Ambitious College Bursary Fund 2026-2027

The government provides two types of Bursary Funds for eligible students[1]:

- Vulnerable Student Bursaries
- Discretionary Bursaries

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.

1. Eligibility

To be eligible for the bursary students must:

- Be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August 2026 or
- For the discretionary bursary only, be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2026 and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
- For the discretionary bursary only, be aged 19 or over at 31 August 2026 and continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18
- Meet the residency criteria
- For the vulnerable bursary only must be one of the defined groups and studying for 30 weeks or more and be under the age of 19. Students aged 19 or over are not eligible for vulnerable bursaries.
- Vulnerable bursary applications should be submitted to the College by 1 June 2027.
- Discretionary bursary applications should be submitted to the college by 30 June 2027.

1.1 Residency Criteria

Students must also satisfy the residency criteria set out in the Department for Education (DfE) funding rules guidance for 16-19 provision 2026 to 2027 academic year as detailed below:

A person on the 'relevant date'[2] 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

[1] Policy is in accordance with the Guidance for all institutions administering the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund in the 2026 to 2027 academic year https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-summary-of-key-funding-rules

[2] 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,

years preceding the 'relevant date'. '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 nationals 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 DfE 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 (or their spouses, civil partners and childrens with) with refugee status (RS) or humanitarian protection (HP) or discretionary leave (DL) or exceptional leave to enter (ELE) or exceptional leave to remain ELR)
b) People with recently settled status (this means those having been granted indefinite leave to enter or indefinite leave to remain, right of abode or British citizenship within the 3 years immediately preceding the start of the course)
c) People granted pre-settled status following the United Kingdom's (UK) exit from the European Union (EU).

In addition to the groups above, the DfE 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 partners[3] who have the right of abode or leave to enter or remain in the UK (or accompanying or joining

d. 1 July if the academic year starts between 1 July and 31 July.

[3] 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

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)[4]
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 support[5].

[4] Immigration Act 2017

[5] Section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 allows National Asylum Support Service to provide fullboard 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'

2. Vulnerable Student Bursaries

Vulnerable bursary applications should be submitted to the college by 1 June 2027.
Funding claims once verified by the college can only be submitted by the college to the DfE on the following dates:

Funding claim window	Open	Close	Payment made to college[6]
First	8 September 2026	12 November 2026	February-March 2027
Second	5 January 2027	11 February 2027	April-May 2027
Third	18 May 2027	1 July 2027	September-October 2027

If an application has not been verified by the college and submitted by the close date for a funding claim, then the claim cannot be submitted to the DfE until the next funding claim window opens, which could cause a delay in receiving the payment from the DfE.

The following groups are defined as vulnerable groups:

- Young people in care
- A Care leaver[7]
- Young people in receipt 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
- Young people in receipt Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in addition to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (UC) in their own right.

Where learners meet the eligibility criteria, the residency criteria and one or more of the criteria above they are eligible for a bursary of up to £1,200 (which is calculated on a pro-rata basis where appropriate). Full time is defined as 5 days for 30 weeks (teaching weeks) or more.

[6] Payments will be made after all checks, validations and quality assurance processes have been completed by the DfE.

[7] A 'care leaver' is defined as:

• a young person aged 16 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16; or

• a young person aged 18 or above who was looked after prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16

Where a learner meets the eligibility criteria for a vulnerable bursary, but their financial needs are already met (they have no relevant costs, or they do not need the maximum award) there is a possibility of either a limited bursary or no bursary awarded.

The Vulnerable bursary can be claimed for each academic year the learner is in education or training, as long as they continue to meet the eligibility criteria.

The agreed standard for a learner's attendance would be expected to be 95% or above should a bursary be awarded. An exception to this may be in circumstances where a learner's health and/or medical needs impact upon their attendance, in which case discretion would be exercised at the Head of College's authority.

Due to the nature of the learners special needs who attend the College it would be difficult to set a standard for behaviour / attainment that would be meaningful for all our learners.

Please complete the form in Appendix 1 and supply the necessary evidence so that the college can submit the claim to the Department for Education (DfE) via a DfE Sign-in account within the appropriate claim window. Applications should be submitted to the college by 1 June 2027 as the deadline for submission of a claim to to the DfE is 1 July 2027 for the final claim window.

3. Discretionary Bursaries

Discretionary bursary applications should be submitted to the college by 30 June 2027.

Ambitious College will administer the Bursary Fund awarded within the Department for Education's (DfE) Bursary Fund Guidelines.

The funding for 2026-2027 is £16,468.00.

This may be awarded on an identified needs basis to learners to help them overcome the individual barriers to participation they face such as essential books, equipment, specialist clothing, transport, meals[8] and that meet the following assessment criteria:

- Applicants must meet the eligibility criteria and the residency criteria

[8] The College Free Meals Policy provides an alternative way to apply for funding for meals and hence learners would be expected to apply for Free College Meals before applying for bursary funding.

