of £200-£499 may be paid in three equal instalments. The first instalment, plus a one-off arrangement fee, must be paid on enrolment. The remaining fees must be paid in two equal monthly instalments by standing order, no interest is charged.
- Total fees over £500 may be paid in four equal instalments again the first on enrolment with the one-off arrangement fee and the balance paid in three monthly instalments by standing order.

Late Enrolments

- Full fees as applicable will be charged for ESFA funded courses.
- Fees in relation to learning aims (courses) supported by the Local Authority, or Full Cost Recovery, will be calculated on a pro-rata basis from the start of the previous half term.

Exceptions

In exceptional circumstances a variation from the standard fee may be charged outside of the Student Fees Policy. The individual must submit an application in writing to the Business Manager, who will consider the application and authorised if appropriate.

Refunds

- A full refund will be given if a course is cancelled.
- Where a student cancels an enrolment up to 5 days prior to the commencement of the learner aim (course) a refund is provided excluding 10% to cover administration cost up to a maximum of £25.
- All other requests for refunds or credit notes must be in writing to the Business Manager within a maximum of 4 weeks of withdrawing from the course. Only exceptional circumstances will be considered. Credit notes will only be valid until the end of the following academic year.
- No refund/credit note will be issued after the start date where the course is based on full cost recovery.

Signed:

Elissa Best

Title:

Principal (Interim)

Date:

13/09/21

3. Student Financial Support Policy

St. Mary's College is committed to promoting and guiding the application of financial assistance to those entitled in order to help support the financial costs of participating in learning.

16-19 Bursary Support Funds and 19+ Adult Discretionary Support Funds are allocated by the Educational and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), The purpose of the funds is to reduce the financial barriers associated with study for students aged 16 and over with proven financial hardship. The funds support students to meet the costs of participating in courses, to attend regularly, achieve and progress.

The Bursary Support Fund supports students who are between 16 and 19 and assessed as being in need of financial assistance. St. Mary's College complies with the 16-19 Bursary Funding Guidelines issued by the ESFA. Young people must satisfy the residency criteria as stated in the document ESFA Funding Guidance Funding Regulations.

In order to further support students St Mary's College, offer an Exceptional Circumstances Bursary to assist with unexpected changes to circumstances and / or exceptional financial difficulty.

Free Meals will be offered to eligible individuals and will be administered following ESFA compliance guidance.

All support fund initiatives are administered in accordance with current ESFA Funding Guidance and St. Mary's College Policies and Procedures.

Signed:

Elissa Best

Title:

Principal (Interim)

Date:

13/09/2021

4. Bursary and Free Meals Guidance

Introduction

The 16-19 Bursary and Free Meal Application Procedure supports the Student Financial Support Policy. St. Mary's College aims to ensure that any opportunities for financial support are promoted and guidance and support is provided to those entitled in applying for financial support to participate in learning.

The Bursary Fund is available to support students who face the greatest barriers to continue in education and to ensure every young person participates in and benefits from a place in 16-19 education.

The Student Financial Support Procedure sets out the arrangements for how St Mary's College will prioritise and administer the 16-19 Bursary Fund in 2021/2022 ensuring funds are used to make the maximum impact on recruitment, attendance, retention, achievement and success rates.

Awards from the Bursary will be used towards essential course related costs such as books, equipment, travel, field trips, visits and other costs associated with learning. It is not intended to provide learning support, support extra-curricular activities where these are not essential to the student's study programme or support general household incomes.

This procedure complies with Funding Compliance Guidance 2021/2022 provided by the Education, Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and relates to Guaranteed and Discretionary Bursaries

Minimum standards include:

- Promoting the opportunity to apply for a 16-19 Bursary to all 16-19-year-old applicants
- Assessing the eligibility of applicants against the ESFA criteria
- Ensuring rigour and consistency in the administration of an application
- Ensuring ESFA administration, monitoring and audit compliance
- Security of and restricted access to data processed and retained
- Providing access to individuals with regard to their own personal data

What is the Bursary Fund?

The 16-19 Bursary Fund is designed to help support young people who face the greatest financial barriers to participation in education or training. The Bursary is means tested and claims can be made at any time for the following (whilst full payment is not guaranteed, each request will be carefully considered):

- transport costs
- books and equipment,
- trips / university visits
- photocopying/printing credits
- meals
- equipment
- re-sit exam fees
- other College related activities and items

The fund is split into 2 parts, Vulnerable Bursaries and Discretionary Bursaries.

