

Financial Support 2026-2027 Policy and Procedures

This information is available in an alternative format such as large print.
Please contact 01256 417500 ext. 5300, if you need us to provide this information in a different way.

Policy Statement:

Queen Mary's College is committed to supporting students to overcome financial barriers to participation in education. The College provides financial support through the 16–19 Bursary Fund and Free Meals scheme in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) guidance. Financial support is awarded to students with **demonstrable financial need** to enable them to successfully start, attend, and complete their programme of study. All decisions are made in a fair, transparent, consistent, and evidence-based manner.

The College will retain appropriate evidence to support all decisions relating to eligibility, financial need, participation costs, and attendance to ensure compliance with DfE audit requirements.

Policy Aims:

- To ensure that Bursary Funds are allocated and administered in accordance with DfE Guidelines and policies.
- To describe the guiding principles and eligibility for how financial support is allocated.
- To explain the procedure for dealing with any appeals or complaints in relation to financial support
- Ensure that applications, awards and appeals are considered on a case-by-case basis, taking account of individual circumstances, supporting evidence and exceptional factors, in line with DfE guidance.

Roles and Responsibilities

The NHEA Trust is responsible for ensuring that the College has appropriate policies and procedures in place for the distribution of financial support funds.

The principal has responsibility for ensuring that these policies and procedures are fully implemented and is accountable for the College's use of the funds.

The Financial Support Administrator, reporting to the Business Support Manager is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the fund is publicised in a timely and appropriate manner to inform prospective students. This includes working with the Admissions, Schools Liaison and Guidance teams to ensure accurate and up-to-date information is shared.
- Overseeing the administration of the fund, ensuring processes are efficient, consistent and in line with college policy.
- Making decisions on the allocation of funds in conjunction with the Business Support Manager.
- Liaising with the Finance team regarding the administration and payment of funds.
- Ensuring that all audit and compliance requirements are met.
- Liaising with students and relevant staff, where appropriate, to identify and support interventions that enable students to continue their studies.
- Acting as the first point of contact for any appeals or complaints relating to financial support.

How we publicise the support available:

- Prior to enrolling at the College - reference will be made to financial support in college marketing materials and communications, at Open Evenings, and presentations in college
- In the Online Enrolment Joining Information which prepares applicants for their enrolment consultation (usually sent at the end of June), a section of the information is dedicated to Financial Support.
- At Enrolment – applicants, and their parents/guardians, can meet the Financial Support Team for support with the financial support application process.
- During a student's programme of study - financial support information is advertised through the website, plasma screens, the Student Portal, posters, tutorial, counselling and wellbeing support, Teachers & Tutors will also be reminded of the funds so that they are able to direct appropriate students for financial support during the year.

What support we can offer those who meet the criteria set out below:

Financial support is awarded based on verified financial need, individual circumstances, and the availability of funds. Each application is assessed on its own merit, and financial support is not guaranteed nor automatically awarded. The College reserves the right to exercise discretion where exceptional or unforeseen circumstances can be evidenced. Support may be provided to help with essential costs directly related to participation in a student's study programme.

- This may include support for travel, course-related materials, equipment and other essential educational expenses, where a clear need is identified.

All awards are subject to ongoing eligibility and review.

Allocation of Funds and Parental Contribution

The 16–19 Bursary Fund is a limited fund provided by the Department for Education to support students with the most significant financial barriers to participation. It is not intended to meet all costs associated with post-16 education.

Where possible, the College will prioritise essential costs, particularly travel to and from education. Where bursary funds are insufficient to meet all identified costs, the College will allocate available funding based on individual need. This may mean that:

- Available funding is used to support essential costs (such as travel)
- Additional or remaining costs associated with participation (for example equipment, trips or other course-related expenses) may need to be met by parents/carers or the student

Parents/carers and students should therefore be aware that the bursary fund is intended to provide targeted support and does not guarantee that all costs will be covered.

The College will ensure that all decisions remain fair, transparent and based on an assessment of each student's actual financial need.

Criteria to be met at application stage:

- Students must meet the residency criteria for publicly funded post-16 education in England, as defined by the Department for Education
- Students aged 19 or over are only eligible to apply for discretionary financial support if they are continuing a study programme they started when aged 16–18 (a '19+ continuer'), or if they have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Eligibility for financial support is assessed in line with the latest 16–19 Bursary Fund guidance, and students must be enrolled on publicly funded 16–19 provision.

- Students must be fully enrolled, have a signed Learner Agreement in place, and be undertaking a full programme of study.
- A fully completed Financial Support application must be submitted via the QMC PayMyStudent portal, together with all required supporting evidence.

Assessment of Financial Need

All applications for financial support are assessed on an individual basis, in line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance, to ensure that funding is targeted at those students who face the greatest barriers to participation.

As part of the financial assessment process, the college will consider wider household circumstances, including the number of dependent children and other individuals supported within the household.

This information will normally be provided by the student and/or parent/carer as part of the application process. Where appropriate, this may be supported by evidence such as a Universal Credit statement or other official documentation.

The College will ensure that any information requested is proportionate, relevant and in line with data protection requirements.

The College will undertake a detailed assessment of financial need, taking into account:

- Household income
- Number of dependent children or siblings in education within the household
- Exceptional financial circumstances, including changes in income or unexpected hardship
- Actual participation costs, including travel, equipment and essential course-related expenses

Attendance & Behaviour

Attendance is expected to be consistently high (normally around 90% or above), recognising that individual circumstances will be taken into account.

Continued receipt of financial support is conditional upon reasonable participation, including attendance and engagement.