- Evidence of household income below the appropriate level[9] see below must accompany the application prior to assessment.
- If evidence is provided regarding care or childcare costs incurred by the parent/carer/learner, the value of these costs will be deducted from the household income value when calculating the income level in the table below.

	Inside Greater London[10]	Outside Greater London
Single Adult	£16,967.04	£14,753.04
Family	£25,323.00	£22,020.00

- Based on the information received and if financial hardship is identified, the learner could be provided/reimbursed with:
    - Contribution toward meal expenditure for college meals above the amount for Free College Meals for additional costs due to dietary needs.
    - Re-imbursement of travel costs upon submission of evidence. e.g. travel tickets/weekly pass or invoices.
    - Purchase of essential books or equipment
    - Other as mentioned above.

Please note that receipts for expenditure and purchases will be required for audit and assurance purposes. Where this relates to weekly travel costs then receipts will be required for a limited time period to show the pattern of costs incurred.

The bursary fund is not intended to

- provide learning and pastoral support - services that institutions give to students - for example, counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring
- Support extra-curricular activities where these are not essential to the students' study programme
- Non-essential activities including field trips
- support general living costs or household incomes (for example rent, bills wi-fi and so on)
- Servicing of computer equipment (laptops and tablets)
- Support costs of foreign or overseas field trips where the content can be found from within England at a cheaper cost.

[9] Based on the Benefit cap amount as at 04/07/2026 https://www.gov.uk/benefit-cap/benefit-cap-amounts
[10] London Government Directory (londoncouncils.gov.uk)

- Replace the Local Authorities statutory transport duty to students ages 16 to 19. Each Local Authority publishes an annual transport statement to set out their arrangements to facilitate participation in education or training for students aged 16 to 19.

The agreed standard for a learner's attendance would be expected to be 95% or above should a bursary be awarded. An exception to this may be in circumstances where a learner's health and/or medical needs impact upon their attendance, in which case discretion would be exercised at the Head of College's authority.

Due to the nature of the learners special needs who attend the college it would be difficult to set a standard for behaviour / attainment that would be meaningful for all our learners.

Please complete the form in Appendix 2 and supply the necessary evidence so that the College can consider the application and send to the college administration team.
The College Administrator or Business Manager will check the application and submit the documentation to the Head of College for authorisation.

The outcome of the decision will be advised in writing.

When the Discretionary Bursary Fund is exhausted the College will advise via the College newsletters/parent meetings and no further applications will be considered until further funding is received from the DfE.

4. Impact of bursaries on Department of Work and Pension (DWP) benefits

Receipt of bursary funding does not affect receipt of other means-tested benefits paid to families, such as Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Child Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Housing Benefit or, Universal Credit.

5. Complaints/Appeals process

All complaints/appeals must be made in writing:

Complaints/appeals fall into 2 categories which are:

- 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 Department for Education (DfE).
- If the complaint/appeal concerns 16 to 19 Bursary Fund policy, then it will be referred to the DfE.

Appendix 1 Vulnerable Bursary Application Form

Please complete the form and submit it together with your supporting evidence to the Head of College via the Executive Assistant to the Head of College by 1 June 2027. A Word version of this form can be downloaded here.

Title					
Surname					
First name					
Address					
Postcode					
Phone/Mobile					
Email					
Date of Birth (DD/MM/YY)					
Your Age on 31 August 2026		*You must be 16, 17 or 18 (i.e. under 19 on 31 August 2026 to apply)*			
Have you the right of abode and been resident in the UK for the last 3 years?	Yes		No		

Vulnerable Bursary Criteria

To qualify you must be aged 16 or over and under 19 on 31 August 2026 and meet the Department for Education (DfE) residency criteria. The bursary is paid to enable you to attend education with us and will only be paid if your attendance and behaviour meet the required standard and there is a financial need for the funding.

To qualify you must fall into one of the categories below and produce the required evidence as stated:

Are you in receipt of Income Support (IS) or Universal Credit (UC)? (evidence required – IS or UC Statement letter. For UC Screenshots or documents printed from your online account are acceptable)	Yes		No	

Care Leaver or currently looked after in care? (evidence required – letter from local authority)	Yes		No	
Student in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in addition toEmployment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (UC) in your own right (evidence required – financial statement showing **both** DLA or PIP and ESA or UC)	Yes		No	

Please provide your bank details below as printed on your bank card or statement.

Bursary payments will be paid directly into learners' bank accounts only (by BACS). Please be aware that the College can choose to pay Bursary awards 'in kind', e.g. by purchasing the equipment required.

