

Financial Support 2024-25 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 helping students overcome financial barriers by ensuring that students, parents/carers and relevant external agencies have access to high quality information and advice regarding the financial support we offer. QMC's Financial Support (sometimes referred to as a bursary) is available to assist students who are in **proven financial need** so that they can successfully complete their programme of study. The Financial Support Team is responsible for the administration and distribution of these funds, **in line with the guidelines provided by the Government.**

Policy Aims:

- To ensure that Bursary Funds are allocated and administered in accordance with EFSA 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.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Governing Body 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 Assistant Principal Organisational Support, is responsible for:
 - o Ensuring that the fund is publicised in a timely and appropriate manner to inform young people starting college in the following academic year. This includes ensuring the Admissions & Schools Liaison and Guidance Teams are all well informed.
 - o Overseeing the administration of the fund.
 - o Making decisions on allocation of funds in conjunction with the Assistant Principal.
 - o Liaising with Finance regarding the administration/payment of funds.
 - o Ensuring that audit requirements are met.
 - o If it becomes necessary, liaising with students and staff regarding appropriate interventions to support students with their studies.
 - o Acting as the first point of contact for any appeal or complaint in relation to the funds.

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 school.
- **In the Online Enrolment Joining Information which prepares applicants for their enrolment consultation** (usually sent at the end of May) – 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 College Bulletin, Student Portal, posters, tutorial, counselling and wellbeing support, and Student & Parent Guides. Subject and Personal 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:

Support is based on proven need, an individual's specific circumstances and availability of funds. This list is not exhaustive but could include some items such as: transport costs, food, examination re-sits, course resources costs (essential courses, not enrichments), up to two essential trips (overseas trips cannot be funded through the bursary), print credit, books, UCAS admin fee, art starter packs (course related), sports/PE kit (course related), etc.

Criteria to be met at application stage:

- Students aged 16 but under 19 on 31 August 2024. We do not not receive funding for students who are aged 19 or over immediately preceding the start of the academic year. A student aged 19+ would only be eligible to apply for financial support if they are completing a learning programme started at College whilst they were aged under 19 at the start of their first year of study, or they have an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP).
- Eligible under Government and/or local charity guidelines - students accessing financial support must meet the eligibility criteria set out in the latest EFSA 16-19 Bursary Fund Guide and should be participating in provision which is funded by the EFSA.
- Enrolled with a signed Learner Agreement and undertaking a full programme of study.
- Fully completed Financial Support application submitted through the QMC portal, with appropriate supporting evidence.

Criteria to be met throughout the student's time at College:

- Attendance of 90% or above, but preferably of 100%. Where attendance falls below 90% students will be contacted to explain and are at risk of financial support being withheld in whole or part, including assistance with transport.
- Appropriate behaviour in accordance with College Expectations.
- Positive progress, as evidenced by Vista and teacher feedback.

When Criteria are not met:

- Students are expected to meet with Financial Support Team in first instance to discuss issue(s) and agree targets for improvement to support progress. Financial Support could be withheld in whole or part, including assistance with transport.
- If these are not met Financial Support Team will escalate to any or all of a student's tutor, teacher(s), Director of Learning to discuss issue(s) and agree actions to support progress. Financial Support could be suspended.
- If these are not met the student will be referred to either an Assistant Principal, Deputy Principal to discuss issue(s) and agree next steps. Financial Support could be withdrawn.

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 free college meals or print credit).
- In exceptional cases only we can pay by cash or directly into a student's bank account by BACS).

Appeals:

- If an award is refused, or the award is subject to any conditions, this will be explained verbally, or by email.
- Students have the right to appeal. In the first instance this should be made in writing to the Assistant Principal, Organisational Support.
- If the matter cannot be resolved the appeal will be referred to the Assistant Principal/Deputy Principal allocated to the student.
- If the student remains dissatisfied the Principal will consider the case and make a final decision.

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 (Criteria apply to a student's time at College as well as at application stage. QMC's policy, and the values contained within it, are subject to change in accordance with updates to the "16-19 Bursary Fund Guide 2024 to 2025 Academic Year" due to be published by Government shortly.):

