

# Colchester Institute

## Free College Meals and 16-19 Bursary Fund Guidelines for 2024 – 2025

These guidelines apply to

- students who are aged 16, 17 or 18 on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024.
- students aged 19 on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024, starting the second year of a two-year course
- students aged 19 or over on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024 who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

If you turn 19 on or before 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2024 please refer to the 19+ Learner Support Fund Guidelines or the Advanced Learner Loan Guidelines

### What are Free College Meals?

From September 2014, Further Education colleges have been required to provide free meals to 16-18 year old students from low-income households.

Eligible students at Colchester Institute will be funded by a meal credit to the value of £5.00 for each day that they have timetabled lessons at College. No cash payments can be made for free college meals if there is a refectory on the campus that you attend. However, if you attend a campus without a refectory or you are undertaking work placement, a cash award will be made.

### Are you eligible for Free College Meals?

You are eligible for free meals if you or your parents are in receipt of one or more of the following benefits	Evidence required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income Support</li> <li>• Income-based Jobseekers Allowance</li> <li>• Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)</li> <li>• Support under part IV of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999</li> <li>• The guarantee element of the State Pension Credit</li> <li>• Child Tax Credit (provided not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190</li> <li>• Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)</li> <li>• Universal Credit, with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 pa</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letter from Job Centre Plus or Department for Work and Pensions</li> <li>• HMRC Tax Credit Award Letter for 2024/25 which shows your income from 2023/24 (full award letter required)</li> </ul> <p>Letter from the Job Centre Plus or Department for Work and Pensions should be dated within the last 3 months. If your letter is older than 3 months, you should provide a recent bank statement showing the relevant payment going into your account within the last 3 months.</p> <p>Copies of Universal Credit award statements for the previous three months / if self employed, copy of company registration form or tax return form is also required</p> <p>Any letters / bank statements provided must show the name and address of the person receiving the benefit</p>

If you are eligible for Free College Meals, please complete the Application for Student Funding 2024 / 2025, ensuring that you tick the 'meals' box in the 'I need help with' section.

You can also top up your meal award by using Upay (register at <https://www.upay.co.uk/app/>), the easy to use payment system at Colchester Institute refectories and cafes, which is open to all students. Upay will always use College awarded meal credits first, so any college funding is deducted from your account before any top-up credit is used.

You can apply for additional help from the 16-19 Bursary Fund on the same application form.

### **What is the 16-19 Bursary Fund?**

The 16-19 Bursary Fund is provided to Colchester Institute by the government and is aimed at supporting 16-18 year olds overcome any financial barriers they may face in attending college.

Students aged 19 who started a two year programme before their 19<sup>th</sup> birthday and students aged 19 and over who have an Education Health and Care Plan should also apply to this fund.

The Bursary Fund is made up of two parts:

1. **The Discretionary Bursary:** Discretionary bursaries are targeted at students who face financial barriers in attending college. Awards are based on specific financial needs for college related costs for such things as transport, books and equipment. The discretionary bursary cannot provide help with costs unrelated to your course, such as general expenses, nor can it be used as an attendance incentive.
2. **The 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary:** This is an award of up to £1200 per year for students who are:
  - In care (Children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (section 31 of the Children Act 1989)
  - Care leavers
  - Receiving Income Support or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves or supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them such as a child or parent
  - 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

The vulnerable bursary is awarded to help students in paying for course related costs, such as books, equipment, uniform, kit, travel, trips, DBS and stationery. The

costs associated with the course will be covered by the bursary.

**Please note** that the full £1200 vulnerable bursary is not automatically given if there is no financial need. Awards will be based on the amount that you need to participate in education. There is the possibility that the outcome of your application will be an award of less than £1200 or no award if you do not have any relevant costs. Awards from this bursary cannot be used to support living costs

### Are you eligible for a discretionary bursary?

If your parent(s) are in receipt of one or more of the following benefits, you can apply for a discretionary bursary

Qualifying benefit	Evidence required
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income Support</li> <li>• Income based Job Seekers Allowance</li> <li>• Income related Employment and Support Allowance</li> <li>• Working Tax Credit / Child Tax Credit with a net annual income + tax credits totalling no more than £30,000</li> <li>• Child Tax Credit (&amp; not eligible for Working Tax Credit)</li> <li>• Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit</li> <li>• Universal Credit – annual take home pay + universal credit totalling no more than £30,000</li> </ul>	<p>A letter confirming benefit entitlement from</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job Centre Plus</li> <li>• Department for Work and Pensions</li> <li>• HMRC -Tax Credit Award Letter for 2024/25 which shows income from 2023/24 - <u>full</u> letter required + last 3 months payslips</li> </ul> <p>If your letter is older than 3 months, a recent bank statement must be provided showing the relevant payment going into the bank account within the last 3 months</p> <p>Copies of Universal Credit award statements for the previous three months / if self employed, copy of company registration form or tax return form is also required</p> <p>Any letter provided must confirm the name and address of the person receiving the benefit</p>
You are currently of No Fixed Abode eg living in emergency accommodation or homeless	Please speak to Student Services

