

Financial Support

2024/25



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.

The purpose of this guide is to provide students with information on the financial provisions available to the College and the criteria used to determine eligibility. The policy is aimed at all students studying courses funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) at Abingdon & Witney College and is written in accordance with guidelines published by the ESFA. It should be noted that eligibility criteria are often based on age at the 31st August of the year of application.

Young people with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) are funded as 16-18-year-old students up to the age of 25, and as such are eligible for age-related financial support directed at 16-18-year-old students.

We cannot guarantee funding as this is subject to what is available from the Government. All applications are on a first come first served basis. All applications will be put on hold once all the funding allocation has been used and students will be notified of this. Applications will be assessed on individual need.

Personal information shared with Abingdon & Witney College regarding financial support will be treated sensitively and kept securely in accordance with data protection regulations. Electronic copies of records are kept and will be needed for auditing purposes. Records will be archived for seven years by the College and then destroyed in accordance with the College Data Protection Policy.



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Financial support

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

- 16-19 Vulnerable Student Bursary
- 16-19 Discretionary Student Bursary
- Free College Meal
- 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Bursary
- Advanced Learner Loan Bursary

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 the following schemes which are administered centrally by the Student Bursary Support Services (SBSS).

Care to Learn is available to support young parents under the age of 20 with childcare costs and applications are made via the SBSS portal. Although college staff are not involved in the processing of applications or payments under this scheme, they will, of course, provide support to students with making applications to the SBSS.

*If you do not know if your course is ESFA 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

Course Fees

Students aged 16-19* do not have to pay tuition or exam fees, but those aged 19+ at the start of their course may have to pay full fees. A fee reduction is available on many of our courses. Please see the College prospectus and website for more details.

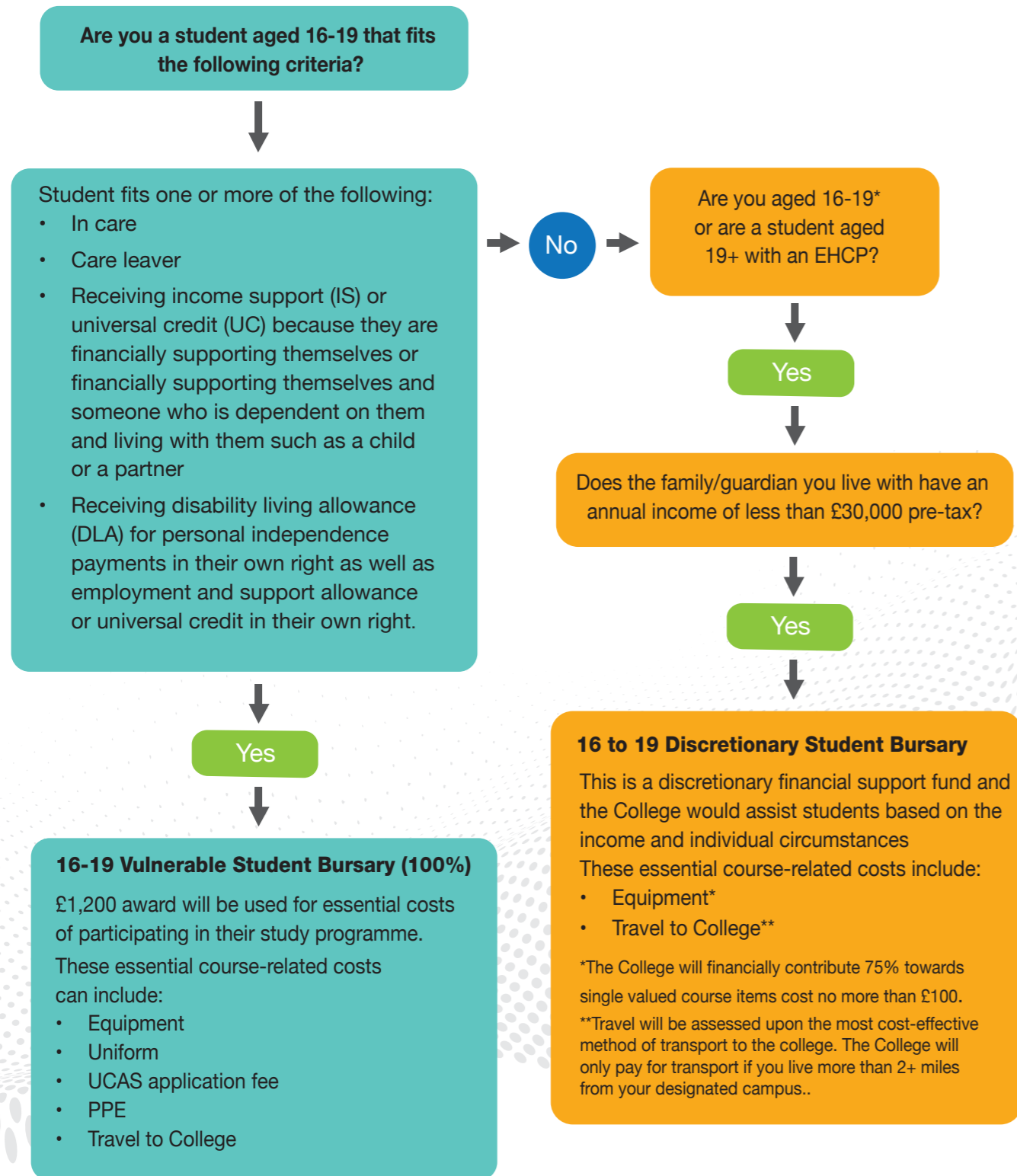
You can also ring the Admissions team on 01235 216 400