Account Name								
Account Number								
Sort Code			-			-		

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 a Bursary payment, 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.
- I understand that the monies I receive under the Bursary Scheme will be paid on condition of the standards of attendance and behaviour, as explained in the Ambitious College Bursary Fund document and there is a financial need for the funding.
- I will attend regularly and complete the course for which my bursary is supporting me.
- When changes to my household financial circumstances occur (which may result in changes to my claim), I confirm will notify Ambitious College immediately.
- I will notify Ambitious College of any changes to my Bank/Building Society details.
- I understand that monies I receive under the Bursary Scheme have been awarded to provide me with financial support to allow me to continue in learning, and if I leave learning all financial support will stop.
- I understand that I do not have an automatic entitlement to Bursary payments, and all payments are based on the information provided.

- I am clear that the Bursary payments I receive are to provide me with the means to remain in learning and are to be used for items such as equipment.
- I understand I have the right to appeal if I disagree with the outcome of by Bursary Application. This appeal should be made in writing to Ambitious College, but if I feel I have not been treated fairly, I can follow the Ambitious College complaints procedure.

Learner signature		Date	
Learner's representative signature (if learner unable to make own application)		Date	
Name of representative			
Capacity of Learner's representative			

Appendix 2 Discretionary Bursary Application Form

Please complete the form and submit it together with your supporting evidence to the Head of College via the Executive Assistant to the Head of College by 30 June 2027. A Word version of this form can be downloaded here.

Title					
Surname					
Firstname					
Address					
Postcode					
Phone/Mobile					
Email					
Date of Birth (DD/MM/YY)					
Your Age on 31 August 2026		*You must be 16, 17 or 18 (i.e. under 19 on 31 August 2026) or 19-25 and have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan to apply.*			
Have you the right of abode and been resident in the UK for the last 3 years?			Yes		No

Discretionary Bursary Criteria

To qualify you must be aged 16 or over and under 19 on 31 August 2026 or be 19-25 and have an EHCP and meet the Department for Education (DfE) residency criteria. The bursary is paid to enable you to attend education with us and will only be paid if your attendance and behaviour meet the required standard.

Your household income is one of the criteria which will help us to assess your application. If your household income exceeds the maximum see below, you will not be eligible for a bursary payment.

	Inside Greater London	Outside Greater London
Single Adult	£16,967.04	£14,753.04
Family	£25,323.00	£22,020.00

Please tick all that apply of the following to show what type of evidence you have provided**. If you cannot provide evidence, then we cannot process your application.**

P60		Income Support / Universal Credit (award letter)	
Self-employed earnings (official tax return)		Full Tax Credit Award Notice (last 3 months statements)	
Wage Slips (most recent wage slips)		Other benefits/pension (award letter)	
Number of dependent children in the household			

Please provide details and evidence of any care or childcare costs incurred	Evidence provided

Student Request for Assistance Form

The amount of financial assistance you will receive is dependent on your personal circumstances. It is intended to help you with the costs of overcoming any barriers you may have when attending learning. Using the table below, please tell us what you might need financial assistance and for how much you will need during the academic year.

This information is strictly confidential and will only be used for this assessment purpose.

Assistance Requested (please provide details what is being purchased and the amount for each item**)**	**Amount Required**	**Number of Days**	**Office Use Only (Total)**
Books			
Equipment			

Transport			
Meals (please apply for Free College Meals, as this is for additional costs due to dietary needs)			
Any other			
If there are extenuating circumstances within your household that have not been covered but you would like is to consider as part of this application, please provide the information here:			
Please provide any additional information in respect of your application:			

Please tick one of the following options

	Ambitious College to use the funding to purchase items as detailed above.
	Ambitious College to pay funds directly into pupils' bank account only (by BACS) for parent/carer to purchase items as detailed above. Please note that the parent/carer should provide receipts for our records when items have been purchased.

Account Name								
Account Number								
Sort Code			-			-		

Please be aware that the college can choose to pay Bursary awards 'in kind', e.g. by purchasing equipment required.

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 a Bursary payment, 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.
- I understand that the monies I receive under the Bursary Scheme will be paid on condition of the standards of attendance and behaviour, as explained in the Ambitious College Bursary Fund document and there is a financial need for the funding.
- **Holidays will be unpaid.**
- I will attend regularly and complete the course for which my bursary is supporting me.
- When changes to my household financial circumstances occur (which may result in changes to my claim), I confirm will notify Ambitious College immediately.
- I will notify Ambitious College of any changes to my Bank/Building Society details.
- I understand that monies I receive under the Bursary Scheme have been awarded to provide me with financial support to allow me to continue in learning, and if I leave learning all financial support will stop.
- I understand that I do not have an automatic entitlement to Bursary payments, and all payments are based on the information provided.
- I am clear that the Bursary payments I receive are to provide me with the means to remain in learning and are to be used for items such as books, equipment, transport, meal costs.

- I understand I have the right to appeal if I disagree with the outcome of by Bursary Application. This appeal should be made in writing to Ambitious College, but if I feel I have not been treated fairly, I can follow the Ambitious College complaints procedure.
- I confirm I will provide to the college receipts for purchases made using the bursary monies.

Learner signature		Date	
Learner's representative signature (if learner unable to make own application)		Date	
Name of representative			
Capacity of Learner's representative			