### Are you eligible for a 16 – 19 Vulnerable Bursary?

If you fall into one of the following groups you can apply for a 16-19 vulnerable bursary

	Evidence required
Young people in care – Children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (section 31 of the Children Act 1989)	Letter from local authority or social worker showing your looked after status
Care Leaver – A young person aged 16 or 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks,	Letter from local authority or social worker showing your previous looked after status

<p>which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16 <b>or</b></p> <p>A young person who is aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks, which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16.</p>	
<p>In receipt of either Income Support or Universal Credit in your own right</p>	<p>Income Support - letter from Job Centre Plus dated within the last 3 months. The letter provided must show your name and address</p> <p>If your letter is older than 3 months, you should provide a recent bank statement showing the relevant payment going into your account within the last 3 months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Last 3 months universal credit full statements.</li> <li>•Evidence that universal credit has been awarded because you are financially supporting yourself and anyone who is dependent on you and living with you (such as a child or partner) eg tenancy agreement in your name, child benefit receipt, child birth certificate, utility bills</li> <li>•Evidence must not state any conditions that prevent you from participating in further education or training</li> </ul>
<p>In receipt of both Disability Living Allowance (or the new Personal Independence Payments) <b>and</b> Employment Support Allowance (or Universal Credit as a replacement for ESA) in your own right</p>	<p>A copy of your UC or ESA award from DWP (UC claimants will be able to print off details of their award from their journal). Evidence of DLA or PIP must also be provided</p>

**Please note** that the full £1200 16-19 vulnerable bursary is not automatically given if there is no financial need. Awards will be based on the amount that you need to participate in education. There is the possibility that the outcome of your application will be an award of less than £1200 or no award if you do not have any relevant costs. Awards from this bursary cannot be used to support living costs

### **When and how should you apply?**

If you are eligible for either the 16-19 vulnerable bursary or the discretionary bursary, please complete an online Application for Student Funding 2024 / 2025.

Supporting Evidence as listed above must be submitted online, along with the online application form

For courses starting in September 2024, applications should be submitted online by 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024. Applications received after 1<sup>st</sup> November will be considered on a pro-rata basis subject to need and the availability of funds.

## What happens after you submit an application form?

We will assess your application and email you with a decision. If you are successful then we will tell you how much you have been awarded, what the award is for, how the award will be made and when you can expect to receive any payment.

Please ensure that your email address on the application form is accurately entered as we will use the email address to contact you to ask for any additional information required or to confirm details of your award. Please ensure that you check your emails regularly.

During busy periods, it can take up to 15 working days to assess your application and we may telephone you with our decision. If you provide us with telephone contact details, please ensure that you check your voicemails regularly.

**Please note that all payments are dependent on your attendance record and you displaying satisfactory behaviour during your time at Colchester Institute. Colchester Institute reserves the right to remove support due to students' misbehaviour, fraud or if the reputation of the College is brought into disrepute. You will be expected to demonstrate commitment to your course through completion of work and engagement in class activities. The College will expect to see attendance of over 90% maintained throughout the year.**

- Applications received on or before 31<sup>st</sup> July will be processed before the end of August.
- Applications received on or after the 1<sup>st</sup> August may take longer to process so you should ensure that you budget for any expenses that you are likely to incur during your first weeks at College.

If your application is unsuccessful, we will write to you explaining why.

## What can the bursary fund pay for?

**\*\*Important: The college support fund will not make any reimbursements for items purchased by you prior to your form being assessed, unless authorised by the Student Services Manager.\*\***

### Payment by BACS

Where a payment is made by BACS, the student MUST provide receipts for items purchased, as these are required for audit purposes. Failure to produce receipts may result in the student being asked to return the BACS payment and may also affect future funding

**Course costs** – the bursary fund can help with payment of course costs confirmed by your tutor as essential to the course. Course costs may include books, equipment, uniform, membership fees, compulsory trips and DBS checks. If you need help with any of these costs, please make sure that you tick the relevant box on the application form.

