Learner Support DfE and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) fund policy for the 16 to 19 TMC Bursary 2026/27

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College Bursary Policy 2026/27

1. Introduction

This policy outlines the financial support available to students through the TMC Bursary Fund. The college is committed to ensuring that financial hardship does not prevent students from accessing, participating in, and successfully completing their studies.

The TMC bursary policy has been written in accordance with DfE and GMCA rules and regulations and we adhere to the LTE group's financial regulation and compliance rules. The bursary is here to help with essential costs that could stop students taking part in a course, such as travel, meals, essential books, equipment or specialist clothing. Support is based on individual circumstances and the actual costs associated with the course. Meeting the eligibility criteria does not automatically mean students will receive support or a fixed amount.

2. Purpose

The TMC bursary fund is designed to support students facing financial barriers, improve attendance and retention, and ensure equitable access to education and training.

The discretionary funds are limited and not guaranteed, and these will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis and will close when the full allocation has been spent. Applications will be assessed fairly and consistently. Priority will be given to students who can show they have the greatest financial barriers to taking part in their study programme. If funds become limited, the College may review awards, but decisions will continue to be based on assessed need, evidence provided and individual circumstances.

3. Scope

This policy applies to eligible students aged 16 to 18, students aged 19 who are continuing a 2-year Programme of Study, and students aged 19 to 24 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) where they meet the DfE funding rules. Students must also meet the relevant residency and funding eligibility requirements.

4. Types of Financial Support

Support may include:

- Travel support
- DfE college meals
- Essential kit support

- Vulnerable student support
- Hardship support
- Placement support

4.0 Travel Support

Travel support will be considered where travel costs are a financial barrier to attending college. The College will take account of free or subsidised travel already available, your timetable, where students live, the most reasonable route to college and any individual circumstances that affect a student's ability to travel.

- An income threshold below £40,000 per annum *and*
- Living within GM but not eligible for Our Pass *or*
- Living outside the GM area *and*
- Is fully enrolled at The Manchester College as a Home Student *and*
- studying more than 8 hours per week

The travel award will be loaded onto the college ID badge (which must always be visible, when on college campuses). This will be used on public transport as a travel card. Students will be able to renew the travel award every 28 days using a smart phone at their campus reception. Students who lose or misplace their ID/bus pass will incur a fee of £3 to obtain a replacement from The Manchester college. Refunds are not available if an ID/bus pass is later found. Whilst the ID/bus pass is being replaced, there will be no replacement funds available.

Any Students found misusing their ID/bus pass will be subject to the student disciplinary procedures. Students who may be in financial difficulties can make an application to the hardship fund from the Welfare team. In cases where students have lost their ID/bus pass up to 3 or more times, the college will adjust the award to daily scratch cards for timetabled days in college only.

Travel support will be awarded only for the period the student is required to attend their approved Programme of Study during the 2026/27 academic year. Where a course continues beyond the standard travel award end date, the College will assess whether further support is needed based on timetabled attendance, placement requirements and available funding.

4.1 Alternative Travel (50% contribution)

In some cases, the bus may not be the most appropriate means of getting to college and alternative travel may be required such as Train/Tram. For alternative travel the additional criteria will apply.

- Live outside the Greater Manchester area and the course is not available locally
- Medical reasons why the bus is not a viable means of transport (SEND/EHCP)

(GP or medical/support worker documentation is required)

For alternative travel the college will make a 50% contribution towards travel costs. For example, if the train costs £130 per month, the bursary may contribute £65. Alternative travel will be paid via BACS payment into a valid UK bank account monthly. Where applicable students may receive both the bursary travel and a Train/Tram contribution, depending on campus location and travel networks.

Students will be asked to provide evidence such as tickets, receipts, medical evidence or confirmation from college staff.

4.2 Our-Pass free travel for 16- to 18-year-olds (Manchester City Council)

The "OUR PASS" Scheme operates throughout Greater Manchester (GM) and will provide those students who are 16 – 18 and live in Greater Manchester free bus travel on all GM local bus services across the region, making it easier to access education, work, training, culture, and leisure opportunities in the Manchester city area.

- Greater Manchester resident and aged 16 and under 18 on 31 August 2026.
- There is a £10 administration fee to be paid by the student*.
- "OUR PASS" will be valid until 31 August after the student's 18th birthday
- Lost or stolen cards (Our Pass) will cost £10* to replace at www.manage.ourpass.co.uk/home.faces which will not be covered by the College.

