Financial Support

2026/27

Be You. Be Extraordinary.

Introduction

Abingdon & Witney College is committed to ensuring that all students are able to access education, regardless of their personal financial circumstances.

This guide provides information on the financial support available through the College and the criteria used to determine eligibility. This policy applies to all students studying on courses funded by the Department for Education (DfE) at Abingdon & Witney College and has been written in line with current DfE guidance.

Please note that eligibility criteria are often based on a student's age as of **31 August in the year of application**. Young people with an **Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)** are funded as 16–19-year-old students up to the age of 25 and may therefore be eligible for financial support available to this age group.

Funding is limited and cannot be guaranteed, as it depends on the allocation provided by the Government. Applications are assessed based on individual need, and where demand exceeds available funds, applications may be prioritised accordingly. Once the funding allocation has been fully utilised, applications may be placed on hold and applicants will be notified.
Personal information provided in relation to financial support will be handled sensitively and stored securely in accordance with data protection legislation. Records will be retained for audit purposes for a period of seven years and then securely destroyed in line with the College's Data Protection Policy.

Applicants for all financial support funds will be required to provide evidence of household income, including any benefits received.
In addition, eligible students may apply for support through the **Care to Learn scheme**, which supports young parents under the age of 20 with childcare costs while they attend college.

Be You. Be Extraordinary.

Financial support

Students of Abingdon & Witney College can apply for financial support from the following DfE-funded schemes*, which are administered by the College:

- 16–19 Vulnerable Student Bursary
- 16–19 Discretionary Student Bursary
- Free College Meals
- Adult Skills Fund Bursary
- Advanced Learner Loan Bursary
- Tailored Learning Support

Applicants to all financial support funds administered by the College will be required to provide evidence of household income, including benefits.

In addition, eligible students may apply for support from schemes administered centrally by the Student Bursary Support Service (SBSS).

Care to Learn is available to support young parents under the age of 20 with childcare costs.

Course Fees

Students aged 16–19** do not have to pay tuition or exam fees. However, those aged 19 or over at the start of their course may be required to pay full fees.
A fee reduction is available on many courses. Please refer to the College prospectus or website for further details.

You can also contact the Admissions team on **01235 216 400** for more information.

Students studying at Level 3 or above, and aged 19 or over at the start of their course, may be eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan. Further information, including how to apply, can be found on the Government website:
www.gov.uk/advancedlearner-loan

** If you are a student aged 19+, please continue to page 9.*
***If you do not know if your course is funded, please ring the Bursary team and they will be able to provide you with that information. Please see the Team's contact information below. Please call **01235 216212** or email your question to studentbursaries@abingdon-witney.ac.uk*

Bursary Flowchart 16-19

The College will request evidence of eligibility and household income to assess bursary applications and meet audit requirements.

Are you aged 16-19 on 31 August 2026 and do you meet one of the criteria below?

Student fits one or more of the following:

- Currently in local authority care
- A care leaver
- Receiving Universal Credit or Income Support in your own name and financially supporting yourself
- Receiving both Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit in your own name

Yes

16-19 Vulnerable Student Bursary

Students meeting the vulnerable bursary criteria may receive support of up to £1,200 per academic year for essential course-related costs.

Supported costs may include:

- Travel to college
- Equipment
- Uniform
- PPE
- UCAS application fees
- Essential study materials

*Students aged 18 before the 31st August of the academic year

No

Are you aged 16-19, or aged 19+ and continuing on a study programme with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)?

Yes

Is your household income below £35,000 gross per year?

Yes

16 to 19 Discretionary Bursary Fund

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Awards are based on:

- Household income
- Individual circumstances
- Course requirements
- Available bursary funding

These essential course related costs may include:

- Equipment and specialist resources
- Books and course materials
- Uniform and PPE
- Travel to college*
- Essential educational visits
- UCAS application costs (where applicable)
- Industry placement costs (where applicable)

*Travel support will normally be based on the most cost-effective method of transport between home and college. Support may vary according to distance travelled and individual circumstances.