- **Books** – the fund will make a contribution towards the cost of books confirmed by your tutor as essential for your course. Payment may be made by either BACS payment into your bank account or if course books are available through the CI on-line store, we will make the on-line store payment on your behalf.
- **Equipment and uniform** – for sports, catering, hairdressing and beauty therapy students, payment for equipment and uniform will be made directly by the College either to the supplier or via the CI on-line store. All other equipment and uniform payments will be made by BACS payment into your bank account.
- **AAT Membership Fees** – a contribution towards the cost of AAT membership will be made by BACS payment into your bank account.
- **Compulsory trips** – When you apply for your bursary you may not know details of compulsory trips for your course. If you have requested help with trips from the discretionary fund, it is important that you speak to Student Services as soon as you become aware of the trip dates, location and price. All compulsory UK trips will automatically be considered. Compulsory trips outside of the UK will be considered on an individual basis. Student Services will make payment for the trip via your CI on-line store account.

Trips are paid for on a first come, first served basis as funding is limited and it is not possible to guarantee payment for trips if the funding has been exhausted.

- **DBS check** – If you are required to pay for a DBS check, payment will be made by the college as an internal transfer.
- **Meals** –Please make sure that you tick the appropriate box on the application form.

If you are eligible for Free College Meals you will receive a meal credit to the value of £5.00 for each day that you have timetabled lessons at College. No cash payments can be made for free college meals if there is a refectory on the campus that you attend. However, if you attend a campus without a refectory or you are undertaking work placement, a cash award will be made by BACS payment into your bank account.

Please contact Student Services at least two weeks prior to starting placement if you require a cash payment for your placement weeks.

If you are not eligible for Free College Meals, the College may make an award for a discretionary meal credit.

Please note that the intended use of meal credits is to provide a hot or cold meal and the credit should not be spent on multiple snack items i.e. multiple packets of crisps and chocolate bars, coffees, cans of drink. If we notice

repeated patterns of inappropriate use, we will look into the spend and may cease the award.

- **Travel** – to receive support with travel you must live over 1 mile away from the campus that you attend. We use the AA Routeplanner to calculate the distance from your home address to college. If you wish to check the distance yourself the website is: <http://www.theaa.com/route-planner/index.jsp>  
The Colchester campus postcode is CO3 3LL, and the Braintree campus postcode is CM7 5SN.
- As funding is provided by public money, we are required to ensure support given provides the best value for money. Travel support may be in the form of a bus pass, train pass or a BACS payment and cost maybe a factor when assessing a travel award

If your journey to college can be made on an Arriva bus, First bus or a Greater Anglia train, the College will purchase a travel pass on your behalf. Travel passes will be automatically renewed each term, if attendance for the previous term is at an acceptable level. You should be aware that that it is your responsibility to fund your travel to college on the first day of each term.

If you use any other bus company to travel to college, payment for a travel pass will be made by BACS payment into your bank account.

In some instances, your travel award maybe the cost of purchasing a termly ticket from the local authority.

If you drive to college and would like help with petrol costs, the distance to college from your home address will be calculated using the AA Routeplanner website. Mileage is paid at 20p a mile (cars) and 10p a mile (motorbikes and mopeds) and will be based on the distance of your return journey to college x the number of days you attend college. Payments will be made by BACS payment into your bank account. Parking costs of up to £2.50 per day can be applied for if the student is driving themselves to campus (Colchester campus students only). Payments for petrol and parking will not exceed the cost of travelling to college by public transport.

It is important for you to be aware that it can take up to two weeks after the start of a term for the travel payment to be made into your bank account and therefore you must budget for any travel costs prior to the travel payment reaching your account.

Travel support for the spring and summer terms may be affected if you do not maintain an attendance of at least 90% in the preceding term.

- **Stationery**

You will be given a £25 WH Smith voucher in order that you can purchase the items of stationery necessary for your course. The voucher can be used in store or online

- **Printer Credits**

If you require additional printing credits during the year, please let Student Services know and we will arrange for additional credit to be added to your printer account

- **University Interviews and Open days**

If you incur travel costs as a result of attending a university interview or open day then we may be able to help you with this expense. This will be dependent on the budget that we have available at the time.

You will have to cover the upfront costs yourself then we will refund your transport costs on the production of public transport tickets **and** university interview or open day letter. If you travel by car we will pay towards petrol costs, providing this does not exceed the cost of travel by public transport. We will not pay for overnight accommodation.

Funding for travel to interviews and open days will be capped at £200 in total.

- **Travel to Job / Apprenticeship Interviews**

As above. Payment on production of tickets **and** interview letter.

- **UCAS application fee**

A contribution towards the cost of applying to UCAS. Confirmation will be required from the Careers office to advise whether you have made a single or multiple UCAS application

- **Device Loan Scheme - to enable learning from home**

If you need a device in order to engage in online learning from home, you may apply for a device loan if you have no access to any other device in the household (such as home computer, laptop, chrome book). The supply of devices is limited and will be targeted at students who would not be able to participate in their online learning without a device.