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 19+ Student, please continue to page 9.

Bursary Flowchart 16-19

The College will request proof of student eligibility as determined by the ESFA/AEB guidance for auditing purposes



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

16-19 Vulnerable Student Bursary

The Vulnerable Student Bursary is available to students that fall into one of the following categories, as set out by the Government:

- In Care,
- Care Leaver,
- Receiving Income Support (IS), or Universal Credit (UC) because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or a partner,
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (UC) in their own right.

These funds are administered in accordance with the ESFA guidance, and as such 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 and 17 who was previously looked after for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (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 prior to becoming 18 for a period of 13 weeks consecutively (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 the local authority, including where the foster carer is on the books of an independent fostering agency, is classed as looked after.

A child who is privately fostered is not classed as looked after and is not eligible for the bursary for vulnerable groups.

16-19 Vulnerable Student Bursary

A young person, who was previously in care of the local authority and the care was transferred to another party via a permanent form of fostering such as a Special Guardianship Order, will be defined as a Care Leaver. They must meet the definition of a Care Leaver in full. This is defined above.

Eligible students aged under 19 on the 31st August 2024 may apply for an award of up to £1,200 over the academic year. The student will be required to demonstrate a financial need as part of their application. This award will be used for essential costs of participating in their study programme. This bursary fund is not guaranteed.

These essential course-related costs can include:

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

*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.

The college will request proof of student eligibility as determined by the ESFA guidance for auditing purposes. For example

- For students who are In Care or a Care Leaver, written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from the relevant authority. The evidence could be a letter or email but must be clearly from the local authority.
- For students in receipt of UC or IS, a copy of their UC or IS award notice.
- For students receiving UC/ ESA and DLA and PIP, a copy of their UC claim from DWP. Evidence of receipt of DLA and PIP must be provided.

16-19 Discretionary Student Bursary

Students aged under 19 on the 31st August 2024, or aged under 25 if they have an EHCP, from households on a low income, may be eligible for a contribution towards essential course costs.

These essential course-related costs can include:

- Equipment,
- Travel to College*

The College will financially contribute up to 75% towards course equipment that costs more than £100.

*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.

The financial support fund will not cover the following costs:

- Providing learner support,
- Support extra-curricular activities where these are not essential to the students' study programme,
- Support general household income.

'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 on their individual circumstances.

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

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for this bursary, the learner must fulfil the following requirements.

- The learner must be studying an ESFA-funded programme at Abingdon and Witney College.
- Applicants must be aged between 16-18 on the 31st August 2024 or be aged under 25 with an EHCP.
- The learner must have an annual household income of less than £30,000 per year.
- Applicants must meet the residency requirements.

Free College Meals

Further Education students in College may be eligible for the Free College Meal provision.

Student eligibility

The learner must fulfil the following requirements:

- They must be aged 16 or over, but under 19 on the 31st August 2024.
- Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to receive a free meal if they are continuing a study programme they began before they turned 19 or the learner has an EHCP.

