# Financial Support Policy

## Purpose

Grantham College is committed to supporting students who may face financial challenges, in helping them access eligible financial support to successfully complete their education.

The Discretionary Support Fund is available to assist students in overcoming financial barriers, enabling them to participate in and complete their studies. This support is intended to help with essential education-related costs, as outlined in this Policy.

Please note that the Discretionary Support Fund is awarded based on eligibility and the availability of funds and therefore is not guaranteed.

Grantham College follows and manages responsibly in line with the funding guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and undertakes to distribute Discretionary Support Funds as fairly and consistently as possible.

## Scope

This Policy applies to eligible students enrolled at Grantham College who require financial assistance to support their learning.

Bursary applications are assessed adhering to the current eligibility criteria by the DfE, and this policy will outline the application process, assessment eligibility, attendance requirements and how the funding is apportioned.

## Application Information

- Discretionary support funds are for individual students **not** courses.
- All students requiring financial assistance should complete a bursary application form via the online portal PayMyStudent which will be live from August.
- Application forms need to be submitted to the portal **no later than** the closing date together with all relevant supporting documentation and evidence of the household income.
- If you apply for a bursary after the closing date, we can still assess your eligibility; however, this will be subject to the availability of funds. Any funding awarded cannot be backdated and if successful, support will commence from the date of your application, providing we have the relevant evidence.

Examples of the household income evidence that will be required alongside the completed bursary application is listed below:

- If employed, P60/3 months' payslips
- If self-employed, most recent self-assessment tax calculation
- 3 months Universal Credit statements
  (full breakdown of award from the last 3 months)

- Income Support
- State Pension/Pension credits
- Private/Work Pension
- Employment and Support Allowance Job Seekers Allowance
- Working Tax Credit/Child Tax Credit (TCAN)
- Evidence relating to other dependents in the family eg students in HE
- Supporting information for bursary entitlement Maintenance payments and any part-time employment undertaken by students on full-time courses and living with parents/guardians, are excluded.

All applications will be assessed for discrepancies.

All supporting evidence must be submitted at the time of your application. If any documents are missing, you will have up to four weeks to provide them. If documents are not received within this time, your application will be closed and no longer considered. If you still wish to apply for bursary support after this period, you will need to submit a new application and provide all required evidence.

Applications will be assessed by the Student Finance Officer, and the decision will be communicated by letter to the student's email address/their online portal account PayMyStudent.

If any students are flagged as hardship cases (eg living independently) they should be referred immediately to the Student Finance Officer.

Students who are 16-18 years old on the 31 August and either in care, a care leaver or 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 or receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in addition to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (UC) - all benefits must be received by the student, in their own right.

All allocations are paid following the end of the month the decision has been made, direct to student bank accounts/parent/guardians or, where this has been agreed ie to the curriculum area for course costs.

Payments for travel costs are divided equally into 10 monthly instalments and paid at the end of each month or make up part of a weekly award based on attendance.

Students will be asked to sign that they understand the conditions under which an award is made and circumstances that may lead to payments being suspended or stopped.

Parent/Guardian of 16-19 Bursary Fund applicants will be asked to sign that they understand the conditions under which an award is made.

For clarification on any points students should contact Student Finance by email studentfinance@grantham.ac.uk or telephone (01476 400281).

## Eligibility & Priority Groups

Support is available to students enrolled on an eligible study programme who meet the eligibility criteria and who require financial assistance. However, all support is subject to funds being available and it is not therefore an entitlement.

Students studying on an apprenticeship programme are not eligible for funding.

The bursaries can be provided in bank payments and in terms of goods or services eg College meal vouchers, travel pass and equipment, subject to eligibility.