Evidence Required

Students must provide evidence of household income, benefits received (where applicable), and any additional information requested to support their application.

16-19 Vulnerable Student Bursary

The 16–19 Vulnerable Student Bursary is available to students who fall into one of the following categories, as defined by the Government:

- In care
- A care leaver
- Receiving Income Support (IS), or Universal Credit (UC) **in their own right** (not in the name of a parent or carer), because they are financially supporting themselves, or financially supporting themselves and someone dependent on them who is living with them (such as a child or partner)
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) **in their own right**, as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (UC) **in their own right**

Students must meet the eligibility criteria in full. However, meeting these criteria does not automatically guarantee a bursary award. All applications will be subject to an individual assessment to confirm financial need.
These funds are administered in accordance with ESFA guidance, and the following definitions apply:
The 16–19 Bursary Fund defines 'in care' as children looked after by a local authority on a voluntary basis (Section 20 of the Children Act 1989) or under a care order (Section 31 of the Children Act 1989).
Section 22 of the Children Act 1989 defines the term 'looked-after child'.
A care leaver is defined as:

- A young person aged 16 or 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 consecutive weeks (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 immediately before their 18th birthday for a period of 13 consecutive weeks (or periods amounting to 13 weeks), which began after the age of 14 and ended after the age of 16

A young person placed with a foster carer by a local authority, including where the foster carer is registered with an independent fostering agency, is classified as looked after.
A child who is privately fostered is not classified as looked after and is therefore not eligible for the Vulnerable Student Bursary.

16-19 Vulnerable Student Bursary

A young person who was previously in the care of a local authority and whose care arrangements changed (for example, through a Special Guardianship Order) **may be considered a care leaver**, provided they meet the full definition of a care leaver as set out above.
Eligible students aged under 19 on 31 August in the academic year of application may apply for support of up to £1,200 over the academic year, depending on their assessed financial need.
Students must meet the eligibility criteria in full, and bursary awards will only be made following an individual assessment of financial need. This award is intended to support essential costs required to participate in their study programme. Funding is not guaranteed.

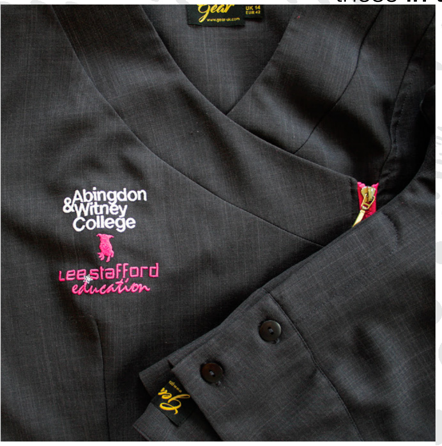
These essential course-related costs may include:

- Equipment
- Uniform
- UCAS application fee
- PPE
- Travel to college*

The College will request proof of student eligibility, in line with DfE/ESFA guidance, for audit purposes.

Examples of evidence include:

- For students who are in care or care leavers: written confirmation of current or previous looked-after status from the relevant local authority (this may be a letter or email but must clearly be from the local authority)
- For students in receipt of Universal Credit (UC) or Income Support (IS): a copy of their UC or IS award notice, confirming the student receives the benefit **in their own right**
- For students receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP), alongside Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC: evidence of all relevant benefits, including a UC or ESA claim and confirmation of DLA or PIP, showing the student receives these **in their own right**



16-19 Discretionary Student Bursary

Students aged 16–18 on 31 August in the academic year of application, or students aged 19 or over with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), who are from low-income households, may be eligible for support towards essential course-related costs.
This is a discretionary fund, and all awards are based on an assessment of individual financial need. Funding is not guaranteed.

These essential course-related costs may include:

- Equipment,
- Travel to College*

The College will contribute up to 75% towards individual course equipment items, capped at £100 per item.