Free meals funding is a targeted financial support for those who are financially 'disadvantaged'. The Department of Education defines 'disadvantaged' in this context as living in a household where one or more of the following benefits are received:

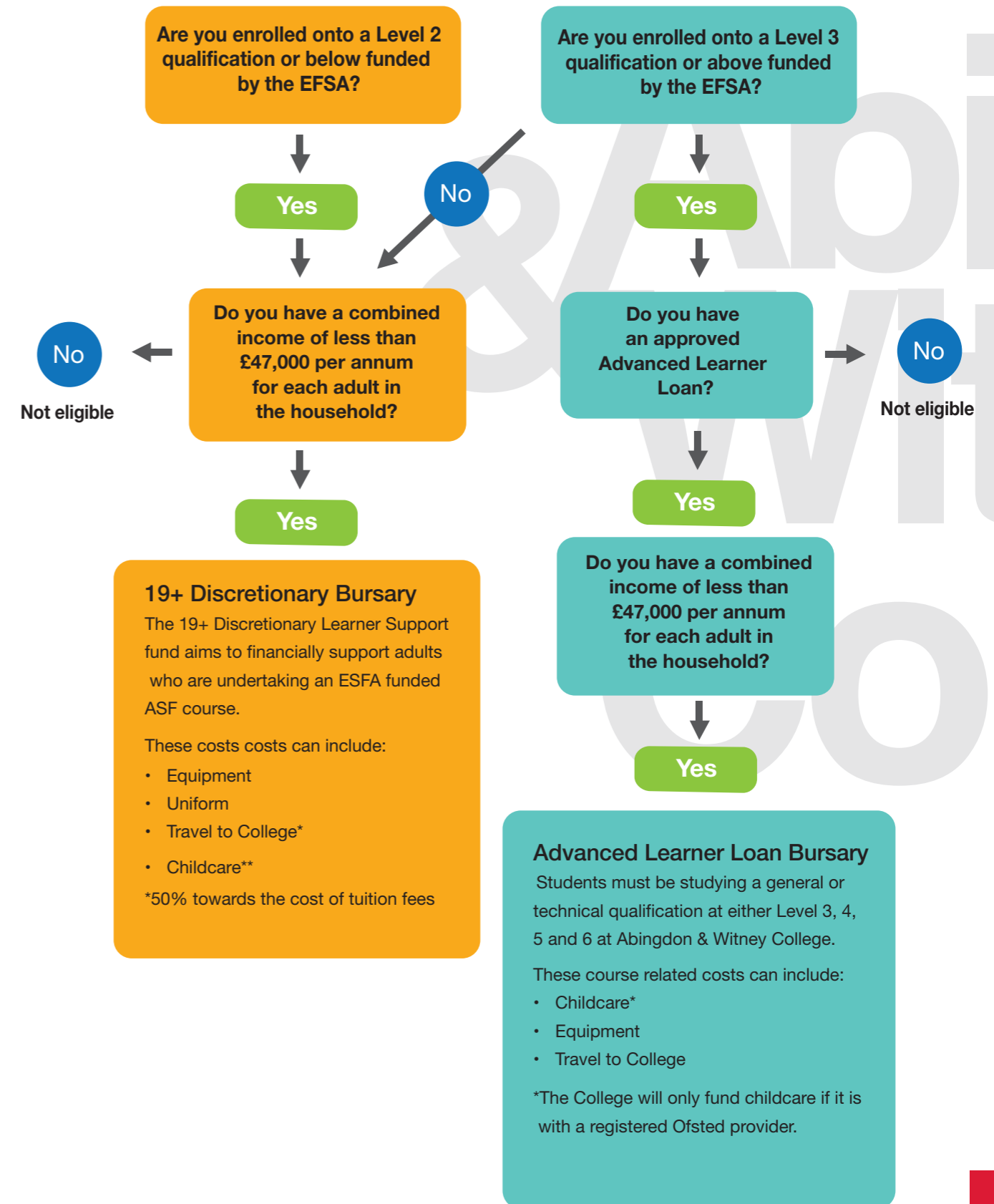
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 as assessed by His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
- Working Tax Credit run-on, paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400pa.

A parent or student must be in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits set out above to be eligible for free meals.

A student is only eligible to receive free meals when they, or a responsible adult on their behalf, have made a successful application via the bursary portal.

Adult Bursary Flowchart

The College will request proof of student eligibility as determined by the ESFA/ASF guidance for auditing purposes



19+ Discretionary Bursary

The 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund aims to financially support adults who are undertaking an ESFA funded ASF course at Abingdon & Witney College. Students aged 19 or over on the 31st August 2024, 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.

*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.