| Priority Group | Eligibility | Potential Support (all subject to funds being available) |
|---|---|---|
| 16-19 years and Vulnerable | In care or leaving care or Universal Credit in student's own name | • Travel if you live more than 3 miles from College<br>• Contribution to meals<br>• Kit, uniform, books and equipment that is essential to completing your course<br>• Educational trips and visits as approved by Grantham College<br>• Other course-related expenses as approved by Grantham College<br>• Examination resit costs<br>• Please note there is no automatic entitlement to £1,200. The amount of support will be linked to the need of the individual student |
| 16-19 years<br><br>(If you are aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August, or if you are aged over 19 and continuing on a study programme you began before turning 19, or are aged 19-24 with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)) | Household income less than £40k net | • Travel if you live more than 3 miles from College up to £135 per week<br>• Contribution to meals where funds allow<br>• Kit, uniform, books and equipment that is essential to completing your College course<br>• Educational trips and visits as approved by Grantham College<br>• Other course-related expenses as approved by Grantham College<br>• Examination resit costs |

| Priority Group | Eligibility | Potential Support<br>(all subject to funds being available) |
|---|---|---|
| 16-19 years<br>Free College meals<br><br>(If you are aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August, or if you are aged over 19 and continuing on a study programme you began before turning 19, or are aged 19–24 with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)) | If you or your parent/guardian within your household, are in receipt of Universal Credit - irrespective of your household income earnings.<br><br>Households that receive Income-related Employment and Support Allowance or the guaranteed element of Pension Credit may also be entitled | • Free College meals are at the standard rate of £2.66 per day towards the cost of a meal.<br><br>• Can be increased up to £5.00 per day if you are eligible for the 16-18 bursary.<br><br>(the amount is increased via the discretionary bursary support fund) |
| 19+ years<br><br>Adult Skills – Non-devolved areas only | Household income less than £40k net<br><br>Residing in a non-devolved region | • Awards for travel if you live more than 3 miles from College up to £135 per week<br>• Kit, uniform, books and equipment that is essential to completing your course<br>• Childcare up to £250 per week<br>• Contribution to meals if funds allow<br>• Educational trips and visits as approved by Grantham College<br>• Other course-related expenses as approved by Grantham College |
| 19+ years<br><br>Adult Skills – Lincolnshire only | Household income less than £40k net<br><br>Residing in Lincolnshire | • Awards for travel if you live more than 3 miles from College up to £135 per week<br>• Kit, uniform, books and equipment that is essential to completing your course<br>• Childcare up to £250 per week<br>• Contribution to meals if funds allow<br>• Educational trips and visits as approved by Grantham College<br>• Other course-related expenses as approved by Grantham College |

| Priority Group | Eligibility | Potential Support<br>(all subject to funds being available) |
|---|---|---|
| 19+ years<br><br>Advanced Learner Loan | Household income less than £40k net | • Awards for travel if you live more than 3 miles from College up to £135 per week<br>• Kit, uniform, books and equipment that is essential to completing your course<br>• Childcare up to £250 per week<br>• Contribution to meals if funds allow<br>• Educational trips and visits as approved by Grantham College<br>• Other course-related expenses as approved by Grantham College |
| Care to Learn Bursary<br><br>(C2L) | You must be under 20 years old on the date you start your study programme.<br><br>You must be the main carer and receive Child Benefit for your child(ren) for whom you are claiming childcare support.<br><br>Your childcare provider must be on the appropriate Ofsted register.<br><br>Other rules apply, please see our eligibility guide. | • C2L can provide childcare and travel support up to a maximum of £180.00 per week based on your timetable at College.<br>• If your costs are more than £180.00 (C2L maximum) further support may only be available if you meet the eligibility criteria for the Discretionary Support Fund.<br>• C2L can pay for deposits up to a maximum of £250.00 per child if the childcare provider requires this.<br>• C2L will pay and registration fees that are charged by your childcare provider up to a maximum of £80.00 per child. This is a one-off payment and will not be paid for subsequent academic years if you use the same childcare provider. |
| Higher Education<br><br>Access & Participation Bursary | You must be enrolled on an eligible Undergraduate or Higher Education course (such as a BA, BSc, HNC, HND, or Foundation Degree) and paying your tuition fees via Student Loan or self-funding. | • You must provide evidence that you have applied for a Higher Education Maintenance Loan and have not been successful.<br>• Application form must be completed and relevant evidence provided.<br>• Maximum award available is £1,000 per student. |

| Priority Group | Eligibility | Potential Support<br>(all subject to funds being available) |
|---|---|---|
| LIoT Quickline Bursary<br><br>(Lincolnshire Institute of Technology)<br><br>Please note that this is not a Grantham College Bursary and criteria is set by LIoT and Quickline. | You must be enrolled on an eligible LIoT course and live within Lincolnshire excluding City of Lincoln. | • Application form must be completed and relevant evidence provided.<br>• You must meet the criteria set by Quickline & LIoT<br>• Maximum award available is £1,000 per student for the duration of their course. |

The net household income for all Discretionary Support Funds must be no more than £40k per annum.

