

Ambitious College Provision of Free Meals Policy 2024-2025

1. Purpose

The government provides funding for the provision of free meals for learners who qualify for the assistance.

For the 2024 to 2025 academic year the rate set is £2.58 per learner per meal taken. The meal is provided where a learner attends College over the lunchtime period.

The meal is provided by accessing food retailers within the local area to purchase a meal up to the value stated above as the College is not able to provide a catering provision.

Where needed reasonable adjustments will be made for special dietary requirements.

Applications for Free Meals for the 2024-2025 academic year must be submitted to the College by 30th June 2025. An application would need to be submitted for each academic year.

If you require assistance with this policy or to make an application, then please contact the College and we will arrange for support to be provided.

2. Eligibility

2.1 Age

Learners are eligible if they are:

- Aged between 16 and 18 on 31 August 2024 to be eligible for a free meal in the 2024 to 2025 academic year, or
- Learners who are 19 or older on 31 August 2024 who commenced on the programme aged 16-18 and are continuing on the same study programme, or
- Learners aged 19 or over on 31 August 2024 who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The following groups of students are not eligible for free meals in further education support:

- Learners aged 19 or over at the start of their study programme who do not have an EHCP.
- Apprentices, including those with an EHCP.

Policy Owner	Head of College	Review Date:	September 2025
Policy No.	AaA 100	Version No.	5.1

2.2 Eligible benefits

Free meals are targeted at disadvantaged learners. For the purposes of eligibility for free meals, disadvantage is defined by the students being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit with net earned annual income not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum (after tax and not including any benefits received). Please note that Working Tax Credit is not a qualifying benefit for free meals, and a parent or learner in receipt of Working Tax Credits only, is not entitled to a free meal.

Transitional protection arrangements to Universal credit are:

- Learners already receiving free meals on or after 1 April 2018 continue to be eligible to receive free meals up until March 2025 and then until the end of their phase of education. This also applies to students who were eligible for free school meals (FSM) prior to moving into further education provision.
- A Learner who becomes eligible for free meals after the threshold has been introduced will also continue to receive free meals until March 2025 and then until the end of the course they are enrolled on. This will apply even if they subsequently become ineligible during this period because their household earnings rise above the new threshold.

2.3 Residency

Students must also satisfy the residency criteria set out in the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Funding regulation guidance 2024 to 2025 academic year as detailed below:

Policy Owner	Head of College	Review Date:	September 2025
Policy No.	AaA 100	Version No.	5.1

A person on the ‘relevant date’¹ who is ‘settled’ in the UK, and who has been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands (that is including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) for the three years preceding the ‘relevant date’¹. ‘Settled’ means having either indefinite leave to enter or remain (ILE/ILR), being an Irish citizen or having the right of abode in the UK. -

Learners who are eligible include:

- British citizens who hold a United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland passport.
- Irish citizens
- European Union citizens or family members of EEA and Swiss workers (resident in the UK before 1 January 2021) with settled status.
- Learners who are children of Turkish workers where the Turkish worker has been lawfully employed and resident in the UK before 1 January 2021.
- British Dependent Territory Citizens (now known as British Overseas Territory Citizens).
- Those whose passports have been endorsed to show they have right of abode in the UK.
- Those who have a certificate of naturalisation or registration as a British Citizen.
- Those with Hong Kong British (Overseas) (BN(O)) visa who have been given Home Office permissions to reside in the UK.

In addition to considering the groups outlined above, the ESFA will also consider the following groups of students (including those who may not have lived in the UK for the last 3 years) to be eligible for funding.

- a) People with refugee status (RS) or humanitarian protection (HP) or discretionary leave (DL) or exceptional leave to enter or remain (ELE/ELR), their spouses, civil partners and children
- b) People with recently settled status (this means those having been granted indefinite leave to enter or remain, right of abode or British citizenship within the 3 years immediately preceding the start of the course)

In addition to the groups above, the ESFA will also consider the following groups of students (including those who may not have lived in the UK for the last three years) aged up to and including the age of 18 as eligible for funding.

- a) Those who are accompanying or joining parents or spouses or civil partners² who have the right of abode or leave to enter or remain in the UK (or

¹ The term ‘relevant date’ refers to ‘the first day of the first academic (or teaching) year of the course’ and this is defined as:

- a. 1 September if the academic year starts between 1 August and 31 December,
- b. 1 January if the academic year starts between 1 January and 31 March,
- c. 1 April if the academic year starts between 1 April and 30 June,
- d. 1 July if the academic year starts between 1 July and 31 July.

² All eligibility references to a spouse should now be read to include a person who has participated in either a formal state-recognised marriage or a state-recognised civil partnership ceremony.

