**Purpose of the Bursary**

The 16–19 Bursary Fund is intended to provide financial support to help students overcome specific barriers to participation in education, such as the costs of travel, meals, books, and equipment. As a specialist post-16 college, South West Regional Assessment Centre is committed to ensuring that all eligible learners can access the support they need to succeed in their education.

**Our Approach to Bursary Allocation**

We interpret the Department for Education's guidance as prioritising support for learners through in-kind payments rather than cash allowances. This approach ensures that bursary funds are directly used to address educational barriers and meet the specific needs of learners.

Examples of in-kind support include:

• Travel passes or direct payment for transport to and from college.

• Meal vouchers or college-provided meals during attendance.

• Provision of required course materials, books, and specialist equipment.

• Other necessary costs identified through a financial assessment of the learner's needs.

By focusing on these practical supports, we aim to maximise the impact of the bursary and ensure it is used appropriately and effectively.

**Support for Vulnerable Learners**

Learners identified as being in defined vulnerable groups will be supported through an assessment of the financial barriers they face whilst accessing education. Based on this assessment, we will ensure that the bursary is used to meet their specific educational needs in addition to the support already provided by the college.

As per the guidance, defined vulnerable groups are learners who are:

- in or you recently left local authority care
- get Income Support or Universal Credit because you're financially supporting yourself
- get Disability Living Allowance (DLA) in your name and either Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit
- get Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in your name and either ESA or Universal Credit

### Discretionary Bursary

For learners not in the defined vulnerable groups, we will allocate discretionary bursary funds based on identified needs following an assessment. This may include covering travel costs, meals, and other essential educational expenses.

### Food and Additional Support

We understand that all learners may occasionally experience unexpected challenges. While bursary funding is allocated based on individual assessments, we also provide food and additional support to all learners who require it, regardless of their bursary eligibility. This support is not linked to the bursary fund and is available to ensure no learner goes without the essential help they need to participate fully in their education.

### Our Current Stance on Cash Payments

We have chosen not to provide weekly cash allowances at this time, as we believe it is challenging to justify how such payments directly address educational barriers. Instead, we will allocate bursary funding to support costs that clearly enable participation in education.

### Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional cases where learners have incurred costs that are barriers to education, we will reimburse these through in-kind support, such as vouchers.

Under other exceptional circumstances SWRAC will consider payments to students and/or their families where the circumstances are outside the requirements of the Bursary funding rules that we are required to operate under. In these circumstances, payments will be made from SWRAC reserves and will not be subject to reconciliation under the Department of Education Bursary rules.

Decisions on individual payments must be authorised by the MD of SWRAC.

### Review and Feedback

We will continue to review our bursary policy to ensure it aligns with government guidance and meets the needs of our learners.

If you have any questions or require further clarification, please contact the college office.

This policy will be reviewed annually or as guidance changes.