

## **FREE STUDENT MEALS (known as Free School Meals)**

### **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

To be eligible for the 'Free Student Meal' students must be:

- enrolled in a further education provision funded via the Department for Education (DfE)
- aged between 16 and 18 as at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025
- aged 19 or over and continuing on the same study programme you began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers)
- aged 19 or over and have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

Free Meals are targeted at disadvantaged students. For the purposes of eligibility for free meals, 'disadvantage' is defined by the students being in receipt of, or having parents/carers who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseekers Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- the guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190, as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC))
- Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after someone stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400pa

### **The following groups of students are not eligible for the Free Meal Scheme:**

- students aged between 14 and 16 as at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025 (these students are already covered by a different provision)
- students aged 19 or over at the start of their study programme, unless they have an EHCP or are a 19+ continuer
- apprentices, including those with an EHCP

### **HOW DO I APPLY?**

You must:

- Complete and submit the relevant application form:
  - 16-18 Bursary Fund (for student aged between 16 and 18 as at 31<sup>st</sup> August 2025)
  - Discretionary Adult Learner Support Fund (for students aged 19 and over)
- Ensure ALL sections are completed in FULL and submitted with ALL relevant evidence
- Incomplete applications will either be returned or any missing information will be requested
- Failure to provide the correct documentation will cause a delay in the processing of your application
- Photocopies of evidence are acceptable. Original documents will be returned as soon as possible
- Ensure you (the student) have signed the form on the back page

If you have any queries with regard to the funds and application forms, please contact the Bursary Fund Team in one of the following ways:

- **Contact Loughborough College:** [studentfinance@loughborough.ac.uk](mailto:studentfinance@loughborough.ac.uk)
- **Contact Stephenson College:** [bursary~@smbgroup.ac.uk](mailto:bursary~@smbgroup.ac.uk)
- **Contact Brooksby College:** [bursary~@smbgroup.ac.uk](mailto:bursary~@smbgroup.ac.uk)
- **Visit us:** at Reception

### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION:**

- A student is only eligible to receive a free meal when they, or a parent/carer on their behalf, have made a successful application to Loughborough College and have enrolled on their study programme
- There is no provision to 'back pay' meals not claimed in any circumstances
- For students who are off site (for example undertaking work placement or work experience as part of their study programme) and eligible for the Free Meal Scheme - the college will refund the free meal cost (as per the government guidelines) direct to the student as reimbursement. Payments will be made by BACS (bank transfer) direct to the student bank account. Confirmation of attendance at the off-site placement will be required prior to any payments being made

### **ONCE I HAVE APPLIED, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

Fully completed forms submitted with all supporting evidence, will normally be processed within 28 days of receipt, but at peak times this may take longer. You may be contacted to discuss your particular needs. It is important that you provide evidence of all household income; **if any evidence is missing no assessment will be made therefore causing a delay to your application**

### **SUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS**

If your application is successful, you will receive a Free Student Meal award notification letter which will indicate how to claim your free meal

### **UNSUCCESSFUL APPLICATIONS**

No guarantee can be given that you will be successful in your application; if you are unsuccessful you will be notified in writing.

### **APPEALS**

You have the right to appeal if:

- Your application is unsuccessful
- You believe your application has not been assessed correctly

Your appeal must be made in writing within 10 working days from the date of the decision and sent to:

**Appeals – FAO: Learner Services Manager**  
**Learner Support Fund**  
**Loughborough College**  
**Radmoor Road**  
**Loughborough**  
**Leicestershire LE11 3BT**

All appeals will be reviewed by a panel. A hearing will take place within 10 working days of receiving the appeals letter from you. The panel will send a decision in writing within 5 working days of the hearing. The decision of the Appeals Panel is final

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT**

The Bursary Fund Panel will:

- Take positive action to ensure that all full and part time home students can apply for financial support, thus widening participation and providing learning opportunities for under-represented groups
- Ensure that no applicant to the Bursary Fund receives less favourable treatment which cannot be justified in relation to individual financial / personal circumstances
- Ensure that all Bursary Fund literature, marketing and publicity material are free from stereotypes, discriminatory assumptions, images and language
- Monitor and review the effectiveness of the support on a regular basis

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Applications are only seen by staff involved in the delivery of the Bursary Fund. From time to time it may be necessary for additional supporting information to be sought from other College staff in order for a decision to be made

## **DATA PROTECTION**

Loughborough College collects data about all students for various administrative, academic, health and safety, contractual and other public interest reasons. You are aware that your data is shared only with those agencies specifically involved with funding or accrediting your qualification, concerned with collection of fees or with ensuring your wellbeing and vital interests. Since the College cannot operate effectively without processing information about you, at enrolment you will be asked to sign to confirm your agreement to this. If you do not do this, we will be unable to enrol you on your programme of study, and may withdraw any offer of a place already made. Please be aware that Loughborough College will only share your information where legally allowed or required in line with current Data Protection legislation. For circumstances outside of this legislation, we will seek your written consent separately before sharing your information