

## Learner Support DfE and Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) fund policy for the 16 to 19 Access to Industry Award 2025/26

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## 1. Introduction

The Manchester College is committed to supporting students in accordance with the DfE and GMCA rules and regulations. The purpose of this Policy is to help you understand the purpose and scope of the available financial support.

The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund provides financial support to help students overcome the specific financial barriers to participation they face so they can remain in education.

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries:

- bursaries for defined vulnerable groups.
- Discretionary bursaries, which The Manchester College awards using policies we have established in line with these funding rules.

## 2. Scope and purpose

The policy details how The Manchester College will offer financial support to Students across the College through the Learners Support Fund mechanism DfE.

Financial support will be offered to:

- 16-18 Students  
*(including Students aged 19 progressing from Year 1 to Year 2 of a 2-year enrolled programme)*
- 19-24 Students with an Education Health and Care (EHCP)

The LSF helps to provide financial support towards the cost of studying and more specifically will offer support for:

- Travel for Students (Not including Students who are eligible for the local authority "OUR PASS")
- Free College Meals
- Free Tea and toast (on arrival from 8:00am until 9:30am)
- Personal Hardship
- Additional Support for the most vulnerable students
- Essential curriculum kits/materials and equipment
- Additional Support to remove barriers to employment and placements.

### 2.1 Policy

The LSF 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. The fund will be reviewed on a Monthly basis. The college reserve the right to adjust the criteria in year according to funds available, individual needs and personal circumstances of individual students.

The college may pay free meals during holiday periods such as Half Terms, Easter Break and Christmas (totalling 7 weeks per academic year) as a BACS payment, this will be paid at £30 for each week.

When making an application to the bursary (Access to Industry), this is done via the Apply Portal located on the main college website [apply.tmc.ac.uk](http://apply.tmc.ac.uk). Full instructions can be found at [www.tmc.ac.uk/study-with-us/fees-finance-funding/](http://www.tmc.ac.uk/study-with-us/fees-finance-funding/)

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

## 2.2 EU and EEA students

Now The United Kingdom (UK) has left the European Union (EU) and free movement between the UK and the EU has now ended. All EU/EEA nationals must show EU pre-settlement or settlement to be eligible for funding unless they fall into one of the exempt categories. All EU/EEA new arrivals will be deemed as international unless special exemptions apply. All Irish citizens continue to be automatically eligible for funding under immigration concessions agreed with the Irish Government before the UK was a member of the EU.

## 2.3 Vulnerable Support Bursary

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.
- Young Caring Responsibilities

The Manchester College may decide that although a young person may be eligible for a vulnerable bursary because they are in one or more of the defined vulnerable groups, they do not have any actual financial need. This might be because their financial needs are already met and/or because they have no relevant costs. The Manchester College reserves the right to refuse a student's application on this basis. Similarly, students will only receive the amount they need to participate, and the College will not automatically award students £1,200 if they do not need the full amount. Students living independently will need to provide evidence of this with a valid Tenancy agreement or Supported Housing agreement.

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 after 31 August 2024, The Manchester college will provide travel support.

All Students in receipt of the vulnerable support bursary will receive up to £1,200 made up of, free meals and meals during holiday periods such as Half Terms, Easter Break and Christmas (totalling 7 weeks per academic year) as a BACS payment, this will be paid at £30 for each week\*.

\*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.

In addition, the college may award extra support from the discretionary awards funds (Edenred shopping vouchers or a laptop) depending on a needs assessment, conducted by the welfare team. The vulnerable support bursary is based on a financial assessment and need.

The Manchester Colleges Bursary Team will check attendance. If this falls below the college standards, The Bursary Team will speak with curriculum and support staff about reasons why the attendance has fallen. If there are genuine reasons, support will not be withheld. If there is no record/reason for not attending, support may be stopped.

### **3. Learners Support Funds (LSF)**

Students aged 16-18 (Students must be under 19 on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025 or on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024 for Students progressing from Year 1 to Year 2 of a 2-year enrolled study programme) and with a household income under the thresholds, outlined below to be eligible for financial support as per Appendix 1. Students who become 19 during the year will continue to receive financial support until the end of the current academic year.

