



Bursary Policy for Prospect Training Services (Glos) Ltd 26/27

The Government will continue to provide a Bursary Fund for students during the academic year 2026/27.

1. Policy Statement

PTS administers the 16–19 Bursary Fund in accordance with statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education.

The purpose of the bursary fund is:

To remove financial barriers that would otherwise prevent or significantly hinder a learner's participation, attendance and achievement on their study programme.

The bursary fund is not an automatic entitlement. All discretionary awards are subject to financial assessment, evidence verification and attendance monitoring.

PTS is committed to:

- Promoting equality of opportunity
- Ensuring public funds are used appropriately
- Targeting support where financial need impacts participation
- Maintaining robust internal financial controls

2. Scope

This policy applies to learners aged 16–19 enrolled on a PTS funded study programme, including:

- English and mathematics provision
- Vocational qualifications
- Mandatory work experience and industry placements

All components form part of a single funded study programme.

Learners eligible to receive a bursary must be aged under 19 on the 31st of August in the academic year in which they start their training programme and 19+ learners who continue on programme and EHCP 19-24 years old would also be eligible.

Prospect Training Services (Glos) Ltd recognise that offering support to learners experiencing financial hardship that creates barriers to learning, requires sensitivity and respect for all those concerned. Information relating to applications will be treated confidentially and stored in line with ESFA guidance and GDPR Regulations.

Bursaries are intended to support those learners experiencing financial hardship that creates barriers to learning and allocations will be made to the groups of learners that are listed below:

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- Learners in care, care leavers, those in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit and learners receiving Employment Support Allowance who are also in receipt of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments will be eligible to receive vulnerable bursary, or payments in kind up to £1,200 a year depending on need.
- Additionally discretionary funding may be granted to learners depending on need and those who are faced with unforeseen changes in their circumstances.

Applications and Assessment

Prospect Training Services (Glos) Ltd will make every effort to ensure that all learners receive support to apply for the bursary fund. All new learners will receive information about the bursary fund during their initial interview. This will give them the opportunity to gather the required evidence to support the application and return this on induction. Learners will be asked to provide evidence of their household income and the number of dependents as detailed on the application form, PTS staff will support this process by contacting the parents/carers where necessary.

We at PTS will also provide 121 support for learners/parents/carers/guardians to complete the application form and gathering the relevant evidence

All applications should be submitted to the data team who will assess eligibility. Learners will be informed of the decision of their applications within 14 working days. If circumstances change during their programme, learners can update their application later in the academic year. If a learner crosses over 2 contract years, then they must reapply for the Bursary and submit updated supporting income evidence to enable them to continue to receive the Bursary Fund.

Learners will be entitled to appeal against any decision made by Prospect Training Services (Glos) Ltd. The appeals process is outlined in section 4 of this document.

3. Principles of Allocation

Bursary allocations at PTS are guided by the following principles:

1. Support must remove a demonstrable financial barrier.
 2. Awards must be evidence-based.
 3. Payments must link to participation.
 4. Public funds must be auditable and proportionate.
 5. Awards must be applied consistently and transparently.
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4. Bursary Categories

4.1 Vulnerable Bursary

Awarded in line with national eligibility criteria.

4.2 Discretionary Bursary

Awarded to learners facing financial barriers impacting participation, retention or achievement.

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5. Tiered Bursary Allocation Model

PTS operates a tiered bursary model to ensure funding is targeted effectively:

Tier 1 – Core Support

Provided to remove baseline barriers to attendance:

- Travel support
- Meal support (breakfast and/or lunch provision)

Tier 2 – Targeted Support

Provided where additional barriers impact participation:

- Work placement costs (travel, PPE, uniforms)
- Essential course equipment (if applicable)
- Digital access (software, learning tools)
- Additional travel support where required

Tier 3 – Intensive / Individual Support

Provided for learners at risk of non-participation or withdrawal:

- **Attendance and retention support**

PTS may allocate discretionary bursary funding to support learners identified as at risk of poor attendance, disengagement or withdrawal where a clear financial barrier has been identified.

This support will be:

- Based on an individual assessment of need
- Clearly linked to removing a financial barrier to participation
- Time-limited and subject to regular review

Examples of support may include additional travel assistance, meal provision or short-term hardship funding.

This support must not be used as an incentive or reward for attendance. Instead, it is intended solely to address financial barriers that may prevent a learner from attending or continuing their programme.

All decisions will be documented, including the rationale, level of support provided and review outcomes.

- **Short-term hardship support**
- **Emergency financial assistance**

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All Tier 3 support must be clearly justified and documented.

