Policy: 16-19 Further Education Financial Support Fund 2026/27

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FRANKLIN COLLEGE TRUST

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1.0 Purpose

Franklin Sixth Form College recognises that the 16-19 Financial Support Fund has an important role to play in removing the financial barriers learners face when continuing in Further Education, especially those students in a lower income household. The primary purpose of the Financial Support funding is to enable these students to access further education and training and to support them to fulfil their maximum academic potential.

The Financial Support Fund will be distributed in a fair and consistent way and in accordance with the Department for Education and Government recommendations. A student's eligibility will be assessed on the learner's social and economic circumstances as described within the policy.

The eligibility detailed below is correct as of May 2026.

For the Discretionary elements of the Financial Support Fund, the College retains the right to make amendments to the fund throughout the academic year. All applications to this fund will be considered individually and funds will be granted where a genuine need for assistance has been proven. Support from the discretionary fund will be awarded on a first come, first served basis and will only be granted during term time. The financial support fund exists to support students with essential costs of participating in their study programme. As such, the College will monitor student attendance and where any student's attendance falls below the minimum College attendance rate of 92%, the College reserves the right to reduce or cease any award granted.

Any information provided by applicants will be used by the College to administer the Financial Support Awards system. Information will be stored and processed in line with our privacy notice, which can be found on the College website.

2.0 Scope

2.1 Organisation and Responsibility

Overall responsibility for the policy lies with the College Leadership Team, monitoring of compliance with the policy is the responsibility of the Chief Financial Officer who is also responsible for the delivery and administration of the policy through the Finance Team.

2.2 General eligibility criteria for all bursaries and awards

To be able to apply for a bursary (discretionary and defined vulnerable groups) in the 2026 to 2027 academic year, students must be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31st August 2026. Students over the age of 19 are only eligible to receive a discretionary financial support award if they are continuing a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers) or are aged 19-24 and have an Educational, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). In exceptional circumstances, students under the age of 16 attending College may qualify for a financial support award, such students would need to contact the College directly to discuss this.

In all cases eligible students will be required to show supporting evidence that they meet the required criteria.

2.3 The Financial Support Application Process

Students can apply to the fund from June 2026, ahead of starting College in September 2026. Students can apply digitally online using our bursary system 'Applicaa'. An email containing a link to register onto the system and apply will be sent to students in June 2026. The link can also be found on the College website. The College will continue to welcome applications throughout the year, however, in order to ensure that the funds are used most effectively, the College encourages applications to be submitted as soon as possible. As far as possible, all applications will be processed and students advised of the outcome within two weeks of receipt, although at peak times this may take a little longer.

2.4 Appeals

Appeals against the outcomes of an application must be made in writing to the Chief Financial Officer.

2.5 Help and guidance

Franklin's Finance Team are available to provide any support required to complete the application form and to explain the system in detail. They can be contacted on 01472 875000 or email studentfinance@franklin.ac.uk

3.0 Types of Financial Support and award criteria

There are four types of bursary available to 16 – 19 students:

3.1 Type 1 - Priority Group Financial Support

- **What is this award?**

Students who are defined by the Government as being within a vulnerable group of students (see section below) are recognised as those students to whom a Priority Award may be made of up to £1,200 per year to remove financial barriers preventing them from accessing education. Students must also be in a programme of study that lasts a minimum of 30 weeks to qualify for the full award. Students on part time study programmes or study programmes of less than 30 weeks may be awarded a pro-rata amount.

The College will assess the individual circumstances of the student to determine the level and nature of support they require. If it is assessed that support of more than £1200 is required for a vulnerable group student to remain in education, then additional funds may be allocated from the discretionary bursary fund.

- **Who is eligible to receive a Priority Group Financial Award?**

To be eligible for the Priority Group Financial Award, a student must meet at least one of the four following eligibility criteria:

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

- A care leaver aged:

  16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of at least 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to at least 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16 - they do not need to have entered care after their 14th birthday to be eligible, they can have entered care at any age, but they must have spent at least 13 weeks in care after their 14th birthday before leaving after the age of 16

  18 or above who was looked after before turning 18 for a period of at least 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to at least 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16

- Students living independently **and** in receipt of Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone else who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner.
- Students 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.

- **What evidence is required?**

You need to provide written evidence from your local authority of your care status and/or evidence of the benefits mentioned above. For self-supporting students, you need to provide a tenancy agreement or letter from your housing provider or council tax/utility bill and a universal credit statement.

3.2 Type 2 – Daily Meal Allowance in Further Education

- **What is this award?**

Franklin Sixth Form College provides a £5 meal allowance each college day which is allocated to the Student College Card to access meals onsite. This consists of free school meal funding and is topped up from discretionary bursary funding. During summer revision and exam periods this meal allowance may be increased to £7 to allow students to receive a breakfast as well as a main meal allowance.

Alternative arrangements will be made where students are being educated away from the main site. Wherever possible, this will be by the issue of an internal voucher to be redeemed at catering facilities onsite to purchase a packed lunch or a supermarket voucher. In cases where this is not possible, payments may be made directly to the student, either in advance or on the production of receipts.

- **Who is eligible to receive a Daily Meal Allowance award?**

Students eligible for free school meals will receive a daily meal allowance. Free meals are targeted at disadvantaged students. Free meals in FE defines disadvantage as students being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

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

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 institution where they are enrolled.

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

There are 2 categories of benefits-based free school meals (FSM):

- ‘targeted FSM’ which continues to be based on the existing threshold, covering pupils who are in households in receipt of Universal Credit with annual household earnings of no more than £7,400 (not including benefits).
- ‘expanded FSM,’ a new category covering pupils who do not qualify for targeted FSM, but who are in households receiving Universal Credit

A student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 on 31 August 2026 to be eligible to receive a free meal. Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a free meal if they either:

- are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (‘19+ continuers’)
- have an EHC plan

These 2 groups of aged 19 or over students can receive a free meal while they continue to attend education (in the case of a 19+ continuer, this must be the same programme they started before they turned 19).

Residency

Students must satisfy the residency criteria set out in our funding rules.

Students who are eligible for the Daily Meal Allowance will also receive Discretionary Support as detailed in **3.3** in the form of Free Bus Travel (if the student lives further than 1 mile from College) and other support as listed if the total gross annual household income does not exceed £40,000.

- **What evidence is required?**

You need to provide an award notice or letter from DWP or HMRC.

3.3 Type 3 – Discretionary Financial Support Awards

- **Who is eligible to receive a Discretionary Financial Support Award?**

Support from this fund is available for students whose total gross annual household income does not exceed £40,000. Household income includes the income from all adults living the household but does not include that of siblings who live at the same property. Where there are doubts about what should be included in the total household income, the College will decide and provide advice to the student.

Residency

Students must satisfy the residency criteria set out in our funding rules.

- **What is the award?**

A student who is assessed as being eligible for this could qualify to receive the following:

- Meal Allowance allocated to student college card as detailed in 3.2

AND

- Free Bus Travel (if the student lives further than 1 mile from College) Students will be provided with a bus pass for use on Franklin Sixth Form College buses.

In addition, any student receiving this award can be entitled to support with:

- books, equipment costs and specialist clothing such as protective overalls
- contributions to the costs of attending industry placements, university interviews or open days
- UCAS application fees
- essential field trips to achieve or support study programme goals or course objectives
- top up to care to learn funding for childcare where necessary and appropriate
- Sportswear if required for the students' study programme.

if identified as being essential to the courses being taken. In most cases these items will be provided for in kind, however in exceptional circumstances, with prior authorisation from the Finance Team, students may purchase items deemed essential to their study programme and receive reimbursement to their bank account on production of supporting receipts/invoices.

Requests for items should be made online using our online bursary system 'Applicaa'.

- **What evidence is required?**

You need to provide the evidence as follows depending on the income source: -

- P60 or most recent payslips covering a 3-month period for employment
- P60 for pension
- Most recent self-assessment for self-employment, taxable interest from savings, dividends and income from property
- Most recent award letter for support under part VI of the immigration and asylum act 1999, 'guarantee' element of state pension credit, income related Employment Support Allowance and Universal Credit.

3.4 Type 4 – Care to Learn

- **What is this award?**

The Care to Learn scheme supports students with the cost of childcare whilst attending College. Students can receive up to £180 per child per week to help with these costs, with the amount being awarded assessed individually.

Care to Learn can help with the cost of:

- childcare, including deposit and registration fees
- keeping a childcare place over the summer holidays for a maximum of 8 weeks
- taking a child to their childcare provider – travel costs

Franklin Sixth Form College will pay the childcare direct to the childcare provider. A student's registered childcare provider must confirm their child's attendance and Franklin Sixth Form College will, in turn confirm that student is attending their course. Travel costs associated with taking a child to a childcare provider are paid directly by Franklin Sixth Form College. Payments end when a student either stops attending their course or they reach the end of their course or their child stops attending childcare.

- **Who is eligible to receive a Care to Learn Financial Support Award?**

A student who meets the following criteria is eligible to receive an award:

- The student is a parent under 20 years old at the start of their course
- The student is the main carer for their child
- The student lives in England
- The student is either a British citizen or has a legal right to live and study in England
- The course being taken qualifies
- The childcare provider qualifies

Care to Learn is only available for publicly-funded courses in England. This includes courses that take place at Franklin Sixth Form College and those courses that are managed by Franklin Sixth Form College in the Community. To qualify, a childcare provider must be one of the following, registered with Ofsted, registered with a childminder agency or a school. They can be a childminder; preschool playgroup; a day nursery or an out of school club.

- **What evidence is required?**

Students need to apply to the College; they will need to complete an application form and provide **EITHER** a copy of the child's birth certificate **OR** a letter confirming receipt of Child Benefit for that child.

4.0 Fraud

If students and/or parents/carers are found to have provided false or incomplete information or to have found to have omitted household income, the matter may be referred to the Department for Education or the police. The student and/or parents/carers could face prosecution, and the college will recover the value of support provided that the student was not eligible for.

5.0 Policy References

5.1 Access to the policy

The policy will be available via Franklin Sixth Form College's SharePoint area and published on the College's website 16-19-financial-support-policy.pdf

5.2 Quality and Assurance Monitoring

The College Leadership Team and the College's Board of Directors will review the policy annually.