#### **3.1 Free travel for 16- to 18-year-olds**

The “OUR PASS” Scheme operates throughout Greater Manchester (GM) and will provide Manchester’s 16-18-year old’s 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 city.

1. Students must be a Greater Manchester resident and aged at least 16 and under 18 on 31 August 2025.
2. There is a £10 administration fee to be paid by the student\*.
3. “OUR PASS” will be valid until 31 August after the student’s 18<sup>th</sup> birthday
4. Lost or stolen cards (Our Pass) will cost £10\* to replace, which will not be covered by the College.

\*Students who may be in financial difficulties can make an application to the breaking barriers hardship fund from the Welfare team.

#### **3.2 16 to 18 College travel (TMCGO)**

The Manchester College Travel award will only be provided to Students who are not eligible for “OUR PASS” This will usually be students who live outside the GM area or are 18 on or after 31 August 2025.

The travel award will operate on 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 **£2** to obtain a replacement from The Manchester college. Refunds are not available if a bus pass is later found. Whilst the bus pass is being replaced, there will be no replacement funds available. Any Student found misusing their bus pass will be subject to the student disciplinary procedures. Students who may be in financial difficulties can make an application to the breaking barriers hardship fund from the Welfare team. In cases where students have lost their ID up to 3 or more times, the college will adjust the award to daily scratch cards for your timetabled days in college only.

The Manchester College is committed to removing any barriers a student faces to attend and progress in the college. The Manchester College will provide a travel package designed to get students to college using the variety of transport means available. For students who are not eligible for the Our Pass or live outside the GM travel area the following criteria will apply.

- An income threshold of below £40,000 per annum
- Living outside the GM area
- A valid UK bank account where applicable
- Living within GM but not eligible for Our Pass
- The bus is not the most appropriate means of getting to college and alternative travel may be required such as Bus & Train/Bus & Tram

### **College Bus Passes**

All eligible students will be provided with bus travel, loaded onto their college ID badge. In cases where a bus is not the most efficient means of travel to college, students will have the opportunity to apply for alternative means of travel where appropriate at the point of application, together with the additional costs involved.

### **Alternative Transport Payments**

In cases where a payment into a UK bank account is necessary The Manchester College will pay the alternative, relevant, reasonable amount as a BACS payment. The student will be expected to choose the most efficient mode of transport available when choosing their transport package.

### **Support for students with disabilities or health conditions**

In cases where a student has a disability or health condition including SEND/EHCP, the college will work with student on the best mode of travel support. However, the college cannot provide taxis to and from college, unless there is an emergency.

### **Placement Travel and Meals**

For learners who must complete a work placement as part of their main programme of study, the income threshold will be flexible, as placement attendance is essential to achieving the qualification and individual progression. Where possible learners are expected to use their Our Pass or TMC GO travel pass where it is appropriate to do so.

Travel requirements will be treated on a case-by-case basis and assessed based on the placement availability and distance. This will be completed by the Employability Placement Coordinators (EPC), stating the start and end date of placement, the location and weekly cost, sent to the Bursary Team using the placement travel application form. The college cannot provide taxis to and from placements.

Meals may be provided at £5.50 per day on placement where it's necessary to do so and the placement provider is not providing any provision. This is paid in arrears and must be included in the application form, completed by the EPC. All students will be expected to have applied for the Access to industry fund before any additional placement travel can be assessed.

In cases where a student has been paid using the BACS system, the student may be asked to provide evidence that a Train 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.

<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>

### **3.3 Free bus travel around the city centre**

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

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

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

### **3.4 Meal allowances**

#### **DfE Free meal allocation**

Students in receipt of a **means tested benefit, child tax credits Or Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding £7,400** are entitled up to £27.50 (depending on profile) meal allowance per week and that they are in college and when they are off-site as part of their Programme of Study e.g., when carrying out a work placement or work experience.