*Students who may be in financial difficulties can make an application to the hardship fund from the Welfare team. For more information and to apply for Our Pass go to www.ourpass.co.uk

4.3 Free School Meals (FSM) and Enhanced Free School Meals (EFSM)

All DfE (Department for Education) eligible students aged 16-18 in receipt of, or the household is in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Universal Credits
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- guarantee element of Pension Credit

will be eligible for a meal allowance of £2.66 per day when in college (timetable only). In cases where a student progresses within The Manchester College and receives a meal allocation, the student will be expected to reapply for funds; this means we can also check on any additional eligibility.

TMC Bursary will award two elements for meals, **FSM** and **Enhanced FSM.**

- FSM will be paid at £2.66 per day, when on a Programme of Study if receiving eligible benefits and the household income is above £30,001 per year
- Enhanced FSM (EFSM) will be paid at £3.90 per day on a Programme of Study if receiving eligible benefits and the household income is below £30,000 per year

Where possible, meal support will be provided through the college cashless catering system loaded onto the college ID card. If this is not possible because of the timetable, placement or approved off-site provision, the College may use another suitable method and may ask for evidence that the support has been used for meals linked to attendance.

All payments will be made using the BACS payment system by the Bursary Team. Attendance will be monitored, allocations reviewed on a regular basis and students will be informed of any changes. The College reserves the right to stop payments. College meal allocation will be re-set to zero every Friday pm and reloaded every Monday am, so it will be important students are encouraged to use their allocation during each week.

4.4 Free School Meals when studying off site

Students who are entitled to FSM/EFSM but are unable to access colleges facilities due to studying externally to the college e.g. are off-site as part of their Programme of Study and/or when carrying out a work placement or work experience will have the meal allocation paid by BACS payment system into a valid UK bank account or vouchers by the Bursary Team for the days on placement only. Attendance will be monitored, allocations reviewed on a regular basis and students will be informed of any changes. The College reserves the right to stop payments.

4.5 Course Kit Support

Essential kits and equipment for a course can be funded up to the full amount depending on a household income threshold of £40,000 per year and curriculum area. Purchase of kits will be operated in conjunction with curriculum areas and the Bursary Team. Awards will be based on an assessment of each student's actual financial need and the specific essential participation costs they would otherwise have to meet.

All curriculum areas may have a level of kit or materials essential to the Programme of Study, any equipment given can only be for the use of a bursary eligible student only. A Justification will be needed for all items requested on the essential and educational/assessment.

Kits and materials must be ordered no later than the Christmas break for students who join The Manchester College in September or the Easter break for students who join The Manchester College in January. All equipment given to students should be signed to confirm receipt of the equipment.

4.6 Vulnerable Support Bursary

The Vulnerable Support Bursary can provide an award of up to £1,200 per year. To be eligible, students must meet one of the DfE defined vulnerable group categories in full and must complete an individual assessment of actual financial needs. This evidence will be used to decide the value and form of support the student can receive.

The most vulnerable Students are defined as:
(Evidence will be required to support the application)

- in care (including unaccompanied Asylum Seekers)
- care leavers (including unaccompanied Asylum Seekers)
- receiving Income Support, or Universal Credit because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and/or has dependents living with them
- 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 assessment must identify the specific costs needed to enable participation, such as travel, meals, essential books, specialist equipment, clothing or other course-related costs. Evidence of eligibility and need will be retained for audit purposes, including confirmation of the vulnerable group category, any benefit evidence, care status evidence, tenancy or supported accommodation evidence where relevant, itemised costs, approval records and payment records.

Students studying for at least 30 weeks per year will be eligible for the vulnerable support bursary of up to, but not a guaranteed of £1,200 a year (Some travel support will be provided via the "OUR PASS") For students aged 18 on or before 31 August 2026, The Manchester college will provide travel support. For students on Programme of Study lasting less than 30 weeks, any award will normally be pro-rated and based on the students' assessed participation costs. Travel support will only be included where it is an actual cost that the student needs to meet to attend their Programme of Study and will take account of any free or subsidised travel already available.