Vulnerable Bursaries

A Vulnerable Bursary is available* to learners who fall into one of the vulnerable groups identified below and are eligible to receive an award of up to £1,200 per year:

- learners in care
- care leavers - 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
- learner 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 16
- learner in receipt of 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
- learner in receipt of 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 (Child Benefit to parent will cease if learner successfully applies for Employment Support Allowance)

**Although a young person may be eligible for the Bursary because they are in one of the defined vulnerable groups, a Bursary will only be granted if there is an actual financial need.*

Evidence of eligibility for Vulnerable Bursaries:

- learners who are in care or a care leaver, written confirmation of current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority
- learners in receipt of Income Support, a copy of the Income Support award notice. Learner must be entitled to the benefit in their own right and the evidence must confirm that the learner can be in further education or training (some young people in receipt of benefits are not allowed to participate)
- learners in receipt of Universal Credit, a copy of the Universal Credit Award notice. Learner must be entitled to the benefit in their own right and the evidence must confirm that the learner can be in further education or training. Learners must also provide additional documentation to confirm their independent status, for example a tenancy agreement in the learner's name, a child benefit receipt, children's birth certificates, utility bills etc.
- learners receiving Universal Credit/Employment and Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments, a copy of the Universal Credit or ESA award from DWP (UC claimants will be able to print off details of their award from their journal). Evidence of receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment, must also be provided

Decisions:

There is possibility that the outcome of an application for a Bursary for vulnerable groups be that of either no award, or a limited award.

Income support is paid to young people such as teenage parents, young people with severe disabilities, teenagers living away from their parents, young people whose parents have died and unaccompanied asylum seeking children, where a financial need is established.

Learner awarded Universal Credit to pay for housing costs (in place of housing benefit) will not be eligible for a vulnerable bursary unless they are also receiving another eligible benefit.

Discretionary Bursaries

St Mary's college will then award bursaries to learners whose family's household income falls below **£18,000** per year and are facing genuine financial barriers to learning. The award will be made in kind up to a maximum of £400 subject to meeting attendance and behaviour criteria. Payments for trips/exceptional costs to ensure participation in learning will be considered on an individual basis – please see the Bursary Team for an award request form.

Who is eligible to apply?

To be eligible to apply for the fund, the household income must fall below £18,000 and learners must meet the criteria detailed below:

- be aged 16 or over but under 19 years of age at 31st August or
- be aged 19 or over at 31 August and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- be aged 19 or over at 31 August and continuing on a programme enrolled on aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers')
- have been resident in the UK or EEA for three years preceding 31 August (verified before enrolment)
- be enrolled on a government funded course

How to apply?

- complete the 16-19 Bursary Fund application form answering all questions to avoid any delays in processing – forms can be downloaded from the College Website www.stmarysblackburn.ac.uk
- submit your application form online before 31st October 2021 and email the required evidence to bursary@stmarysblackburn.ac.uk – applications received after this date may be considered but funds will be allocated on a pro-rata basis.

Evidence

All applications to access the 16-19 Bursary Fund must be supported by appropriate evidence as detailed on the application form. All evidence will be treated as confidential.

Learners in receipt of qualifying benefits – the evidence must confirm that the learner can be in further education or training.

What happens next?

- The Bursary Panel will test the application against the eligibility criteria and check the evidence and assess the need for funding. The Bursary Team may discuss the application with the student if required. The 16-19 Bursary will only be awarded to a student that is eligible and facing a genuine financial barrier to participating.

- The Bursary Team will notify students by email of the outcome of their application within 14 working days of receipt. However, in September the processing time may be longer as most applications are received at this time.
- Any application that requires special consideration will be discussed by the Bursary Fund Awards Committee (see membership on page 12), who will consider the application and decide the level of any award. This is normally completed within 4 weeks of the application.
- The Finance Office will keep financial records of all awards made for a period of six years

Please note: Students will need to have a current bank account.

Appeals Process

You have a right to appeal. Any learner or their parent/guardian not satisfied with the outcome of their application, can appeal in writing to the Bursary Team within 10 working days stating fully their reasons why. The Bursary Team will call a Bursary Fund Appeals Panel within 14 working days of receiving the appeal. Final decisions for appeals will be made by the Appeals Panel consisting of the Business Manager and Head of Safeguarding and Student Discipline. The applicant will be informed of the panel's decision within 10 working days of that meeting. The panel's decision is final.

Confidentiality

Applications and supporting evidence will be confidential to the 16-19 Bursary Application Panel, and in the event of an appeal, the 16-19 Bursary Appeals Panel. The applications and supporting evidence will remain confidential during processing, payment and storage. If it is necessary to obtain additional information to reach a decision, the learner and/or their parent/carer(s) will be told the reasons why this is necessary prior to sharing any information further.

Exceptional Circumstances

The Applications for learners who are eligible for government funding, but whose household income is in excess of the stated threshold and are experiencing financial difficulty due to a significant and unexpected change in personal circumstances during their time at College, may be considered for the Bursary Fund/emergency payments.

The Bursary Team may, at their discretion, also award a Bursary to any learner who faces genuine financial barriers to staying on in education such as a young carer who is providing care to a sick or disabled relative.

The College will operate a contingency fund which will be used for one-off payments to help learners who are experiencing exceptionally challenging circumstances, attend school trips, interviews etc.

Learners may apply for the Bursary Fund anytime during the year if their circumstances change.

Absence

Any awards will be subject to satisfactory attendance, punctuality, behaviour and progress in line with the College's Attendance Policy. Attendance below 93% may result in the bursary

awards being removed or withheld. Issues with punctuality may also result in awards being withheld.

Holidays in College Term Time

The College discourages taking time away from study for holidays during term time therefore holidays in College term time will be recorded as unauthorised. In the event you choose to do this a letter from a parent/carer should be sent to the Attendance Officer.

