JOHN LEGGOTT COLLEGE

STUDENT FINANCE POLICY

2025-26

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1. Policy Aims

1.1. The college recognises that financial hardship can be a barrier to students wishing to participate in Post 16 education. The college will promote Education Skills Funding Agency (DfE) and other sources of financial assistance to help students with essential college related learning costs.

The college will abide by equalities legislation to ensure that there is no discrimination against students on the basis of their protected characteristics, as stipulated by the public sector equality duty (section 149(1), *Equality Act 2010*).

1.2. John Leggott College will administer each of the student finance schemes below according to the allocation received each academic year from the relevant funding agency and in accordance with their published guidelines, eligibility, level of study and residency criteria:

- **16 to 19 Discretionary Bursary Fund –** DfE
- **19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund** – DfE
- **Vulnerable Bursary Fund** – DfE
- **Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund** – DfE
- **Free Meals -** DfE
- **Care 2 Learn** - DfE

1.3. John Leggott College will administer the student finance scheme below according to the allocation received each academic year and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the trust fund:

- **John Leggott College Student Trust Fund**

2. Applying for Student Finance

2.1. All students wishing to receive financial support from the schemes listed at 1.2 and 1.3 will need to complete a Financial Support For Students application for the relevant academic year. This can be accessed via https://leggott.paymystudent.com/portal/ or through the John Leggott Sixth Form website.

Please note: Care 2 Learn applications can be completed online at: https://www.gov.uk/care- tolearn. Eligibility to Care 2 Learn is assessed by the DfE *Student Bursary Support Service.*

2.2. An application will only be accepted if all required evidence to support the application is provided.

3. Data Protection

3.1. All information provided on application forms will be held securely by JLC, a Data Controller under the Data Protection Act 1998. JLC holds the information purely for the purposes of:

3.1.1. Determining eligibility for student finance.

3.1.2. Assessing the maximum amount of financial support available.

3.1.3. Payment of student finance awards.

3.1.4. Detection and prevention of fraud.

3.2. If false or inaccurate information is provided and fraud is identified, details may be passed to the fraud prevention agencies to prevent fraud and money laundering. JLC may share the information with other organisations e.g. DfE and other government departments, local government bodies, universities or colleges for these purposes. JLC may also get information about the student or their household from other organisations e.g. Jobcentreplus Benefits and Allowances. If so, it will only be for the purposes described above and permitted by law.

4. <u>Eligibility & Assessment criteria (EFA & SFA funded – assessed by college)</u>

4.1. The college will automatically assess entitlement to the schemes applied for (with exception of the Care 2 Learn scheme) based on the student's age; residency qualifications; course and level of study; home and personal circumstances; health and disabilities and household income.

4.2. The college will advise students and parents that it is their responsibility to tell the Department of Work and Pensions about any financial support that they receive from the college. Receipt of 16 to 19 bursary payments for essential college costs will not affect any Department of Work and Pensions income-related benefits.

The college will not make regular student finance payments for living costs, as these would then be subject to the Social Security Amendment (Students and Income-related Benefits) Regulations 2000.

4.3. Eligibility Criteria - Bursary Fund

4.3.1. To be eligible to receive a 16-19 Bursary award, a student must be a young person aged over 16 years and under 19 years on 31st August 2025 (DfE 16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide: 2025 to 2026 academic year); and

- satisfy the residency criteria in the DfE document *Funding guidance for young people 2025 to 2026 - Funding regulations* e.g. resident in the United Kingdom or the European Economic Area for 3 years prior to 31 August 2025; and
- be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body which assures quality (i.e. Ofsted), the provision must also be either:
  - o funded directly by DfE or by DfE via a local authority; or funded or co-financed by the European Social Fund; or
  - o otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including Level 3) accredited by Ofqual or is pursuant to Section 96 or the Learning and Skills Act 2000; or
  - o a 16 to 19 traineeship programme

***** Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a discretionary bursary if they:

- are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or
- have an Education, Health and Care Plan

***** In exceptional circumstances the college can use its discretion to pay bursaries to younger students e.g. where the student is on an accelerated study programme.