Vulnerable Student Grants	Care leavers	Up to £1,200 is available as a hardship grant to vulnerable students where there is a proven need
"	Students looked after by the Local Authority	Up to £1,200 is available as a hardship grant to vulnerable students where there is a proven need
"	Students in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit in their own right	Up to £1,200 is available as a hardship grant to vulnerable students where there is a proven need
"	Disabled and in receipt of Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments	Up to £1,200 is available as a hardship grant to vulnerable students where there is a proven need
Discretionary Hardship Grants	Household income under £16,190 (and with savings below £16,000)	Applications are assessed on an individual basis but where there is a proven need, and the costs are relevant to the programme, you can expect support with any combination of the items detailed in 'What can we help with' (see above)
"	Household income under £27,000 (and with savings below £16,000)	Applications are assessed on an individual basis but where there is a proven need you can expect a contribution to transport and course resources costs in the region of £250 (payable in kind directly to providers)
"	Household income under £32,000 (and with savings below £16,000)	Applications are assessed on an individual basis but where there is proven need you can expect a contribution to transport and course resources costs in the region of £150 (payable in kind directly to providers)
Free College Meals	Students on a household income of below £16,190, in receipt of income-related ESA, Income Support or income-based Job Seekers Allowance, Universal Credit (provided you have an annual net income of no more than £7400), Guaranteed element of State Pension Credit.	The government has introduced free college meals for students whose household income is below £16,190, (terms and conditions apply – see website). Eligible students will have £3.50 added to their student ID card on a daily basis which can be used at any of the College outlets. Applications can be made at https://www.cloudforedu.org.uk/ofsm/fe-apply The College will be notified of eligibility directly from HCC.
QMC Welfare Fund	Available to all students	The College allocates a small sum of money to assist students in <i>immediate</i> financial need. All students may apply to this fund through the Financial Support Team, via the Help Desk. The fund can support specific small costs at any time throughout the year, such as: lunch costs or one-off travel costs. Wherever possible this money will be made available

		as a loan to the student, to be paid back by agreement.
Queen Mary's Foundation - a Basingstoke charity which receives applications for support from students who attend QMC	Available to all students	Students can apply for financial assistance with whole/part payments towards such items as music lessons. The College can refer applications to the Queen Mary's Foundation. See the Financial Support Team for advice, approval and an application form. In making an application, the student agrees to financial assessment details being shared with QMF. Further details can be found on our website https://www.qmc.ac.uk/student-life/financial-support
Child Care	For students who are parents themselves	Students requesting support for childcare will be directed, in the first instance, to apply for support from Care to Learn https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn . Assistance with these applications is available from the Financial Support Team.

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.qmc.ac.uk/admissions/bursaries-financial-support/>. Students and parents/guardians of under 18 year olds must accept and agree to abide by the criteria outlined above in the declaration at the end of the application form – giving false or incomplete information that leads to incorrect/overpayment may result in future payments being stopped and any incorrectly paid funds being recovered. Incorrect information may also result in a referral to the police with the possibility of the student and/or their family facing prosecution.

The deadline for application is 30th September 2024. A completed application with the relevant supporting documentation is mandatory. If your financial position changes and you have missed the deadline you are welcome to contact the Financial Support Team to discuss your needs. Applications are dealt with in date order and we aim to assess and confirm the financial support decision within 20 working days. We cannot guarantee support for applications. Early application is more likely to be successful given the availability of funds.

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 at 1 September 2024, or if you are over 19.

Documentary evidence, to support figures given, must be submitted through the online portal as detailed during the application process. **No assessment can be made without supporting evidence.** If any of the evidence given is later found to be fraudulent support will be withdrawn and this will be reported to the relevant authorities.

The grant will be allocated by the Financial Support Team. In all cases, the Assistant Principal Organisational Support has the right to award/decline claims in exceptional circumstances disregarding this policy.

Students/parents will be notified of their award by letter and/or email. If an award is refused, or the award is subject to any conditions, this will be explained in writing. If the student's attendance falls below an acceptable level, or if a student's attitude to study is poor, the College reserves the right to withdraw any further payments of the award.

If the student is asked to leave college or chooses to leave college before the end of the course, no further payments of the award will be made after the leaving date. All reasonable attempts will be made to reclaim a portion of the grant if applicable to individual cases.

Equalities Statement:

QMC is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion for all. Therefore, it is extremely important to us that the contractors and partners we work with both understand the importance and practice the principles in applying the Equalities Act 2010 to the delivery of their services. Should any issues arise during the course of our work together, we expect our contractors and partners to fully adhere to our approach whilst working with us and when required provide appropriate evidence of their own commitment to these significant principles and legal requirements. For clarification the requirements are set out below:

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the work place and wider society, it also imposes a public sector equality duty. The College is specifically listed as a public authority under schedule 19, section 149 of the Act. Please note that duty also extends to contractors working with the College.

In summary, those subject to the equality duty must, in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- 1) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- 2) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 3) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Please note that the following categories are defined as protected characteristics: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and Civil partnership (in employment), Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex (Gender) and Sexual orientation.