Formal Agreement

A student awarded a Guaranteed or Discretionary Bursary will sign an agreement with St Mary's College undertaking to meet the College's conditions, accepting the amount and basis on which it is to be paid.

Roles & Responsibilities

DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUND AWARDS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

- The Bursary Team

Responsibilities:

1. The Bursary Team and the Business Manager to formulate the College policy and procedure for distributing the Bursary Award Fund
2. To agree and confirm the criteria and formula for making standard awards
3. To agree discretionary awards on an individual basis

DISCRETIONARY LEARNER SUPPORT FUND APPEALS PANEL MEMBERSHIP

- Head of Safeguarding and Student Discipline
- Business Manager

Responsibilities:

This Panel is responsible for hearing any appeals and to rule on the appropriateness of the original award decision, confirming or amending it as appropriate. Following this, the Bursary Team will communicate the outcome of the appeal to the student by letter.

5. Important notes

The fund will be distributed in a consistent and fair way and in accordance with guidance issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Learner eligibility will normally be determined through an income-related assessment together with an assessment of the actual need for support. Where possible and appropriate, awards will be calculated using a standard formula. This process will be managed by the Bursary Team.

The Bursary fund cannot be used to fund extra-curricular activities or learning support, Duke of Edinburgh Award, tuition etc. Awards will be made as and when funds are requested for a specific purpose, upon completion of an awards request form. Request forms will be emailed upon a successful bursary application and will also be available on the College website.

Where, in the view of the Bursary Team, special circumstances apply, the application will be assessed and awards will be made where appropriate.

In cases where emergency help is required, support may be arranged by the Bursary Team to reflect the immediate needs of the learner.

The budget for the Bursary Fund is limited: learners who are eligible for support are not automatically entitled to it. If demand exceeds the available funds, reduced awards may be given.

In its administration of the Bursary Fund, St. Mary's College will not discriminate against learners on any basis as defined in current equalities legislation.

Learners enrolled on a two year course will need to re-apply for financial assistance at the beginning of the second year. Awards made in the second year may differ from first year awards.

All awards are dependent on the learners achieving and maintaining satisfactory progress and attendance in all their classes and the Bursary will be withheld or withdrawn if deemed unsatisfactory.

If false or incomplete information is submitted, or if parents do not declare any part of their income that is relevant, it may result in a referral to the police with the possibility of the learner and/or their family facing prosecution.

The Bursary Team may require updated evidence throughout the year.

Care To Learn - Childcare support for young parents

Students aged 16-19 years of age who have parental responsibility can also access financial support for childcare through the Government funded Care to Learn scheme. Further details and how to apply can be found at <https://www.gov.co.uk/care-to-learn/how-to-claim>. Young parents are expected to access any entitlement they may have for 15 or 30 hours free childcare for 2, 3 and 4 year olds before applying for funding from Care to Learn. More information is available on the gov.uk website (<https://www.gov.uk/free-early-education>)

6. Free College Meals

As well as the Bursary fund, some students may be eligible for the free college meals. The College will fund the free meal to all eligible students via an electronic credit to the value of £2.41 a day for the days the student is timetabled to be in College, which can only be redeemed on-site to the value of £2.41 a day.

Learners who are off-site undertaking work placement or on educational visits may be offered cash at the discretion of the Bursary Team – please inform the Bursary Team prior to the event.

Eligibility

One of the following must apply:

- learners must be aged between 16 and 18 on 31 August 2021 to be eligible for free meals. Learners who turn 19 during their study programme will remain eligible for a free meal until the end of the academic year in which they turn 19.
- learners aged 19 or over at 31 August 2021 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

- learners aged 19 or over at 31 August 2021 and continuing on a programme enrolled on aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers').

In addition to the above, learners must have been a resident in the UK or EEA for three years preceding 31 August 2021 (verified before enrolment).

In addition, learners or their parents / carers must be entitled to one of the benefits listed below to qualify for the free meals:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- State Pension Credit (guarantee element)
- Child Tax Credit (provided you are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 as assessed by HMRC
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa
- Working Tax Credit run-on - paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

Universal Credit (self - employment) - Parents will need to provide evidence of:

- Universal Credit by providing their Universal Credit award letter.
- Self - employment by providing a copy of their company registration and tax return form.
- Monthly net earnings not exceeding the threshold - please complete the self-declaration form on the website.

Absence

Meals will only be funded on the days the learner is in College/Placement/Educational visit.

How to apply?

- complete the 16-19 Bursary Fund/Free Meals application answering all questions to avoid delays in processing – forms to be completed on the College Website www.stmarysblackburn.ac.uk
- email the required proof to bursary@stmarysblackburn.ac.uk – please state student name and date of birth in the email
- applications received after 31st October will not be backdated for awards

Evidence

All applications for the Free Meal must be supported by appropriate evidence as detailed on the application form.

Helpful Contact for information and support

Miss Duerden
01254 580464
bursary@stmarysblackburn.ac.uk

NB. The College reserves the right to amend/update the application form/policy & procedures during the academic year.