4.4. Accompanied and Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers - Eligibility

Accompanied asylum seeking young people (under 18 years with an adult relative or partner) are entitled to education but not to public funds. If they are destitute they can apply to the Home Office for suitable housing and cash essentials, but they are not eligible for other income.

As long as an asylum seeker has not had their application for asylum refused, the college can provide 'in kind' student support such as course related books, equipment or a travel pass.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking young people do not receive cash support from the Home Office and are the responsibility of the local authority. They are treated as 'looked after children' and eligible for a Vulnerable Bursary – see para 4.7.

When a young person reaches legal adulthood at age 18, the college must consider their immigration status. If the asylum claim is decided in their favour the local authority must provide them with the same support and services as they do care leavers. As such, they continue to be eligible to a Vulnerable Bursary until they reach the upper age limit for the

16 – 19 years Bursary Fund.

If their asylum claim is not supported, the student may not be able to stay legally in the UK. When the asylum claims have been fully heard and appeal rights exhausted, the student has no entitlement to public funds and the Vulnerable Bursary will be withdrawn. However, advice should be sought from the DfE as withdrawal of support may be seen as a breach of human rights.

4.5. Young Offenders – Eligibility

Young offenders **can** apply for a bursary if they:

4.5.1. Are serving a non-custodial sentence.

4.5.2. Have been released early from a custodial sentence (except on temporary license).

4.5.3. Have been remanded to a non-secure institution.

Young offenders **cannot** apply for a bursary if they:

4.5.4. Are serving a custodial sentence.

4.5.5. Have been released from a custodial sentence on temporary license.

4.5.6. Have been remanded to a secure institution.

DfE guidance recommends that the college should provide in-kind support to young offenders rather than cash wherever possible.

4.6. **Prince's Trust Team Programme** The Prince's Trust Team Programme is for 16 to 25 year olds. It is a 12 week course designed to improve confidence, motivation and skills. Each team aims to recruit a mix of 16 to 25 year olds of different abilities and backgrounds, including employees sponsored by their employers. The teams are funded by DfE, but are run and managed locally by institutions in partnership with the Prince's Trust.

Non-employed students aged 16 to 19 will be eligible to receive the bursary while participating in a Prince's Trust Team Programme in the same way as any other student participating in an eligible, publicly funded course. The bursary cannot be used to subsidise any delivery costs of the programme.

4.7. The Bursary Fund Elements

The 16-19 Bursary Fund allocation consists of two elements for the college to administer:

4.7.1. Vulnerable Bursary Fund - Eligibility

Students who are eligible for the £1,200 Vulnerable Bursary are vulnerable young people who are either:

- In care.
- A care leaver.
- Are an unaccompanied asylum seeker with 'looked after' status by the local authority.
- Claiming Income Support, or Universal Credit in place of Income Support, in their own right.
- Disabled and receiving Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit and Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independent Payments in their own right **and** are enrolled on a full-time study programme lasting 30 weeks or more in the academic year. Where a student is on a part-time course the college will make an award on a pro rata basis based upon a daily rate.

The college is responsible for identifying the vulnerable young people who are eligible for this payment and must seek appropriate evidence from the young person to confirm eligibility e.g.

- Written confirmation from the *Department of Work and Pensions* of entitlement to either *Income Support or Universal Credit in place of Income Support*; or *Employment Support Allowance/Universal Credit and Disability Living Allowance* or *Personal Independent Payment*

- Written confirmation from the young person's Local Authority of their current or previous 'looked after' status

If a student does not meet conditions listed above, their application will be assessed for the Discretionary Bursary Fund.

4.7.2. Discretionary Bursary Fund - Eligibility

- The college will use its discretion to target discretionary bursaries towards young people facing the *most significant* financial barriers to participation in further education.
- Evidence of the student's household income (including the income of the student, the income of adults living in the household who are responsible for the student and/or the income of the student's partner) and household circumstances must be submitted before the college can complete a means-tested assessment of 'actual need'.

