

**Knowsley FACE**

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| **Policy:** | Flourish Bursary Policy |
| **Date reviewed:** | Created : June 2020  Reviewed: April 2021  Reviewed Sept 2021 |
| **Date to be renewed** | August 2021 (date subject to change in Govt guidance and funding rules yearly)  Updated Sept 2021 |
| **Reviewed by:** | Vicky Bolster |

**Purpose**

* To ensure that an assessment and eligibility process is carried out correctly to make a claim for the vulnerable student bursary and to administer such bursary under the rules and guidelines issued by the ESFA
* To allow choice to be made to either be assessed for Bursary which will take into account eligibility for and cover the cost of Free School Meals.
* Or to be assessed separately for both Free School Meals and Bursary ( A separate process outside of this policy must be followed for FSM)

\*\* to note any monies awarded separately for FSM will be deducted by the ESFA and the bursary awards will be reduced accordingly.

Bursary Guidance

[***https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2021-to-2022-academic-year***](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2021-to-2022-academic-year)

Free School Meal Guidance

[***https://www.gov.uk/guidance/free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-guide-for-the-2021-to-2022-academic-year#audit-and-assurance***](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-guide-for-the-2021-to-2022-academic-year#audit-and-assurance)

**Scope**

This guidance applies to all staff responsible for administering the bursary application and any subsequent award.

**Objectives**

For all bursary applications the following process will be implemented.

* The ESFA expects Flourish FE to use the guidance as the basis of their bursary policies and to be able to show they comply with it, at any audit.
* Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a bursary if they are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (‘19+ continuers’) or have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
* Students must be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality (for example Ofsted).
* Eligibility criteria: bursaries for young people in defined vulnerable groups. Students who meet the criteria, and who have a financial need, can apply for a bursary for vulnerable groups. The defined groups reflect that these students may need a greater level of support to enable them to continue to participate. Institutions must ensure students are eligible for the bursary for defined vulnerable groups in each year they require support. The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

• in care

• care leavers

• 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

• 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.

**Evidence**

To apply for Bursary Funds evidence must be provided for:

* students who are in care or a care leaver - written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority - this is the local authority that looks after them or provides their leaving care services. The evidence could be a letter or an email but must be clearly from the local authority
* students in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit, a copy of their Income Support or Universal Credit award notice. This must clearly state that the claim is in the student’s name/confirm they are entitled to the benefits in their own right.
* students receiving UC/ESA and Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments, a copy of their UC claim from DWP (UC claimants should be able to print off details of their award from their online account). Evidence of receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment, must also be provided.

**Meeting the criteria (21/22 example)**

Students who meet the criteria for a bursary for vulnerable groups are eligible for a bursary of up to £1,200 if they are on a study programme which lasts for 30 weeks or more in the academic year. Students who meet the criteria and who are on study programmes lasting for less than 30 weeks should be given a bursary on a pro-rata basis.

For example:

* a student is on a 30 week programme. If the institution assesses they have financial needs that require a full £1,200 - if paid weekly, the bursary would be £1,200 ÷ 30 = £40 per week
* if the same student was on a 10 week programme, the pro-rata bursary would be £40 x 10 weeks = £400

**Publishing bursary fund policies**

* Institutions must publish a policy or statement setting out how they will use their bursary fund.
* At Flourish FE – this will be used for example, to help with resources and equipment, field trips, day trips, use of leisure centre facilities, gyms and community access as well as other education programme related costs.

**Managing bursary fund applications**

* Flourish FE has developed and uses its own application forms for the bursary fund.
* The process will maintain confidentiality and the application form, promotional materials etc. will emphasise this message.
* Students and/or their families will sign a declaration when they apply for help from the bursary to confirm that the evidence they have provided is correct and complete to the best of their knowledge and belief.
* Students and their families will be made aware that giving false or incomplete information that leads to incorrect/overpayment may result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered. They will also be informed that this might result in a referral to the police with the possibility of the student and/or their family facing prosecution.

**What the bursary fund cannot be used for**

* The bursary fund is not intended to provide learning support - services that Flourish FE give to students - for example, counselling or mentoring, or to support extra-curricular activities where these are not essential to the students’ study programme.
* Flourish FE is not permitted to use the bursary fund in any way that would give them a competitive advantage over other institutions. Examples include:
* fees for access to facilities in the institution
* block subsidy of the canteen
* block subsidy of transport, or support for travel for all students regardless of family incomes
* block provision of equipment, material or books
* making bonus payments to reward attendance or achievement
* incentivising attendance
* payments to support student’s general living costs

**Paying bursary funding to eligible students**

* ESFA encourages institutions to pay bursaries in-kind rather than cash as far as possible. This helps ensure that the bursary is spent for the reasons it was awarded. In-kind payments can include travel passes, vouchers or credits for meals, required books and required equipment, resources and any other items required for the educational purposes of the student.
* Flourish FE will make in-kind payments to students and explain to the student the value of the payments and how these have been deducted from their total bursary award.
* ESFA does not expect any monetary bursary payments to be paid into another person’s account, except in exceptional circumstances where a student is unable to administer their own account. If the student cannot manage their own funds, Flourish FE will need to consider who will manage the bursary on the student’s behalf.

**Conditions for receiving bursary funding**

* Flourish FE will use the bursary fund/make payments from the bursary fund - conditional on the student meeting agreed standards of attendance and behaviour.
* Flourish FE must ensure that any standards set are clear, accessible and understood by students/ their parents of carers.
* Flourish FE will ensure they obtain and retain evidence that a student/parent or carer has seen and agreed to the conditions. This will be an agreement signed by the student or a signed declaration that forms part of Flourish FE‘s bursary fund application form.
* Flourish FE will stop payments where students have been absent for a period of 4 continuous weeks or more (excluding holidays, or if there is evidence that the student intends to return) and where students have made a decision to withdraw from a study programme.
* If Flourish FE purchases books, resources or equipment for a student, they can specify the student must return these at the end of their study programme so they can be used again by another student where appropriate.
* If Flourish FE purchases equipment that is necessary for the student to complete their study programme, they can purchase this with bursary funds and specify the student must return it once they have completed their study programme. If keeping equipment on campus is the best way of ensuring this happens, institutions have the right to set this as a condition.

**Institutions’ responsibilities in managing complaints or appeals**

* Any student or parent/carer who is unhappy with how Flourish FE has handled their application for bursary funding should first raise their concern with Flourish FE. Knowsley Council has its own complaints procedure.

**Rules on unspent bursary funds**

* ESFA permits Flourish FE to carry unspent bursary funds over to the next academic year. Any funds carried forward must continue to be used to support students. They cannot be added to general institution funds.

**Audit, assurance and fraud**

* 16 to 19 Bursary Funds are subject to normal assurance arrangements for 16 to 19 education and training. Flourish FE will ensure they have appropriate processes in place to record bursary applications and awards (including the number, value, purpose, whether awarded or not, and a brief justification for the decision). They must also be able to confirm, during any audit, the amount of any unspent funds that have been carried forward to the current academic year.
* Flourish FE must ensure they can evidence their application process, how the student was assessed, how they made the decision to award the specific amount of bursary and the funds that they have issued to the student. Auditors will be looking for evidence that institutions have applied their bursary fund eligibility criteria correctly and used a consistent application and assessment process for all students. Some institutions use an eligibility checklist to confirm which documents they have seen for each student.
* Flourish FE will retain copies of any documents the student has signed to give formal agreement to their conditions for payment.
* Hard or scanned copies of documentation should be retained for 6 years (records can be kept electronically).