6. Travel Support

6.1 Eligibility Criteria

Travel support may be awarded where:

- The learner resides 2 miles or more from their main PTS centre; and
- Household gross annual income is £40,000 or below; and
- Travel costs present a barrier to participation and attendance.

The 2-mile threshold reflects local transport accessibility within Gloucestershire and aligns with common sector practice for defining reasonable walking distance.

6.2 Evidence Requirements

Applicants must provide:

- Proof of address
- Evidence of travel cost (bus pass receipt, public transport fare, or mileage calculation)
- Household income documentation

Mileage will be reimbursed at the prevailing HMRC advisory rate.

6.3 Payment Method

Travel support is:

- Attendance-linked
- Reconciled half-termly
- Subject to review where attendance falls below expected levels

7. Meal Support (Breakfast and/or Lunch Provision)

7.1 Model

PTS provides breakfast support at a rate of £5.00 per eligible attendance day.

Breakfast and/or lunch has been selected to:

- Promote punctuality and engagement
- Provide early-day nutritional support
- Maintain financial sustainability of the bursary fund

7.2 Rate Justification

The £5.00 rate reflects:

- Current regional catering costs
- Benchmarking against local colleges allocating £4–£5 per day
- Inflationary food cost increases

Evidence of catering costs is retained for audit purposes.

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7.3 Eligibility

Meal support is awarded where:

Free meals are targeted at disadvantaged students. Free meals in FE defines disadvantage as students being in receipt of, or having parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Universal Credit, regardless of household income

Meal support is not awarded on days of absence.

8. Digital Access Support

PTS recognises that access to digital resources is essential for participation.

Support may be provided for:

- Required software (e.g. Microsoft Office or equivalent platforms)
- Digital learning tools necessary for course completion

Conditions:

- Must be required for the study programme
 - Must represent a financial barrier
 - Wherever possible, provided **in-kind** (e.g. licences purchased by PTS)
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9. Emergency Hardship Fund

PTS operates a **discretionary hardship fund** to support learners experiencing unexpected financial difficulty.

This may include:

- Sudden change in household income
- Family crisis
- Emergency travel or subsistence needs

Controls:

- Short-term, time-limited support
- Evidence required where possible
- Approved by Bursary Lead / senior staff
- Clearly recorded and monitored

A proportion of the bursary fund may be reserved for this purpose.

10. Essential Course Costs

Bursary funds may support mandatory course-related equipment or materials where:

- The item is essential to achieve the study programme;
- It is not optional enrichment;

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- Financial need is demonstrated.

Standard resource packs provided to all learners are funded separately to ensure equality of access.

11. Income Assessment Framework

11.1 Household Income Threshold

The discretionary bursary threshold is set at:

£40,000 gross annual household income.

11.2 Rationale

This threshold reflects:

- National Living Wage increases
- Regional transport costs
- Food price inflation
- Sector benchmarking where thresholds range from £29,000–£40,000

PTS has determined that £40,000 appropriately balances access to support with financial sustainability.

11.3 Evidence Requirements

Acceptable evidence includes:

- Universal Credit statements
- P60
- Payslips
- Self-assessment returns

Learner part-time income may be considered in context but will not automatically exclude eligibility.

PTS requires this for last 3 months.

12. Attendance-Linked Controls

All bursary allocations are conditional upon participation.

Controls include:

- Weekly attendance monitoring via MIS
- Half-term reconciliation between attendance and bursary allocation
- Review triggered by persistent non-attendance
- Adjustment or withdrawal of support where appropriate

No payments are made without evidence of attendance.

13. Trips and Visits

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Bursary funds may only support:

- Mandatory trips
 - Activities directly required to achieve qualification outcomes

Optional enrichment activities are not funded.

14. Governance and Oversight

- Audit and Funding Committed are responsible for application assessment
- Finance team responsible for payment processing
- Operations Director provides oversight
- Annual policy review
- Internal audit review

15. Payments

The bursary is intended to help learners overcome barriers that might otherwise prevent them from attending Prospect Training Services (Glos) Ltd.

The learner must meet the requirements for attendance, attainment and behaviour set out at the start of their programme. Should any learner fail to meet these requirements, Prospect Training Services (Glos) Ltd reserve the right to reduce or withhold bursary payments and/or entitlement to in-kind benefits. When a learner withdraws from Prospect Training Services (Glos) Ltd, they will no longer receive payments.

Learners entitled to bursary fund who start courses later in the academic year will receive a pro-rata allocation. Details on payments can be found in the Bursary Application and FSM Process.

16. Appeals

Learners are entitled to appeal against decisions made in relation to their application for a bursary or the withholding of payments. They should first raise their concerns with the Quality Manager, and if such a meeting fails to resolve any differences, they should make a written complaint for consideration to the Directors of Prospect Training Services (Glos) Ltd.

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