## Travel Applications

Applicants aged between 16 and 18 on 31st August or if you are aged over 19 and continuing on a study programme you began before turning 19 or are aged 19–24 with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), should apply to their Local Education Authority for assistance with travel costs.

Assistance may be given if LEA application is rejected; rejection letter will need to be provided.

Applicants aged 19+ should complete an Adult Skills Discretionary Support Fund or Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund application form for assistance with travel costs.

You will be required to provide travel receipts showing the cost of your journey to and from College for your first week of travel, to enable us to accurately calculate your travel costs going forward.

Receipts (eg bus passes or train tickets) can be uploaded to the PayMyStudent portal.

Please note, if we do not receive one week of travel receipts, we will be unable to calculate or reimburse your travel costs.

If travel support is provided, this will be paid in arrears and based upon student attendance.

## Childcare

The annual allocation awarded to individual students at the start of term should cover all childcare costs based on the information given to the College at the start of the academic year. It may not be possible during the course of the year to increase the allocation due to unforeseen eventualities.

No childcare costs will be allocated unless an 'Application for Childcare Costs' form has been completed and signed by the childcare provider.

All invoices for childcare should cover no later than the last day of the current academic year of study, ie if a student is undertaking a 2-year course a second application form will need to be completed at the start of their second year.

If your Childcare Support application is successful, the 20+ Childcare Fund can contribute towards your childcare fees, after any eligible government-funded childcare hours have been deducted.

The maximum award available is up to **£9,000 per academic year**, equating to **up to £250 per academic week**. If you require support above this amount, please provide details of your circumstances and the reasons for your request.

Please note that the College has limited funding available; therefore, additional financial support cannot be guaranteed and may not be available.

Eligible childcare support can be provided for your timetabled hours. If childcare support is required for non-timetabled hours, your tutor must inform the Student Finance Officer and provide details of the circumstances requiring the additional childcare outside of your timetabled hours. Requests for this additional support will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, however, cannot be guaranteed due to limited funding.

It will be your responsibility to pay any childcare costs above the agreed award.

Retainer fees are not guaranteed to be paid by the College, however, where possible and if funds allow, we will do our best to help with these costs.

No money will be allocated until 4 weeks after the start of the academic year as all applications need to be given the same priority.

No invoices for childcare will be paid in advance.

Any payments made by students should be receipted by the Nursery/Childminder and passed to the Student Finance Officer, once the allocation has been set.

Payment for childcare costs will only be made direct to the Nursery/Childminder upon receipt of a valid invoice and not to the student unless prior arrangement has been made.

Childcare invoices will be assessed monthly, paid in arrears and authorised based on student attendance.

Childcare payments may be reduced, adjusted or withdrawn if attendance falls.

## Free College Meals

From the start of academic year 2026 to 2027, students in households receiving Universal Credit will be entitled to free meals in further education, regardless of earnings.

Grantham College will provide Free College meal vouchers to students who meet the eligibility and age criteria.

If you are aged between 16 and 18 on 31st August or if you are aged over 19 and continuing on a study programme you began before turning 19, or are aged 19–24 with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Students within the above age categories must be in receipt of, or have parents/guardians who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits to be eligible for Free Meals irrespective of their household income level:

- 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 guaranteed element of Pension Credit may also be entitled to a meal.

You are only eligible to receive a free meal when you have made a successful application to Grantham College via the PayMyStudent portal and have provided evidence of the qualifying benefits.

Free College Meals are provided in the form of a meal voucher to be redeemed at Grantham College and provided for each full day you attend College.

Eligibility for free meals is assessed separately from bursary support. Receipt of free meals does not automatically entitle a student to discretionary financial support, which is awarded based on separate eligibility.

## End of Transitional Protections

Since 2018, some children have continued to receive free school meals, even if their family circumstances changed during the rollout of Universal Credit. This is referred to as transitional protections.