For those are eligible for the vulnerable bursary, the College will assess what support they actually need to take part in their course. This could include travel, meals, essential kit, specialist clothing, books or other approved course-related costs. Students will not automatically receive £1,200 or a fixed weekly payment. Any support will be based on

assessed need, evidence provided, course requirements and the period the student is attending. Essential kit will normally be purchased directly by the College or paid to a supplier, where possible.

Where possible, support will be provided by direct purchase or direct payment to suppliers. BACS payments to students should be used only where this is the most appropriate method and the College can demonstrate how the payment relates to assessed participation costs.

These payments will only be paid into a valid bank account in the name of the student receiving funds. The student can enter bank details via the Apply Portal when applying for TMC Bursary. Any details submitted late may cause delays in payments. Any additional discretionary support must be assessed separately, recorded clearly, and must not duplicate costs already met through the vulnerable bursary. The College will retain evidence showing how each element of support addresses an identified financial barrier to participation.

Before reducing, suspending or withdrawing support, the College will consider the student's individual circumstances, including safeguarding, care status, disability, health, housing instability or other barriers affecting attendance. Decisions and reasons will be recorded, and students will be signposted to the appeals process and welfare support.

4.7 Hardship Support

Hardship support is for exceptional or unexpected situations that create a financial barrier to taking part in education. It is not guaranteed and will be assessed individually. The College may ask for evidence of the students' circumstances and will consider whether other support is available before making an award.

Students applying to the hardship fund will be expected to book a welfare appointment to assess need. In addition, as part of the hardship provision. We can also support with Get Smart, designed to ensure no student is put at a disadvantage due to lack of finance or support and will provide:

- Suitable clothes/uniforms for students who are due to start a work placement.
- Suitable clothes for students who are looking for work and have an interview.
- Students who are progressing to Higher Education and need support with the UCAS fee.

If a student does not have access to a piece of IT equipment for independent study, then students can book college computers or laptops through the Libraires Laptop Lockers to work on whilst on college campus.

The Manchester College is committed to supporting the most vulnerable students who come from the lowest income bandings. Therefore, we will, via a needs assessment, provide a laptop for students who are eligible under hardship.

A laptop will only be provided following a needs assessment by the Welfare Team. Students will be expected to sign the Acceptable Use Policy and confirmation of receipt of the equipment. At the end of the academic year, the student will be expected to return the equipment, unless they undertake a two-year programme, so it can be reimaged and reused for other students. Failure to return any equipment may result in recovery action and students may become liable for the full cost.

The college reserves the right to stop this practice at any time depending on available funds.

4.8 Work Placement Support

For students who must complete a placement as part of their main Programme of Study, students are expected to use their Our Pass or TMC Bursary travel pass where it is appropriate to do so.

Where additional placement travel support is required - i.e. the placement is out of borough or alternative mode of transport is more appropriate, the Employability placement coordinator (EPC) will refer to the Bursary Team and provide details of the placement, to support the assessment for further travel support. If a student hasn't already applied for the TMC Bursary, then they will need to apply for the additional placement travel support.

If a student is eligible for FSM/EFSM, Meals may be provided up to £3.90, depending on circumstances, per day on placement where it's necessary to do so and the placement provider does not provide any provision. This will be paid for with vouchers and must be included in the application form, completed by the EPC. All students will be expected to have applied for TMC Bursary before any additional placement travel can be assessed.

The student may be asked to provide evidence that a Train/Tram ticket has been purchased. The Manchester College will provide the students with the tools to plan their journey to college and take advantage of any free transport available.

5. Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for TMC bursary students must*:

- Be fully enrolled on a program of study at The Manchester College AND
- Have a household income of no more than £40,000 per year OR
- Be in receipt of Universal Credits or relevant benefits
- Aged over 16
- Aged under 19 on 31st August 2026 (or 31st August 2025 for those Students progressing to a 2nd year of a 2-year enrolled study programme)
- Aged between 19 and 24 and subject to a LDA or EHCP
- Eligible for DfE funding

- Have a good attendance in line with the college expectations, unless there are agreed or evidenced circumstances affecting attendance which the College has considered.

*Additional criteria apply for some individual elements of the bursary. See section 4.

Eligibility means students can be considered for support; it does not guarantee an award. The College will also assess a student's actual financial need, the costs they need help with, and whether those costs are essential for participation in their Programme of Study.