In cases where a student is progressing within The Manchester College and received a meal allocation. The student will be expected to reapply for funds; this means we can also check on any additional eligibility.



Students will receive their allocation loaded onto their ID card. For students who cannot access the cashless catering system, such as those on work placements or based in community provision, appropriate alternative payment methods will be arranged.

All payments will be operated using the BACS payment system by the Bursary Team. Attendance will be monitored, allocations reviewed on a regular basis and students informed of any changes. The College reserves the right to stop payments. College meal allocation will be re-set to zero every half term, so it will be important students are encouraged to use their allocation during term time. In cases where a student has accumulated funds during term time, the refectory will provide a “Grab Bag” option containing a set number of items, which can be taken home (limited to one per student each day).

### **College Meals**

In 2024/2025 the college introduced College Meals from the discretionary support fund for students who do not meet the criteria for DfE free meal allocation and have a household income below £30,000. For the 2025/2026 academic year this will continue and will be assessed based on the Access to Industry application form.

This fund is only guaranteed for the 2025/2026 academic year and may not continue for the 2026/2027 academic year. The college reserves the right to stop this fund, if funds become depleted.

### **3.5 19-24 Students with Education Care and Health Plan (EHCP)**

Students are entitled up to £27.50 (depending on profile) meal allowance per week that they are in college and when they are off-site as part of their Programme of Study e.g., when carrying out a work placement or work experience.

Students will receive their allocation loaded onto their ID card. Where Students cannot access the cashless catering vending system, such as those Students on work placement or who are based in community provision, appropriate alternative payment methods will be put in place.

All payments will be operated using the BACS payment system by the Bursary Team. Attendance will be monitored, allocations reviewed on a regular basis and students informed of any changes. The College reserves the right to stop payments.

Students will be expected to use their allocation when on college campus, using one of the refectories available, which caters for a range of tastes and requirements. If, by the end of the academic year there are any funds left on the ID card the college cannot pay this as cash to students.

In cases of severe hardship in the 2025/2026 academic year, The Manchester College will provide **food** support whilst a student attends their study programme, without undertaking the checks on household income or gathering other evidence that would normally be required. This will only apply in exceptional circumstances.



### **3.6 Fruit and bottled water**

As part of the college commitment to healthy living, alongside the free breakfast provision, we will make fruit and bottled water available to all students which can be collected in and around the main reception area twice per week. This will continue through the academic year, depending on funds.

### **3.7 Personal Hardship – Removing Barriers Fund**

The college has a Hardship provision to be held centrally to support Students who experience sudden, unavoidable, and extreme hardship e.g., homelessness. Furthermore, in reaction to the cost-of-living crisis. You can apply through The Welfare team. Or by downloading the breaking barriers application from [www.tmc.ac.uk/study-with-us/fees-finance-funding](http://www.tmc.ac.uk/study-with-us/fees-finance-funding).

Students applying to breaking barriers will be expected to book a welfare appointment to assess need.

### **3.8 Desirable Kit & Equipment**

kits and equipment for a course can be funded up to the full amount depending on an 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.

All curriculum areas may have a level of kit or materials essential to the study programme, any equipment given can only be for the use of a bursary eligible learner. A Justification will be needed for all items requested including trips, on the educational benefit but also the social and confidence building aspect can be considered.

Kits and materials must be ordered by the curriculum area no later than the Christmas break (for September starts) or the Easter break (January starts). There can be some flexibility for skills events only. All equipment given to learners should be signed for to confirm receipt of the equipment.

### **3.9 Get Smart**

Get Smart is designed to ensure no student is put at a disadvantaged due to lack of finances 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.

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

### **3.10 Laptops**

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 for free college meals.

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 program, 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.

#### 4. Application processes

Any Students wishing to apply for Students Support Funds will need to complete the Access to Industry applications, found on Apply Portal at [tmc.ac.uk](http://tmc.ac.uk) and upload proof of household income. The bursary team will only communicate using the student's college email account. The college will work with the college Learning Support Team to identify any students who may need additional support when applying for financial support in the college.

Proof of household income can be evidenced through:

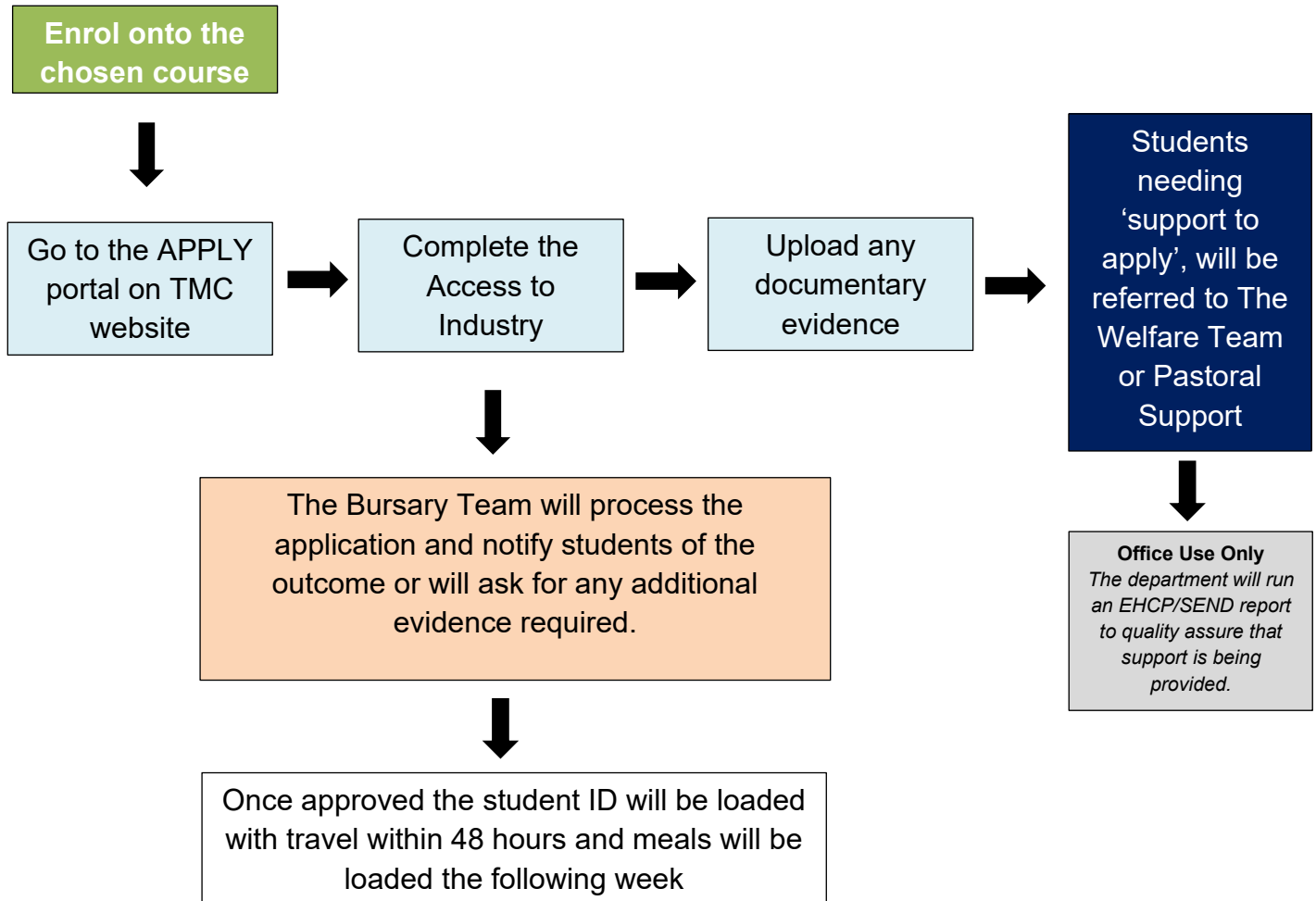
- P60
- Tax Credit Award Letter (Child or Working)
- Benefit Award Letter
- Universal Credit
- Part IV Immigration & Asylum Act 1999
- Guaranteed element of the State Pension Credit
- Wage slips for last 3 months.
- Self-assessment tax calculation or certified accounts
- Evidence of self-employment
-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

To be eligible for an EFA Free meal allowance (**means tested benefit**) a learner must be in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income based JSA
- Income related 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

Where a student is in receipt of any of the above AND working tax credits, the above benefits over-ride the WTC and entitle the learner to a meal allowance.