The bursary fund will not be used to cover:

- Learner support services (e.g. counselling or mentoring)
- Extra-curricular activities that are not essential to the study programme
- General living or household costs

'Low income' will be defined annually in line with Government guidance and sector best practice. The household income threshold will be published to students by 31 August each year.

Students undertaking a T Level qualification may also be eligible for support with travel costs to their industry placements.

**Travel will be assessed upon the most cost-effective method of transport. The college will only pay transport for learners that live 2+ miles away from their designated campus.*

Free College Meals

Further Education students in college may be eligible for Free College Meals.

Student eligibility
The learner must meet the following criteria:

- Aged 16 to 18 on 31 August 2026
- Students aged 19 or over are only eligible if they are continuing a study programme they began before turning 19, or if they have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

Free meals funding is targeted support for students who are financially disadvantaged.

From the 2026–2027 academic year, the Department for Education (DfE) defines eligibility as students living in a household where **Universal Credit is received**:

- Universal Credit (no earnings threshold applies)

This means:

- The previous **£7,400 earnings cap no longer applies**
- All households receiving Universal Credit are now eligible

Other qualifying benefits (where applicable)

The following benefits may still be referenced where relevant within transitional arrangements or specific cases:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (subject to conditions)
- Working Tax Credit run-on

Adult Bursary Eligibility Flowchart 2026/27

The College will request evidence of eligibility and household income to assess applications and meet funding audit requirements.

Are you enrolled on an Adult Skills Fund (ASF) course at Level 2 or below?

Yes

Is your household income below £47,000 gross per year?

No
Not eligible

Yes

Adult Skills Fund (ASF) Bursary

The Adult Skills Fund Bursary provides financial support to eligible adult learners experiencing financial hardship whilst studying an eligible funded course.

Support may include:

- Travel to college
- Essential equipment
- Uniform
- PPE
- Childcare (where applicable)
- Other essential course-related costs

Contribution towards tuition fees (subject to eligibility and available funding).
A fixed 50% contribution is uncommon unless specifically stated in College policy. Check local bursary rules before retaining this.

Evidence Required
Students must provide evidence of household income, benefits received (where applicable), and any additional information requested to support their application.

No

Are you enrolled on an eligible Level 3, 4, 5 or 6 course funded through an Advanced Learner Loan?

Yes

Have you been approved for an Advanced Learner Loan?

No
Not eligible

Yes

Is your household income below £47,000 gross per year?

Yes

Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund

Financial support may be available to learners who have an approved Advanced Learner Loan and meet the College's bursary eligibility criteria.

Support may include:

- Childcare*
- Travel to college
- Essential equipment
- Uniform or PPE
- Other approved study-related costs

* Childcare support may only be provided for childcare delivered by an Ofsted-registered provider, subject to eligibility and available funding.

Adult Skills Fund Bursary

The Adult Skills Fund Bursary aims to financially support adults who are undertaking a DfE funded ASF course at Abingdon & Witney College. Students aged 19 or over on the 31st August 2025, with a low income, either as an individual or living with a partner, may be eligible for support with course costs.

These course costs can include:

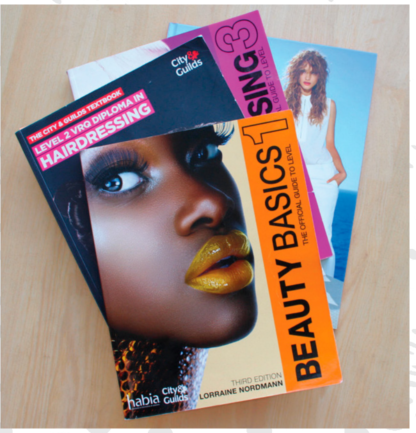
- Equipment
- Uniform
- Travel to College*
- Childcare**
- A contribution towards the cost of tuition fees.

'Low income' will be defined annually in accordance with the Government and sector advice and published to students by the 31st August each year. This is a discretionary financial support fund and the College will assess students based upon their individual circumstances.

If a learner is in receipt of any state benefits, it is their responsibility to inform the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) about bursary support provided by the College.