Students on a 16 –18 Programme of Study (Students must be under 19 on 31st August 2026 or on 31st August 2025 for Students progressing from Year 1 to Year 2 of a two-year enrolled Programme of Study) and with a household income under the thresholds.

Young Offenders are eligible for the TMC Bursary if they are:

- serving a non-custodial sentence
- redeemed early from a custodial sentence
- remanded to a non-secure institution
- Work based Students will only be eligible for TMC Bursary in exceptional circumstances.

6. Application Process

Students must apply through the college online "APPLY" portal on the college website and provide supporting evidence such as proof of income or benefits.

1. Must be fully enrolled
2. Go to the APPLY portal on the college website
3. Complete all sections of the bursary application
4. Upload evidence
5. Submit to the bursary team for processing

The Bursary team will process the application and inform students of the outcome via the student email address. (This should be within 10 working days).

If any application is incomplete or evidence is missing, the Bursary Team will contact students using their student email address. Applications may take longer to assess if evidence is not provided. Students should tell the College as soon as possible if their financial circumstances change during the year.

For applications for Hardship, students can use the QR code to complete the application and once they are completed, students must book an appointment with a welfare advisor on campus.

7. Assessment Process

Applications are means-tested and assessed by the bursary team, with priority given to students with the greatest need. To be eligible a student must be in receipt of, or have parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Universal Credits
- Income Support
- Income based JSA
- Income based ESA
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of the State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Working Tax Credits (WTC) run-on
- Universal Credit

The College may ask for evidence of household income, benefits, care status, independent living, travel costs, placement costs, course equipment costs or other information needed to assess your application. Evidence must be current, clear and match the details on a submitted your application. Proof of household income can be evidenced through:

- P60
- Tax Credit Award Letter (Child or Working)
- Benefit Award Letter
- Universal Credit
- Part IV Immigration & Asylum Act 1999
- Guaranteed element of the State Pension Credit
- Wage slips for last 3 months.
- Self-assessment tax calculation or certified accounts
- Evidence of self-employment
- Tenancy agreement (for vulnerable support bursary)

8. What the Bursary Covers

The bursary may support meals, travel, essential course kits and materials, and other required costs linked to study. It cannot cover any costs associated with course fees or none essential equipment. Support is limited to essential costs directly linked to taking part in the approved Programme of Study and which the students would otherwise need to pay themselves.

The bursary fund is not intended to.

- Additional student support services, i.e., counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring.

- support extracurricular activities where these are not essential to the students' Programme of Study
- support general household incomes.

No cash payments can be made to 16-18 Asylum Seekers in the UK with a parent(s) or guardian(s). We can, however, support unaccompanied Asylum Seekers.

The bursary cannot be used for:

- fees for access to facilities at The Manchester College
- 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.
- payments to support students' general living costs i.e. income replacement

9. Payment Methods

Payments for some elements of the TMC Bursary may be made via college ID cards, bank transfer (BACS) or direct payments to a supplier for essential kits.

The College will choose the most appropriate payment method for the type of support agreed. This may include direct purchase, vouchers, payment to a supplier, support loaded onto a college ID card, or BACS payment. Cash or BACS payments will only be used where appropriate and will require receipts or other evidence.

The Manchester College operates a cashless payment system. Students and or parents/carers can load funds via a Cash Loader on campus or via an App. If the internet or college systems go down, Tokens will be made available to TMC Bursary students (receiving FSM/EFSM only). If a student forgets their college ID, there are no additional funds /replacements available. Payments can also be made using a credit/debit card.

Any payments made to a student via BACS will take up to 5 working days and will show on a statement as LTE PAYMENTS.

10. Conditions of Support

Before support is reduced, suspended or withdrawn, the College will consider individual circumstances, including illness, disability, caring responsibilities, safeguarding concerns, housing instability or other barriers to attendance. Decisions will be recorded and students will be told how to appeal.

All students are expected to follow the "College Deal": Respectful, Collaborative, Proactive, Committed, Responsible, Ambitious and professional. Students who are subject to a disciplinary may jeopardise their TMC Bursary award.

All meal awards loaded onto the college ID will be wiped every Friday pm and reinstated every Monday am. As a college we are committed to encouraging healthy living for our students. All students attempting to buy large quantities of non-water-based drinks or confectionery products may be referred to The Careers and Welfare or Student Support to discuss healthy options and appropriate spending of their meal allocation.