Now that entitlement is being expanded to all families on Universal Credit, these protections will end at the end of the 2025 to 2026 academic year. This means:

- Some students may no longer be eligible from the start of the 2026 to 2027 academic year if they or their parents do not receive Universal Credit or another qualifying benefit.

- Eligibility will now be based on current benefit status.

- Please note that the above is per the Department of Education Free College Meals Guidance that Grantham College must adhere to.

## Attendance

- Students must maintain good attendance and engage fully with their studies.
- Within the 16-19 bursary fund, any eligible travel support provided will be based upon student attendance.
- Within both of the Adult Skills Bursary funds, eligible travel, childcare and hardship support provided will be based upon student attendance

## General Principles

In deciding whether an absence should be authorised or not, the College should take account of three general principles:

- The presumption is that any absence should be considered to be *unauthorised*, unless there is a valid reason otherwise. In other words, where there is an absence there is no requirement for the college proactively to justify its decision not to authorise the absence.
- If the claimed reason for absence could have been foreseen, then the student should have applied for authorised absence in advance, for example, it might be acceptable for a student of the Jewish faith to have authorised absence on Yom Kippur if this was applied for in advance, but it would not be acceptable to miss classes without prior notification and then claim that the absence should be authorised.
- Where the claimed reason for absence could not reasonably have been foreseen, the College should consider whether the absence was really unavoidable. An absence which could not have been notified in advance should be notified to the College on the day in question, unless exceptionally there is a good reason why this could not be done, the absence should not be authorised without such notification.

In operating these principles, the College should ensure that decision making processes are transparent, and that there is equitable application of rules across all the students receiving attendance based financial support.

Students are expected to attend 100% of their timetabled lessons. However, Grantham College does recognise that there are occasions when it will not be possible for a student to attend. In these circumstances it may be possible for an authorised absence to be given. This will be essential for students who are in receipt of a Bursary Fund and wish to be paid if they miss lessons.

Please see the College Attendance Policy for more information.

## General Authorisations

The College may issue a general authorisation of absence in some circumstances (e.g. severe weather).

## Guidance in respect of attendance-based financial payments

In general, a student should be paid only where they have attended all the sessions for which they are required to register for these payments.

If the student has failed to attend, then the student should receive no payment for that week, and the College should notify appropriately in the weekly return.

It is, however, acceptable for the College to deem absence to be authorised. Where an absence is authorised, the student will still be entitled to the weekly payment as though they have attended in full (unless, of course, they have an unauthorised absence for a different session).

The fundamental principle is that, based on government guidelines, the College decides whether a particular absence is to be authorised or not.

## Partial attendance

For attendance based financial payment purposes the key point is that the College needs to report whether there has been satisfactory attendance and the College is free to determine the basis for taking that decision.

Where a student has not registered for an individual lesson, or arrives late, this should be picked up at the register taken for that lesson, but this may not immediately be detected for payment purposes.

The College should ensure that where staff are reporting absence from a lesson, there are arrangements for drawing this to the attention of the Student Progress Mentor.

## Study Leave

Students should receive their weekly payment during periods of authorised study leave preceding examinations until they have sat their final examination

## Notification of non-payment of weekly Bursary Fund

If there is a non-payment of Bursary Fund for any reason, students will be notified by email.

## Pay/No Pay Decisions

a) The Student Finance Officer will make the decision on whether or not to pay a student for a particular week based on the above guidance.

b) If a student is not satisfied with this decision they should appeal to the Student Finance Officer.

c) If the student is still not satisfied with the decision of the Student Finance Officer, they should appeal to the Director of Finance whose decision will be final.

## Note

All payments are made at the discretion of the Student Finance Officer and the Director of Finance.

## How to Appeal

If a student is not happy with the allocation made to them from the Discretionary Support Fund, they are to appeal in writing to Student Finance Officer, within 10 days of the date of the letter.

A further review of the student's personal circumstances will be considered by the Director of Finance and a letter in response sent out within the next 10 days.

## Maximum Allocation

Each course has a maximum payment threshold, determined by the essential expenditure for that course.

Allocations will not exceed that threshold and will be paid in accordance with household income criteria.

| Quality Assurance Version Control | | | |
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