Eligibility criteria

- To be eligible for this bursary, the learner must fulfil the following requirements.
- The learner must be studying a DfE funded programme at Abingdon & Witney College.
- The applicant must be aged 19+ on the 31st August 2025.
- The learner has a combined household annual income of less than £47,000.
- Applicants must meet the residency requirements.



Advanced Learner Loan Bursary

The Advanced Learner Loan Bursary is a discretionary fund that supports students who have been approved for an Advanced Learner Loan by the Student Loans Company (SLC).
Students aged **19 or over on 31 August 2026**, from a low-income household, may be eligible for support with course-related costs while studying at Abingdon and Witney College.
Students must be studying a general or technical qualification at **Level 3, 4, 5 or 6**.

These course-related costs can include

- Childcare*
- Equipment
- Travel to College**

This is a discretionary financial support fund, and the College will assess each application based on the student's individual circumstances.

If a learner is in receipt of any state benefits, it is their responsibility to inform the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) of any bursary support received.

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for this bursary, the learner must:

- Be studying a **Level 3 or above qualification funded through an Advanced Learner Loan**
- Have an **approved Advanced Learner Loan** from the Student Loans Company
- Be aged **19 or over on 31 August 2026**
- Have a **total household income of less than £47,000 per year**
- Meet the **residency requirements**

** Childcare will only be funded where it is provided by a registered Ofsted provider.*
*** Travel support will be based on the most cost-effective method. The College will normally only fund travel for learners living more than 2 miles from their designated campus.:*

Care to Learn Bursary

The Care to Learn Bursary provides financial support to eligible young parents, helping them continue in education after having a child.

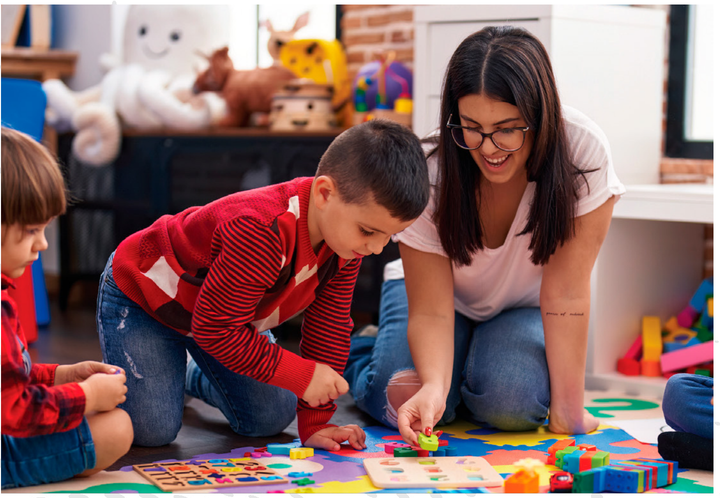
The bursary can help with:

- Childcare costs with an Ofsted-registered provider
- Travel costs to and from the childcare provider
- Childcare costs during timetabled study and work placements

Eligability Criteria

To be eligible for this bursary, the learner must meet all of the following requirements:

- Be under 20 years old at the start of their study programme
- Be the main carer for their child
- Be in receipt of Child Benefit for the child they are claiming for
- Be living and studying in England
- Have the legal right to live and study in the UK
- Be enrolled on an eligible, publicly funded course
- Use an approved (Ofsted-registered) childcare provider



Evidence Requirements

When assessing applications for financial support, the College requires evidence of the household income declared on the application form before any payments can be approved. This evidence enables the College to make a fair and appropriate award.
For students aged **16–19**, or those aged **up to 25 with an EHCP**, evidence must be provided for **all resident parent(s), carer(s), or guardian(s)** within the household.
For students aged **19+**, evidence must be provided for the **applicant and all adults living in the household who contribute to the household income**.
All evidence must clearly show **gross income (before deductions)** and be **dated within the last three months** prior to the application.