4.7.3. Priority for a Discretionary Bursary Fund Award

- A young person lives in a household whose annual income is under £30,000 net.
- A young person lives in a household whose annual income is between £30,001 and £40,000 net will be considered for help towards a bus pass. If the student lives more than 3 miles from JLC a contribution will be provided by the college towards the bus pass and the Campus Charge.

4.7.4. Eligibility Criteria - 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund

To be eligible to receive a 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund award a student must be aged 19 years or over on 31st August 2025: and satisfy residency criteria i.e. that they have been resident in the United Kingdom or the European Economic Area for 3 years prior to 31 August 2025; **and**

- be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality e.g. Ofsted; **and**
- be studying on a programme of Further Education (up to and including Level 3 programmes of study) fully funded / co-funded by the DfE **and** are not released on temporary licence.

Evidence of the student's household income (including the income of the student and/or the income of the student's partner) and household circumstances must be submitted before the college can complete a means-tested assessment of 'actual need'. The assessment will take into consideration any dependants of the student living in the student's household who are under 20 years of age and are in full-time non-advanced education (up to and including level 3 – the equivalent of A Levels).

4.7.5. Priority for a 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund Award

- The student lives in a household whose annual income is under £45,000 net.

4.8. Eligibility Criteria - Advanced Learner Loan Bursary

4.8.1. To be eligible to receive an Advanced Learner Loan Bursary the student must be aged 19 years or over and eligible for the Advanced Learner Loan. The DfE *Advanced Learner Loans funding and performance rules: 2025 to 2026 funding year* refers.

Applications for the Advanced Learner Loan can be submitted to Student Finance England at: https://www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan.

4.8.2. The college will use its discretion to target this discretionary bursary towards students facing the *most significant* financial barriers to participation in further education and who are unable to afford *essential* college related learning costs. **This fund also supports identified classroom assistance due to a disability or learning difficulty.**

Evidence of the student's household income (including the income and/or the income of the student's partner) and household circumstances must be submitted before the college can complete a means-tested assessment of 'actual need'. The assessment will take into consideration any dependents of the student living in the student's household who are under 20 years of age and are in full-time nonadvanced education (up to and including level 3 – the equivalent of A Levels).

4.8.3. Priority for an Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Award

- The student lives in a household whose annual income is under £45,000 net

4.9. Eligibility Criteria – 16 to 18 education: Free Meals in Further Education

To be eligible to receive a free meal in the 2025 to 2026 academic year the student must be aged 16 or over but under 19 at 31 August 2025*****. The DfE *16 to 18 education: free meals in further education for academic year 2025 to 2026* refers. Students must also satisfy the residency criteria set out in DfE Funding regulation guidance *Funding guidance for young people 2025 to 2026 - Funding regulations*.

* Students aged 19 or over are only eligible for a free meal if they:

- are continuing on a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 ('19+ continuers') or
- have an Education, Health and Care Plan

These two groups of students can receive a free meal while they continue to attend education (in the case of a 19+ continuer, this must be the same programme they started before they turned 19), as long as their eligibility continues.

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

- Students aged 19 or over at the start of their study programme, unless they have an EHCP or are a 19+ continuer.
- Apprentices, including those with an EHCP.

4.10. Qualifying Benefits

Free meals are targeted at disadvantaged students. Free meals in further education defines disadvantage as students being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following qualifying 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 (HRMC).
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for four weeks after someone stops qualifying

for Working Tax Credit

- Universal Credit with an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400

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 college.

4.11. Evidence that the student (or their parent/guardian) has been awarded one of the qualifying benefits listed at 4.10 above. This must be an award notice or letter from the Department of Work and Pensions or HMRC.

Please note: The student will also be encouraged to supply evidence of all their household income (including the income of parents/guardians and / or the income of the student's partner) and household circumstances to assess entitlement to the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund vulnerable and discretionary elements.

5. Awards and Payments (DfE Funded Schemes – assessed by college)

All awards are made at the absolute discretion of the college and circumstances of individual cases do not set a precedent.