** The College will only fund childcare if it is with a registered Ofsted provider.

'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 ESFA programme at Abingdon & Witney College.
- The applicant must be aged 19+ on the 31st August 2024.
- 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 fund which supports students who have been approved for an Advanced Learner Loan by the Student Loans Company (SLC). Students aged 19 or over on the 31st August 2023, with a low income, either as an individual or living with a partner, may be eligible for support with course-related costs. Students must be studying a general or technical qualification at either level 3, 4, 5 and 6 at Abingdon and Witney College.

These course-related costs can include:

- Childcare*
- Equipment,
- Travel to College**

*The College will only fund childcare if it is with a registered Ofsted provider.

** 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.

This is a discretionary financial support fund and the College will assess the student's application based on their personal 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 Level 3 or above qualification ESFA programme at Abingdon & Witney College.
- Have an approved Advanced Learner loan from the Student Loans Company.
- The applicant must be aged 19+ on the 31st August 2024.
- The learner has a combined household annual income of less than £47,000.
- Applicants must meet the residency requirements.

Evidence Requirements

When assessing applications for financial support, the College will need evidence of the household income declared on the application form before we approve any payments. The evidence provided will help us make an appropriate award.

For students aged 16-18 or a student under the age of 25 with an EHCP, this evidence will need to be for each parent/carer/ guardian within the household. For students aged 19+, this needs to be for the student applying for the financial support and other adults within the household.

Common examples of suitable evidence include:

- Benefit Award letters*
- Pay Slips

Please provide a complete copy (all pages) of any benefit statement letters. If you receive Universal Credit, we can accept a screen shot of your award (all pages) which includes your name, address, and the amount that you receive each month. All evidence must be dated within the last three months prior to your application.

You can upload your evidence to the Pay My Student Portal. If you do require assistance, you can also bring these documents to the Bursary team at the College. The team can scan these documents on your behalf and upload them directly to your bursary application. You can also email your documentation to the Bursary team at:

studentbursaries@abingdon-witney.ac.uk.

*Relevant Benefit Award Letters include the following:

- Job Seekers Allowance,
- Employment and Support Allowance,
- Income Support,
- Housing Benefit- to include earnings and calculation pages,
- Universal Credit,
- Working/ Child Tax Credits,
- Pension Credit.

If you are self-employed then you must provide your most recent Self-Assessment and/or letter from your Accountant (on accountant headed paper).

If you are in receipt of a private pension, please provide evidence in the form of advice slips/ pension statement or a bank statement.

Evidence Requirements

If personal circumstances change, students must inform the College

Please note, student financial awards should be paid into the student's bank account, but if you are aged 16-19 years old and do not hold a bank account, we can pay this into a parent's/ guardian's bank account.

If evidence is not provided to complete the application, we will remind the student via email, letters and telephone calls. **If this fails to gain a response after three attempts within one calendar month, we will place the application on hold where it will remain awaiting contact from the student.** Any fees that would have been covered by the bursary will then become payable to the College by the student.

Students on courses of less than 30 weeks, those who become eligible during the year or those on a part time course will get a pro-rata award based on the amount of time spent in College over the academic year.

Please note, the College will not approve any awards without evidence of income or benefits.

Students should be aware that submitting false or incomplete information, which leads to an incorrect/ overpayment, may result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered.

This might result in a referral to the police with the possibility of facing prosecution.

What happens next?

Once we have all the information and evidence required, your application will be assessed by members of the Bursary team, and you will be emailed with a decision regarding your application.

Please remember your application cannot be processed unless you **complete all compulsory sections of the online application** making sure you electronically sign the declaration and **provide full copies of household income and any benefits received.** .

Any financial assistance granted is based on satisfactory attendance of 90% or above. Failure to reach this attendance minimum may lead to financial support being withheld. If you feel that your attendance record is not correct, please speak to your Tutor or Progress Coach.

Bursary award decisions will be made by the Student Finance Panel. The Student Finance Panel consists of the Head of Student Engagement, and another member of the Student Engagement Team. We will communicate with students via email regarding award decisions, including unsuccessful applicants who are not eligible for an award.

Students who owe the college course costs for previous academic years will only be supported by the Student Finance Panel in exceptional circumstances or when their debt is paid.

This application is only valid for one year and students returning to College for the 2025/2026 academic year will need to reapply with up- to-date evidence in the summer of 2024.

Students will not normally be given student financial support awards for more that two consecutive years.

In exceptional circumstances, where there is a clear progression of skills and qualifications, awards may be given for a longer period of time.

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/>





www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk