



SB -33 Safe Opportunities – Bursary Fund and Free Meals Policy

Signed by:

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Company Director

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1. Introduction

Safe Opportunities aims to provide support for students who are likely to be disadvantaged by financial constraints and by the impact of study on their finances. Any students on ESFA funded courses are eligible to apply for support.

The Bursary fund is a discretionary fund and is cash limited. There **will** be a formal assessment of need.

Free meals vouchers can be applied for by students on ESFA funded programmes.

Objectives

- Ensure successful identification and targeting of the most financially vulnerable students
- To support attendance and retention working in line with tutors to identify “At Risk” students
- Ensure an open and fair process in relation to distribution of funds.

2. Entitlement

Free Meals: Safe Opportunities will invite applications from students 19-24 years enrolled on ESFA programmes. There is a specification that student must meet to be granted free meal vouchers.

Discretionary Bursary: Safe Opportunities will invite applications from students aged 19-24 for discretionary bursaries to help them meet specific costs related to their learning programme.

Priority will be given to students entitled to free meals, although applications are welcomed from students whose individual contribution to household taxable income does not exceed £26,000 including taxable benefits in the last financial year.

If a student does not have their own income, then parental contribution to the household taxable income will be used if this does not exceed £26,000 including taxable benefits in the last financial year. This must be established through current wage slips/P60, benefit award notice letters or bank statements.

The threshold of £26,000 may be increased at the Management Teams discretion if insufficient applications are made.

Any new students may apply but will not receive the discretionary bursary until 42 days after their start date at college.

3. Withdrawal/Withholding of Bursaries

Safe Opportunities will, at its discretion; withhold funding from successful applicants who do not attend their programme regularly without a valid reason. This is based on an attendance rate of 90% but does include authorised absences. Students who leave the programme during the academic year will no longer be entitled to bursary.

4. Payment

Bursaries may be paid ‘in kind’ e.g. a transport pass or IT equipment. Some items such as IT equipment provided to named individuals must be returned to Safe Opportunities at the end of the course as they may be used for a new student.

5. In-Year Applications

New students arriving mid academic year may apply for the discretionary bursary on a first come, first served basis as long as the relevant bursary criteria is met and that bursary funds are still available.

6. How to Apply

Students must apply using the Application form including a list of evidence required for both Free Meals and Bursary

7. Organisation and Appeals

The Bursary funding for discretionary awards is given to Safe Opportunities every year by the Education Skills Funding Agency(ESFA). Once these monies have been allocated during the year, Safe Opportunities will not be able to make further grants until the new academic year.

If you wish to appeal a decision you must inform the Company Director in writing within five working days.

Following your appeal, you will be invited to a meeting and then informed of the final decision in 10 working days in writing.

8. Data

The college is required to track attendance and progress data on each student who submits an application.

This information will be audited by the Education skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

For audit purposes students applying for the discretionary bursary are required to identify why they require the bursary e.g. travel, resources etc.

The application forms will be kept in a lockable filing cabinet at Safe Opportunities offices at Scope House to keep data safe and secure.

The data will be securely disposed of after 7 years.

9. Other Information

Current guidance from the Funding Agency regarding Management Information recording and evaluating the processes required will be as follows:

- How many vulnerable students applied for the Discretionary Bursary?
- How many were awarded the Discretionary Bursary and what was the allocation?
- How much did these students actually receive?
- How much was spent on Discretionary Bursaries in total?

The reasons each bursary was allocated:

- Books/equipment
- Additional costs
- Transport
- Meals/vouchers

- Specialised clothing (where it directly relates to a course)
- Materials
- Course related trips and educational visits
- Employer Open day costs
- Occupational or other activities (where they directly relate to a course)
- Other miscellaneous – specifying what

Other considerations:

- It is expected that if a student changes providers that the information regarding their Bursary Award is communicated.
- It is at the discretion of each institution to design arrangements that best suits the needs and individual circumstances, including the frequency of payments.
- It is also an expectation that the payment is conditional on the student meeting agreed standards set by the provider.
- There is no cut-off date stipulated by the Education Skills Funding Agency in terms of applications but Safe Opportunities have agreed a date by which applications are made.
- Applications last the duration of the academic year and students will need to resubmit an application each year to be awarded a Bursary.
- Safe Opportunities can also award asylum seekers under the Discretionary Bursary allocation.
- All Bursary payments will be used to support the student's education.

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by Company Director and Team Managers

The date of this policy's next review is 26th September 2024.