You should provide a covering statement on the online application form advising why your household does not have access to a device, PC, laptop. We may also seek information from your tutor.

**What will I get?** You will be loaned a device, such as a College chrome book or laptop.



**Is it mine to keep?** No unfortunately not, this is a College device which we will lend to you for the academic year.

**What if I come back next year?** Eligibility for devices will be assessed each academic year and will be dependent on you being required to participate in online learning for a further year. A device award for a second year of learning is not guaranteed.

**Can I use the device for personal use?** No - this device is provided by the College so that you can engage in online learning for your course only.

**Will you check on the device?** Yes, we will. We will routinely call in devices to be checked by our IT department. This will ensure they are kept updated.

**What if the device gets damaged while I'm at home?** In line with College policy, any damage to college property will result in the cost being recovered and possible disciplinary action for the student.

**When do I have to give the device back?** All devices must be returned in a good condition by the end of the academic year (**June 2024**) or before if your situation regarding learning from home should change. If you leave your course or are withdrawn from the College you will need to return your laptop at this time. Failure to return the device in either situation above will result in you being invoiced for the cost of the device

- **Other course related costs**

If you require funding for any course related costs not specified above, please complete an Application for Student Funding in the normal way. You should include full details of the item that you are looking for help with and a short statement covering why you consider the item to be necessary for your course

### **What can't the bursary fund pay for?**

- **Locker Deposits** – students requiring a locker are asked to pay a deposit which is returned at the end of the year. As the deposit is refundable, we cannot provide support with this cost.
- **Exam Re-sits**
- **Extra-curricular activities** – any extra-curricular activities that are not essential to your study programme
- **Attendance bonuses / incentives** – all payments to you are based on you achieving a minimum of 90% attendance and displaying satisfactory behaviour during your time at Colchester Institute. The bursary fund does not reward students with additional monies if they achieve good attendance levels throughout the year.

- **General living costs** – e.g. accommodation, utility bills, mobile phone bills
- **Associated trip costs** – funding for passports, suitcases etc will not be covered by the fund

### **Do you need your own bank account?**

**Yes.** Students aged 16 and over can open a basic bank account which will allow BACS payments and allow you to withdraw money. We cannot make payments to your parent(s), guardian(s) or any third party accounts unless there are exceptional circumstances and you are unable to administer your own account. In the case of asylum seeking children who are unable to open a UK bank account, we will make payments to a nominated carer's bank account, providing we receive written confirmation from both the young person and carer confirming that they are happy for payment to be made to the nominated account.

### **If you make an application are you guaranteed support?**

**No.** Unfortunately the budget we have available is limited and we may not be able to meet your funding requirements. We would advise you to put in an application as soon as possible as funds are limited and can run out.

### **If you are successful in your application are there any conditions on your award?**

**Yes.** If you are awarded a guaranteed or discretionary bursary then you will need to meet conditions of attendance and behaviour in order to receive your award. The College will expect to see attendance of over 90% maintained throughout the year.

If you feel that you have extenuating personal circumstances that have affected your attendance, it is important that you speak to Student Services as soon as possible.

### **What should you do if you are not happy with the outcome of your application?**

You can appeal our decision if:

- You think that we have assessed your application incorrectly
- You think that the level of support you have been awarded is significantly less than you need to attend College

Appeals should be made in writing to the Student Services Manager. Appeals should be made within 15 working days of you receiving a decision from us.

### **What should you do if you are not sure if any of this applies to you or if you have any questions regarding financial support?**

Contact Student Services. We can talk you through whether or not you are eligible. We can help you complete the application form, advise you on the evidence we need from you and answer any questions you may have.

### **When should I re-apply for financial assistance?**

Applications for financial help are valid for one academic year only. Should you return to College in September 2024 and still require financial assistance, a new application form must be completed and up to date supporting evidence supplied.

### **What happens to my funding if I withdraw from my course?**

If you leave Colchester Institute you will not be eligible to receive further payments and may need to repay a proportion or, in exceptional cases, all of the money paid to you. You may also be asked to return any equipment you have received that has been funded by this scheme.

### **Student Services contact details**

**Phone:** 01206 712435

**Email:** [student.finance@colchester.ac.uk](mailto:student.finance@colchester.ac.uk)

**Call in:** Student Services offer a drop-in service. We are open:-

Colchester: 8.30am – 5.00pm (Monday – Thursday) / 8.30am – 4.30pm (Friday).

Braintree (term time only): 8.00am – 4.00pm (Monday – Thursday) and 8.00am – 3.30pm (Friday)