Financial support may be reviewed where there are concerns regarding a student's participation, including attendance, engagement or progress. Any decision will take into account mitigating or exceptional circumstances and will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Where concerns arise, the Financial Support Team will work with the student and relevant staff (such as tutors, teachers and the Director of Learning) to identify barriers and agree appropriate support strategies to enable continued participation.

If concerns persist, the case may be escalated to an Assistant Principal or Deputy Principal to consider further support options and next steps.

Any adjustment, suspension or withdrawal of financial support will be reasonable, proportionate, and in line with DfE guidance, with the primary aim of supporting the student to remain in education. Financial support will not be withdrawn solely as a disciplinary measure.

How payments are made:

- In kind (for example, payments to Stagecoach for a student's full/partial bus pass).

- By transfer to another QMC departmental budget (for example, offsite visits/trips payments).
- Directly on to the student's ID card (for example stationary)

Appeals:

- If an award is refused, reduced, withdrawn, or made subject to conditions, this will be explained verbally and/or in writing including the reason for the decision.
- Students have the right to appeal. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Business Support Manager within a reasonable timeframe and should outline the grounds for appeal and include any additional supporting evidence.
- If the matter cannot be resolved the appeal will be referred to the Deputy Principal
- If the student remains dissatisfied the Principal will consider the case and make a final decision.
- The outcome of an appeal will be confirmed in writing, and the decision of the Principal is final.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion:

QMC celebrates and promotes equality and diversity for all. We aim to create an environment where everyone feels safe and valued and within which they are treated with dignity and respect. We recognise that all individuals are different and have different needs. We confirm an entitlement of equality, diversity & inclusion for all those who make up the college, including prospective students.

Types of Support Available

Vulnerable Students

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Care leavers • Students looked after by the Local Authority • Students in receipt of Universal Credit in their own right • Disabled and in receipt of Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments 	<p>Students who meet the DfE defined vulnerable group criteria will be awarded bursary support of up to £1,200 per year, based on an assessment of their actual financial needs and participation costs. This is not means-tested in the same way as discretionary bursaries.</p> <p>Students in defined vulnerable groups are not automatically entitled to receive the full £1,200 bursary. All awards are based on an assessment of the student's actual financial need and the essential costs required to participate in their study programme.</p>
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Discretionary Hardship Grants

Household income under £27,000 (and with savings below £16,000)	Students with a household income below £27,000 may be eligible for support. Awards are based on assessed financial need, actual participation costs, and available funding
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Free Meals

From September 2026, eligibility for free meals will be expanded in line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance. Students from households in receipt of Universal Credit will be eligible to apply for free meals, regardless of household income level.

Eligibility must be confirmed through the appropriate application and verification process, and students must provide evidence of entitlement as required.

Eligible students will receive a daily allowance credited to their student ID card, which can be used at college catering outlets.

Meal credits will not normally be issued for days when a student is absent from college or not required to attend. The College will ensure that free meals funding is used appropriately and reflects actual attendance.

Eligibility for free meals is assessed separately from bursary support. Receipt of free meals does not automatically entitle a student to discretionary financial support, which is awarded based on a separate assessment of financial need and participation costs.

How and When to Apply:

Students can apply for support using the Pay My Student Portal. This portal can be found on our website at <https://www.gmc.ac.uk/admissions/bursaries-financial-support/>. Students and parents/guardians of under 18-year old's must accept and agree to abide by the criteria outlined above in the declaration at the end of the application form.

Priority will be given to applications received by 11th September 2026; however, applications will continue to be accepted for students whose circumstances change Subject to the availability of funds.

Submission of a fully completed application, together with all required supporting documentation, is a condition of consideration for financial support. Where an applicant's financial circumstances change after the published deadline, they may contact the Financial Support Team to discuss their individual circumstances.

Applications are assessed in line with Department for Education (DfE) guidance. While applications may be processed in the order they are received, financial support is awarded based on assessed financial need and the extent to which support is required to enable participation.

The College will prioritise students facing the greatest financial hardship and reserves the right to prioritise or re-prioritise applications accordingly, to ensure fair and equitable distribution of the funds.

Decisions will normally be communicated within 20 working days of receipt of a fully completed application and supporting evidence.

All awards are subject to eligibility, assessed financial need and the availability of funds. Financial support is not guaranteed.

All grants will be subject to a detailed financial assessment based on:

- Family income – if the student is 16 -18 and lives at home. In line with Universal Credit, anyone with savings above £16,000 is not entitled to support.
- Student's income – if you live independently and are 16-19 as of 1 September 2026, or if you are over 19.

Documentary evidence to support the figures provided **must be submitted via the online portal**, as outlined during the application process. Applications cannot be assessed without appropriate supporting evidence. If any submitted evidence is later found to be fraudulent, support will be withdrawn and the matter reported to the relevant authorities.

The grant will be allocated by the Financial Support Team following a detailed financial assessment. Decisions will be evidence-based and proportionate and made in line with DfE guidance. In all cases, the college reserves the right to award or decline claims in exceptional circumstances or where a strict application of the policy would result in hardship, ensuring that decisions remain fair and defensible.

Students/parents will be notified of their award by letter and/or email. If an award is refused, or subject to any conditions, this will be explained in writing.

Where there are concerns regarding a student's participation, including attendance, engagement or progress, financial support may be reviewed to ensure it continues to support participation. This will be considered alongside the College's approach set out above, including the identification of any barriers and the provision of appropriate support.

Following review, and where concerns persist, financial support may be adjusted, paused or withdrawn. Any such decision will be reasonable, proportionate, and in line with DfE guidance, taking into account mitigating or exceptional circumstances and the individual needs of the student.

Louise Harvey Business Support Manager
Updated: June 2026 (reviewed annually)