When making an application to the TMC bursary this is done via the Apply Portal located on the main college website apply.tmc.ac.uk. Full instructions can be found at www.tmc.ac.uk/study-with-us/fees-finance-funding/

This will need to be completed year on year with all relevant evidence.

For students receiving payments via BACS, the college expects evidence that funds have been used for its intended purpose. This includes evidence/receipts for Train/Tram ticket purchases, Meal or supermarket/shop purchases or Breakfast/after school club payments. Evidence should be sent to the bursary team BursaryTeam@tmc.ac.uk

Failure to provide evidence may result in awards being suspended.

11. Changes, Reductions & Withdrawal

If a student's circumstances change, their support may be reviewed. This could include changes to income, household circumstances, course, attendance, timetable, placement, travel route or other support received. The College may increase, reduce, suspend or stop support where the evidence shows a need has changed.

12. Appeals Process

An appeal should explain why a student believes the decision is wrong and include any additional evidence they want the College to consider. The appeal will be reviewed by staff who were not involved in the original decision where possible. For all funds, Terms, Conditions, and eligibility criteria apply. All funding rules and regulations are correct at time of publication. The Manchester College reserves the right to make any changes within the academic year as appropriate.

Students will be expected to have looked at all options before submitting an appeal or have spoken to the welfare team for support.

Additional information links:

https://tfgm.com/plan-a-journey

https://www.firstbus.co.uk/greater-manchester
https://tfgm.com/public-transport/tram/ticket-prices
https://www.systemonetravel.co.uk

Free bus travel around the city center. The Manchester City Centre has a free bus service 1,2 and 3 that operate around the city center. All buses are wheelchair accessible.

https://tfgm.com/public-transport/bus/free-bus

When students are traveling by train into Manchester Central Zone, they can use the train ticket to also travel on the tram within zone 1, without the need to purchase additional tickets.

www.tmc.ac.uk/financial-advice/

13. Fraud and Misuse

Students must provide accurate information and use bursary support only for the purpose agreed. The College will ask for receipts or evidence. If false information is provided or funds are misused, support may be withdrawn and the College may take recovery or disciplinary action.

14. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually in line with funding guidance and college priorities. Students can expect an inclusive and supportive learning environment whatever their background. This policy has been scrutinised by an Equality impact assessment.

Are there concerns that this policy could have an adverse impact on any of these protected is action required?	**If yes, is action required?**
Age	NO
Disability	NO
Gender reassignment	NO
Marriage or civil partnership	NO
Race	NO
Religion	NO
Pregnancy and maternity	NO
Sex	NO
Sexual orientation	NO
EIA Summary	
Person responsible for EIA	Marie Stock
EIA Outcome & statement	

This policy outlines the TMC Bursary guidance for students. All above have been taken into consideration when writing the policy to ensure all protected characteristics are not disadvantaged.

Quick Guides

Travel

1. Not eligible for Our Pass *AND* Income below £40,000
2. Enrolled on a course of 8 or more hours per week as a home student

Travel is loaded to the college ID and should be renewed every 28 days at a college reception.

Meals up to £3.90 a day

Claiming Universal Credits or relevant benefits *AND* fully enrolled on a course
FMS is £2.66 (over 30k)
EFSM is £3.90 (under 30k)

Meals are loaded to the college ID each week and wiped every Friday pm.

Hardship

Income below £40,000 *AND*
Enrolled on a course

Award based on assessment and individual circumstances.



Alternative Travel – 50% contribution

1. Live outside GM AND / OR
2. Have a medical condition *AND*
3. Income below £40,000 AND
4. Enrolled on a course of 8 or more hours per week as a home student

Paid into a UK bank account every month and evidence of ticket purchase must be provided.

Must provide medical evidence if applicable from a valid source (GP, Hospital or health professional)

Kits

1. Income below £40,000 *AND*
2. Enrolled on a course

Kit must be essential to completing the course.

Placement Support

1. Income flexible *AND*
2. Enrolled on a course

We may pay additional travel depending on where the placement is and meals where the employer is not providing this support.

Vulnerable Support

Award based on assessment and individual circumstances. Example:

Meals at	up to £3.90
Holiday meals	£20 per week
Course Kit	if applicable

The Manchester College
be amazing