Confirmation of the allocation will be sent to the students email within **15 working days**.



#### 4.1 Eligibility

To be eligible for an allocation Students must be:

- Aged over 16
- Aged under 19 on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025 (or 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024 for those Students progressing to a 2<sup>nd</sup> year of a 2-year enrolled study programme)
- Aged between 19 and 24 and subject to a LDA or EHCP
- Aged 16 to 18 and enrolled to an ESF programme
- Enrolled to a The Manchester College course
- Eligible for DfE funding
- Have a good attendance in line with the college expectations
- Meet the minimum criteria relating to household income

Young Offenders are eligible for the Learners Support Funds if they are:

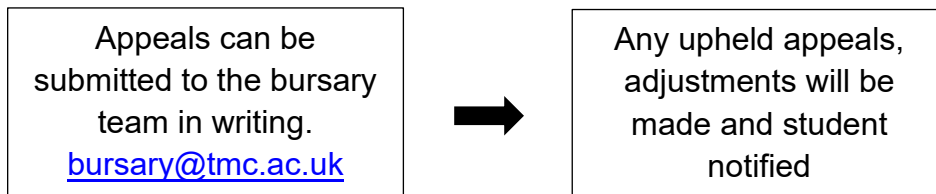
- serving a non-custodial sentence
- redeemed early from a custodial sentence
- remanded to a non-secure institution
- Work based Students will only be eligible for the Learners Support Funds in exceptional circumstances.

## 4.2 Appeals

Should a student wish to appeal any decision, they will need to put this in writing outlining why they feel the decision was incorrect and send to the Bursary Team via email at [BursaryTeam@tmc.ac.uk](mailto:BursaryTeam@tmc.ac.uk) within 10 working days of the decision date/letter.

An appeal panel will re-assess the application, and the outcome decision will be communicated within 10 working days from the date the appeal letter is received.

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.



## 4.3 What the bursary fund cannot be used for

The bursary fund is not intended to.

- provide learning support – services The Manchester College provides to students – for example, counselling, mentoring or extra tutoring.
- support extra-curricular activities where these are not essential to the students' study programme.
- 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

#### 4.4 Equality & Diversity

Students can expect an inclusive and supportive learning environment whatever their background. This policy has been scrutinised by an Equality impact assessment.

#### 4.5 Location and access to this policy

- Student Hub
- Staff Hub
- College Website

### 5. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)

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
<b>EIA Summary</b>	
Person responsible for EIA	Marie Stock
<b>EIA Outcome &amp; statement</b>	
This policy outlines the Bursary (Learner Support Funds) guidance for students. All above have been taken into consideration when writing the policy to ensure all protected characteristics are not disadvantaged.	

## Appendix 1 - 16-18 Programme of Study Award

	Income below £40,000	Income below £40,000 excluding meals
<b>Travel</b>	Only if not eligible for “OUR PASS” or living outside the GM area	N/A
<b>DfE Meal Allowance – Means Tested Benefits</b>	N/A	DfE will fund the cost of meals whilst in college up to £27.50 per week
<b>College Meals</b>	Income below £30,000 will fund the cost of meals whilst in college up to £27.50 per week	
<b>Desirable Kit and Equipment</b>	N/A	The Manchester College will fund desirable kits and equipment based on personal circumstances and curriculum area
<b>Hardship- Removing Barriers</b>	N/A	Allocated on a case-by-case basis. Via the Welfare Team
<b>Get Smart</b>	N/A	Allocated on a case-by-case basis. Via the Welfare Team