Examples of acceptable evidence include:

- Benefit award letters*
- Payslips (recent and consecutive where applicable)
- Universal Credit award statements (full screenshots showing name, address, and full breakdown of entitlement)
- Tax Credit award notices
- P60s
- Bank statements (where required to support income evidence)

Please provide **complete copies (all pages)** of any documents submitted.

Additional evidence requirements

- **Universal Credit:** Screenshots must include full details of the claim, including the claimant's name, address, assessment period, and full award breakdown.
- **Self-employed applicants:** Must provide the most recent Self Assessment and/or a letter from their accountant (on headed paper).
- **Private pensions:** Provide pension statements, advice slips, or bank statements showing payments.

Submitting evidence

Evidence can be uploaded via the **Pay My Student Portal**.

If assistance is required, documents can be brought to the Bursary team at the College, where they can be scanned and uploaded on your behalf.

Alternatively, documents can be emailed to:

studentbursaries@abingdon-witney.ac.uk

*Relevant Benefit Award Letters include:

- Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit (including earnings and calculation pages)
- Universal Credit
- Working Tax Credit / Child Tax Credit
- Pension Credit

Failure to provide the required evidence may result in delays or an inability to assess the application.

Evidence Requirements and Conditions

Students must inform the College of any changes to their personal or financial circumstances, as this may affect their bursary entitlement.

Financial awards are normally paid directly into the student's bank account. However, for students aged **16–19 who do not have a bank account**, payments may be made into a **parent or guardian's account**.

The College cannot approve any bursary award without appropriate evidence of income or benefits.

If evidence is not provided, the College will attempt to contact the student by **email, letter, and telephone**. Where there is no response after three contact attempts within one calendar month, the application will be placed on hold until the student makes contact. Any costs that would otherwise have been covered by the bursary may then become payable by the student.

Bursary awards may be **pro-rated** for:

- Students on courses lasting fewer than 30 weeks
- Students who become eligible part-way through the academic year
- Students studying part-time

All applications are subject to verification. If a student provides **false, misleading, or incomplete information** that results in an incorrect or overpayment, the College reserves the right to:

- Withdraw or stop future payments
- Recover any funds paid in error

In serious cases, this may be treated as fraud and could result in referral to the appropriate authorities.

What happens next?

Once all required information and supporting evidence has been received, your application will be assessed by the Bursary Team. You will be notified of the outcome via email.

Please note that your application cannot be processed until all mandatory sections have been completed, the declaration has been electronically signed, and full evidence of household income and any benefits has been provided.

Bursary awards are linked to **attendance, engagement, and progress**. Students are expected to maintain satisfactory attendance (normally **85% or above**). Where attendance falls below this level, financial support may be reduced or withdrawn. If you believe your attendance record is incorrect, please speak to your Tutor or Progress Coach.

Award decisions are made by the **Student Finance Panel**, which includes the Head of Student Engagement and a member of the Student Engagement Team. All applicants will be informed of the outcome, including those who are unsuccessful.

Students with outstanding course fee debts from previous academic years will not normally be considered for financial support, unless there are exceptional circumstances or the outstanding balance has been cleared.
Bursary applications are **valid for one academic year only**. Students returning for the **2026–2027 academic year** will be required to submit a new application with up-to-date evidence in **summer 2026**.

Financial support is normally provided for the duration of a learner's study programme where eligibility criteria continue to be met. In most cases, support will not extend beyond the expected length of the course. However, in exceptional circumstances, and where there is clear progression in learning, support may be considered for a longer period.

Appeals

Students who wish to appeal against a Student Finance Panel decision may do so. Appeals should be made in writing, explaining why you should wish to appeal.

Please direct your appeal to the following address:

Vice Principal, Student Engagement
Abingdon & Witney College
Wootton Road
Abingdon OX14 1GG

How to contact us

Should you require any further assistance or information, please contact the Bursary team at Abingdon & Witney College on 01235 216 212 or email: **studentbursaries@abingdon-witney.ac.uk**

To apply for student financial support, please follow the link here: **https://abingdonwitney.paymystudent.com/portal/**