



Bursary Policy

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Introduction

This policy outlines how Queen Alexandra College (QAC) administers the 16–19 Bursary Funds (DfE [Department of Education] issued guideline) to support students who may otherwise face financial barriers to accessing education. The fund is intended to support essential education-related costs such as travel, books, specialist equipment and other necessary course costs. It is not intended to meet general living costs or provide learning support services.

As a specialist college supporting students with learning difficulties, disabilities and additional needs, QAC will administer the Bursary Fund fairly, transparently and in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) guidance. Applications will be considered regardless of disability, age, sex, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

The Bursary Panel consists of Bursary Officers from the Finance and Executive teams.

Principles

QAC will:

- Target support at students facing genuine financial barriers to participation.
- Assess each student individually based on actual need.
- Ensure awards reflect actual participation costs.
- Make decisions consistently and fairly.
- Maintain clear records and evidence for audit purposes.
- Prioritise support that enables attendance, participation and successful completion of study programmes.

QAC will not make blanket, flat-rate or automatic awards. All support will be based on assessed need and evidenced costs.

Types of Bursaries Available

Defined Vulnerable Groups Bursary

Students *may* be eligible if they are:

- In care.
- A care leaver.
- Receiving Income Support or Universal Credit in their own right because they are financially supporting themselves.
- Receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) together with Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (UC) in their own right.

Support of up to £1,200 per academic year may be available where required. However, awards will be based on assessed need and may be lower than £1,200, or higher where additional support is provided through the Discretionary Bursary Fund.

Assessment of Need

Students who meet the eligibility criteria for a Vulnerable Bursary are not automatically entitled to financial support. QAC will assess each student's actual financial need and participation costs before determining whether an award is required and, if so, the level of support to be provided.

The assessment will consider:

- Essential travel costs.
- Course-related equipment and materials.
- Meals while attending college.
- Other participation costs necessary to enable the student to access and remain in education.
- Financial support available from parents, carers or other sources.
- The student's individual circumstances and ability to meet participation costs.

A student may meet the eligibility criteria for a Vulnerable Bursary but receive a reduced award or no award where QAC determines that there is no unmet financial need. For example, where a student satisfies the eligibility criteria but their participation costs are already fully met through parental support, local authority arrangements or other funding sources, QAC may determine that no bursary award is required. Such students may be recorded as a "zero bursary" student in accordance with DfE guidance.

Conversely, where a student's assessed participation costs exceed £1,200, additional support may be considered through QAC's Discretionary Bursary Fund, subject to eligibility and the availability of funding.

Discretionary Bursary

Discretionary bursaries are available to eligible students who face financial hardship and need help with the essential costs of participating in their education. QAC determines eligibility criteria for discretionary awards in accordance with DfE guidance.

In assessing applications for a Discretionary Bursary, QAC will consider household income alongside the student's individual circumstances and actual participation costs. Where a student is financially independent and living separately from their parents or carers, QAC may assess the student's own income and benefit entitlement instead of household income. Receipt of Universal Credit or other income-related benefits may indicate financial hardship, but support will only be awarded following an assessment of actual need and the costs associated with participation in education. Awards will not be made solely on the basis of benefit entitlement or household income.

Student Eligibility

To be eligible, students must:

- Be aged 16 or over and under 19 on 31 August of the academic year for which support is being requested, or
- Be a 19+ continuing student with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan who remains on the same study programme started when aged 16–18.

Students must also:

- Be enrolled on an eligible QAC study programme.
- Meet residency requirements for DfE funding.
- Have assessed financial need connected to participation in education.

Discretionary Bursary Eligibility Criteria

Discretionary bursaries are available to eligible students who face financial hardship and require support with the essential costs of participating in education.

QAC will assess both eligibility and need. Meeting an income threshold does not automatically entitle a student to support. All awards will be based on an assessment of actual participation costs, including travel, equipment, meals and other essential course-related expenditure. Support will be targeted towards students whose financial circumstances would otherwise present a barrier to participation in education.

Household Income Bands

For the purposes of assessing financial hardship, QAC will use the following household income bands which are reviewed annually having regard to demand, local economic conditions and available bursary funding:

:

Band	Gross Household Income
Band 1	Up to £30,500 and/or receipt of qualifying income-based benefits
Band 2	£30,500 – £37,000
Band 3	£37,000 – £45,000

These thresholds may be reviewed annually in line with changes in funding guidance and affordability.

Assessment of Support

Students assessed as eligible may receive support up to the following levels:

Band	Maximum Level of Assessed Support
Band 1	Up to 100%

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Band 2	Up to 60%
Band 3	Up to 30%

The level of support awarded will be dependent on:

- Actual participation costs.
- Individual financial circumstances.
- Availability of bursary funding.
- Other support available to the student.

QAC will not make blanket, fixed-rate or automatic awards. All awards will be based on the student's individual circumstances and evidenced need. Where possible, support will be provided through direct payment to suppliers, travel passes, equipment purchase or reimbursement rather than cash payments

Additional Considerations

In determining eligibility and levels of support, QAC may also consider:

- Number of dependent children within the household.
- Disability-related costs not covered through other funding.
- Travel distance and transport requirements.
- Care experience.
- Young carer responsibilities.
- Exceptional family circumstances.
- Risk of homelessness or financial crisis.

Where a household contains more than two dependent children, QAC may exercise its discretion to assess the student within the next highest support band.

Students with a household income above £45,000 may, in exceptional circumstances, be considered for support where there is clear evidence of financial hardship and participation risk.

Evidence Requirements

Applicants must provide appropriate evidence to support their application. This may include:

- Universal Credit statements.
- Tax Credit Award Notices.
- Benefit entitlement letters.
- P60s.
- Payslips.
- Other evidence requested by QAC.

Benefits intended to support disability-related costs (including DLA, PIP and Attendance Allowance) will not normally be included when assessing household income.

What the Bursary Can Be Used For

Support may be provided for:

- Travel between home and QAC.
- Essential educational visits.
- Specialist clothing or equipment required by the course.
- Essential books and learning materials.
- Industry placements.
- University interviews and open days.
- Exceptional childcare top-up costs consistent with DfE rules.

What the Bursary Cannot Be Used For

The bursary will not be used for:

- General living expenses.
- Social or recreational activities.
- Non-essential trips.
- Learning support provision already supplied by QAC.
- Counselling, mentoring or tutoring services.
- Incentive payments or rewards.
- Overseas trips unless they are essential to the study programme and represent value for money under DfE guidance.

Application Process

Students must complete a bursary application form and provide supporting evidence. This may include:

- Universal Credit statements.
- Tax Credit Award Notices.
- Benefit entitlement letters.
- P60s.
- Payslips.
- Other evidence requested by QAC.

Assessment and Awards

All applications will be assessed individually.

QAC will consider:

- Eligibility.
- Household circumstances.
- Actual participation costs.
- Other financial support available to the student.
- Available bursary funding.

Awards may be provided:

- By reimbursement of evidenced expenditure.
- By BACS payment where appropriate.

Conditions of Payment

Receipt of bursary support may be conditional upon:

- Attendance meets the agreed and expected threshold and where authorised absence will not affect the financial support required.
- Appropriate behaviour as per Student Code of Conduct
- Continued enrolment on the study programme.
- Submission of receipts or evidence where required.
- Appropriate use of the support provided.

Where a student does not meet agreed conditions, payments may be suspended, reduced or withdrawn following consideration of individual circumstances.

Emergency Hardship Support

QAC may retain a small emergency fund to support students experiencing unforeseen financial hardship that threatens their ability to remain in education.

Emergency support will normally focus on immediate travel or meal costs while a full assessment is completed.

Appeals

Students who are dissatisfied with a bursary outcome decision may appeal. The college will normally respond within 10 working days of receiving the appeal. If your concern is about the administration of the bursary scheme, this should be dealt with as a complaint, through the College Complaints Procedure (policy available on the website).

Stage 1

Written appeal to the Bursary Panel within 10 working days of the decision.

Stage 2

Review by the Chief Finance & Operations Officer or nominated senior manager.

Stage 3

Final review by the College Principal or the Charity CEO-Executive Principal.

The decision at Stage 3 will be final.

Fraudulent Claims

Evidence is required to support all applications.

Where false information is provided, QAC reserves the right to:

- Withdraw support
- Recover funds
- Refer cases for investigation

Where false or misleading information has been supplied intentionally.

Returning Applicants and Declaration of Unchanged Circumstances

Students who received a bursary award in the previous academic year must submit a new application each year.

As part of the application process, returning applicants will be asked to confirm whether their financial and personal circumstances have changed since their previous application.

Where an applicant confirms that their circumstances have not changed, QAC may rely on evidence previously provided to support the current application.

By confirming that circumstances remain unchanged, the student and/or parent/carer is declaring that, to the best of their knowledge:

- Household income remains materially the same
- Benefit entitlement remains the same
- Living arrangements and travel requirements remain the same
- No significant change has occurred that would affect bursary eligibility

Applicants must inform the college as soon as possible if their circumstances change at any point during the academic year.

Failure to disclose a change in circumstances, or providing false or misleading information, may result in:

- Suspension or withdrawal of bursary support

- Requirement to repay funds or return goods provided through the bursary
- Further action in line with college procedures where appropriate

QAC reserves the right to request updated evidence at any time to confirm continued eligibility.

Data Protection

Information collected as part of bursary applications will be processed in accordance with UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and QAC's Data Protection Policy.

Information will only be used for the administration and audit of bursary funding.

Monitoring and Review

QAC will review:

- Demand for bursary support.
- Distribution of awards.
- Equality of access.
- Compliance with DfE guidance.

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated where required to reflect changes in government guidance.

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