Payments and awards will be based upon standards of attendance, progression and behaviour as outlined in the student's Contract For Success (**Appendix 2**) and the college's Behaviour Policy.

5.1. Awards and Payments – Vulnerable Bursary

5.2. The award of £1,200 will be paid at a weekly rate based on the number of weeks (full and part weeks) in the academic year e.g. £1,200 divided by 36 weeks = £33.40 (rounded up).

The £1,200 will be paid at a pro rata rate if a young people becomes eligible to the Vulnerable Bursary during the academic year or if the young person is on a part-time course (e.g. 2 days per week).

5.3. Where a young person does not meet the attendance criteria in any given week an award will be made based on the % attended, so 75% attendance would result in 75% of the full award being paid.

5.4. Awards and Payments
16 to 19 Discretionary Bursary Fund

5.4.1. Awards will be made following the tiered system outlined below:

Tier 1
Household Income of less than £30,000 net.
Student will receive a weekly meal allowance **and** a bus pass (where applicable), campus charge payment, support with stationery and other course related materials. Additional support will be considered upon individual request for college trips/visits, DBS, UCAS payments and Music Lessons. Access to a college laptop or tablet which can be kept for the duration of the academic year.

Tier 2
Household Income of less than £30,001 and £40,000 net.
Student will receive a bus pass (where applicable) and campus charge payment only. Access to a college laptop or tablet which can be kept for the duration of the academic year.

Additional support within Tier 2 can be applied for and will be looked at on an individual basis.

Students aged under 20 years on 31.08.25 may be eligible for financial support with childcare costs from the Care to Learn' scheme. More details about this scheme can be found on the website at *https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn/overview*

5.4.2. Awards under the above Tiers may be subject to change and students will be advised of any changes.

5.5. Payments and Awards – Advanced Learner Loan Bursary

- Awards are regulated by the DfE based on the essential college costs required. Details of the award monthly rates are in the DfE *Advanced Learner Loans funding rules: Version 1: for the 2025 to 2026 funding year* and are as follows:
  - Rate 1 (£50) – low-cost learner support, not including childcare and residential.
  - Rate 2 (£150) – learning support recognising that the learner could have learner support needs as well.
  - Rate 3 (£250) – residential or childcare support recognising that the learner could have other learning support or learner support needs as well

  Payments will be approved if the student has met the criteria as per the second paragraph under section 5 above. If this criteria has not been met e.g. attendance is under 93%, the college can use its discretion to make a part payment or suspend a payment in full and set an appropriate attendance target, which if achieved, will enable the suspended element of the payment to be approved.

5.6. Provision of 16 to 18: Free Meals in further education

5.6.1. The college will make provision for free meals to eligible students (those who are in receipt of the qualifying benefits and who make a successful application for free meals) for each day that the student attends their study programme, where this is appropriate.

5.6.2. The college is required to make free meals provision for students on days when they are off-site as part of their study programme, for instance attending a work placement or work experience. Wherever possible, the college will arrange for a meal to be provided.

5.6.3. The college reserves the right to use its discretion to enhance the £2.53 free meals funding rate and align this to the 16 to 19 discretionary bursary fund meal award. Any monies above £2.53 will be funded from the 16 to 19 discretionary bursary fund.

6. <u>Awards and Payments (non-DfE Funded Schemes – assessed by college)</u>

6.1. John Leggott Student Trust Fund

This Trust Fund has limited funds to support costs not met by the above schemes.

Current and former John Leggott Students can apply for support to the trustees in writing. The fund has supported current and former John Leggott College students with educational and enrichment activity costs with small grants of up to £250.

Applications will be submitted to Student Services for consideration by the trustees.

7. <u>Fraud</u>

The college treats fraud seriously and will require a student to repay the college in full any monies paid that have been based on false or misleading information. Eligibility to a Finance Scheme award will be withdrawn.

The college will take such disciplinary action and /or legal action as is deemed appropriate.

8. Complaints Procedure

If a student feels aggrieved about how their application for Student Finance was handled, they will be encouraged to use the standard college complaints procedure.

Policy Owner:	Mike Hall	Next Review Date:	June 2026