Policy Owner	Head of College	Review Date:	September 2025
Policy No.	AaA 100	Version No.	5.1

- accompanying or joining relevant family members, usually parents, who are UK or Irish citizens), or those who are children of diplomats.
- b) Those who are dependants of teachers coming to the UK on a teacher-exchange scheme.
 - c) Those who are residing legally in the UK (including those entering the UK in the last 3 years who are or were not accompanied by their parents) who are British (or Irish) citizens or those whose passports have been endorsed (or as part of move to digital immigration systems, either a biometric residency permit (BRP), or an equivalent digital status and/or an endorsement letter) to either show they have the right of abode in this country or to show that they have no restrictions on working in the UK
 - d) Those who are dependants of adults residing legally in the UK who have been given immigration rights as workers to reside in the UK
 - e) Those who are dependants of foreign students where the accompanying parent or legal guardian has a student visa (the accompanying parent or legal guardian is excluded from funding)
 - f) Asylum seekers.
 - g) Those having been granted leave under section 67 of the Immigration Act 2016 (the 'Dubs' amendment)³
 - h) Those having been granted Calais leave to remain
 - i) Those who are (including unaccompanied asylum seekers) placed in the care of social services or those in receipt of Section 4 support⁴.

3. Application Process

A student is only eligible to receive a free meal when they, or a parent/guardian on their behalf, have made a successful application to the institution where they are enrolled.

Please complete the form in Appendix 1 and supply the necessary evidence as early in the academic year as possible and at the latest by 30th June 2025, so that the College can consider the application.

The College Administrator will check the application and submit the documentation to the Head of College and Business and Contracts Manager for authorisation.

The outcome of the decision will be advised in writing.

4. Complaints/Appeals process

All complaints/appeals must be made in writing:

³ [Immigration Act 2017](#)

⁴ Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 allows National Asylum Support Service to provide full-board accommodation outside London for destitute asylum seekers who have exhausted all their appeal rights but are unable to return home. Section 4 support is also known as 'hard case support'

Policy Owner	Head of College	Review Date:	September 2025
Policy No.	AaA 100	Version No.	5.1

If the complaint concerns an operational process or a complaint about customer service this will be dealt with under the Ambitious College complaints procedure.

If the complaint or appeal is not resolved than it will be passed to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

5. References

[Free meals in further education funded institutions guide: 2024 to 2025 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/free-meals-in-further-education-funded-institutions-guide-2024-to-2025-academic-year)

Policy Owner	Head of College	Review Date:	September 2025
Policy No.	AaA 100	Version No.	5.1

Appendix 1: Application form for the provision of free meals

Please complete the form and submit it together with your supporting evidence to the College Administrator by 30th June 2025. A Word version of this form is available to [download here](#).

Title				
Surname				
First name				
Address				
Postcode				
Phone/Mobile				
Email				
Date of Birth (DD/MM/YY)				
Your Age	<i>You must be 16, 17 or 18 (i.e. under 19 on 31st August 2024) or be aged 19+ continuing on a study programme commenced aged 16-19 or be 19-25 on 31st August 2024 who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).</i>			
Have you an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?	Yes		No	
Do you satisfy the residency criteria set out by the Education Funding Agency (ESFA) – see section 2.3 of the Provision of Free meals policy?	Yes		No	

To qualify the learner must be in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of one or more of the eligible benefits and produce the required evidence: *Please tick the Yes and No columns and if Yes detail the evidence provided in the appropriate column.*

Eligible Benefit	Yes	Evidence Provided	No
Income Support			
Income-based Jobseekers Allowance			
Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)			
Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999			
The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit			
Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)			
Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit			
Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum or meets transitional protection arrangements to Universal credit			

Learner Declaration

- I declare that the information on this form is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.
I have made this claim for the provision of free meals, fully aware that any false statements can lead to withdrawal/refusal of any financial support and may lead to me being prosecuted.
- I understand that if I refuse to provide information which may be relevant to my claim, the application will not be accepted.
- When changes to my household financial circumstances occur (which may result in changes to my claim), I confirm will notify Ambitious College immediately.

Please tick one of the following options

	Ambitious College to use the funding to purchase meals/food on behalf of the learner to provide a meal at college each lunchtime.							
	Ambitious College to pay funds directly into pupils' bank account only (by BACS) each term to the bank account detailed below for the parent/carer to be able to provide a packed lunch for the learner each lunchtime. Please note that adjustments will be made each term for non-attendance in the previous term.							
Account Name								
Account Number								
Sort Code			-			-		

Learners Signature		Date	
Learner's representative signature (if learner unable to make own application)		Date	
Learner's representative name			
Capacity of learner's representative			
Learner's representative phone number			
Learner's Representative Email			

