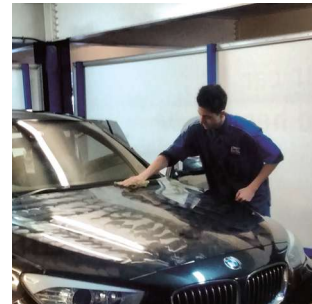
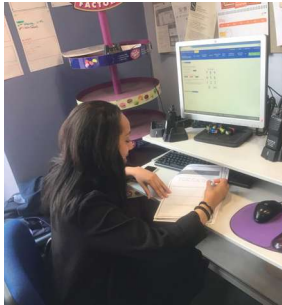


Juniper

TRAINING



FREE MEALS AND BURSARY FUNDS

A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS AND CARERS



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INTRODUCTION

For students studying at Juniper, there are different sources of funding to help you/your child whilst on programme. This guide tells you what funds there are, and who may be able to apply for those funds. Please note that all information detailed is taken from the latest funding guidance and may be subject to change.

At Juniper, we manage each of those funds through an application form. We will ask for information to ensure that you/your child are assessed for the maximum funds available to you, fairly and equally.

It is necessary for the Application Form to be completed if you intend to apply for these funds. When we assess students for the various funds, we take a number of different things into consideration. We will ask questions about where students live, who they live with, household income etc. You will then be asked to send us (with the application form) different types of documents for us to assess student eligibility for support under these funds. Juniper has a legal duty to protect the funds it looks after and must be satisfied that you meet the criteria to receive these funds.

If you are applying for more than one type of funding, for example Free Meals and Discretionary Bursary, you must submit enough evidence to meet the criteria for both. The “evidence required” list will tell you what documents you will need to submit for each type of fund and this is usually different for each of the funds you have applied for.

When should students apply? Now!

The timing of submitting the application form and supporting documents is really important. If there is a delay in doing this, it can delay when funding begins. The sooner you submit the application the sooner eligibility can be assessed.

To have your funding award in place for the start of your programme you should submit your application and supporting evidence prior to starting on programme.

If you are unsure, it is better to submit more evidence when completing your application so that it is not delayed unnecessarily.

FREE MEALS

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

Students must be over 16 and under 19 at 31st August 2026 when starting on programme to be eligible to receive free meals funding in the 2026 to 2027 academic year and satisfy the residency criteria set out in the ESFA Funding Regulations Guidance 2026-27.

Students who turn 19 during their programme will remain eligible for free meals funding. Students aged between 19 and 25 who are subject to an Education Health Care Plan (EHC Plan) are also entitled to free meals funding while attending their programme if they meet the eligibility criteria.

Students must be in receipt of, or have parents who are in receipt of, one or more of the following benefits:

- Income Support or Universal Credit
- Income-based Job Seekers 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 (providing you are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 as assessed by HMRC

The following groups of students are **not eligible** to receive free meals funding:

- Students aged between 14 and 16 (these students are already covered by different provision i.e Free School Meals)

WHAT EVIDENCE NEEDS TO BE SUBMITTED WITH THE APPLICATION FORM?

Please see table below. You will need to submit documents as detailed in the 'Evidence' column to correspond with the benefit you/your parent(s) are in receipt of:

BENEFIT IN RECEIPT OF	EVIDENCE REQUIRED
Income Support	Income Support letter or Bank Statement with 'IS' / 'Income Support' printed by the transaction (not dated more than 3 months ago)
Universal Credit	Universal Credit award statement (all pages) (3 most recent monthly awards). Bank statements are not acceptable.
Income-based Job Seekers Allowance	Benefit Letter (all pages) (not dated more than 3 months ago) If Benefit Letter is dated more than 3 months ago, submit Bank Statement showing in receipt of the eligible benefits, not dated more than 3 months ago.
Income-related Employment Support Allowance (ESA)	Benefit Letter (all pages) (not dated more than 3 months ago) If Benefit Letter is dated more than 3 months ago, submit Bank Statement showing in receipt of the eligible benefits, not dated more than 3 months ago.
Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999	ID Card for all family members ; confirming Asylum Seeker Status, Name, Date of Birth and Address of all family members; or NASS reference number and the name of the Authority providing your support
Guaranteed Element of State Pension Credit	Benefit Letter (all pages) (not dated more than 3 months ago) If Benefit Letter is dated more than 3 months ago, submit Bank Statement showing in receipt of the eligible benefits, not dated more than 3 months ago.
Child Tax Credit (providing you are not entitled to Working Tax Credit) and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 as assessed by HMRC	Tax Credit Award Notice TC602 (all pages) (to be dated within the current tax year)

IF I AM ELIGIBLE FOR FREE MEALS FUNDING, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

When you submit your application form and supporting evidence online, this is then sent to Juniper's Central Support Services. Your application form and evidence is checked to ensure it meets the criteria.

Application Form and evidence submitted are accepted:

- You will be notified that you are eligible to receive Free Meals Funding
- A Free Meal payment will be paid into your bank account weekly (based on your attendance)
- You will continue to receive Free Meal payments for the remainder of the academic year or to the end of your programme, whichever is sooner*
- You are responsible for making sure these payments are used for food purchases

*eligibility to receive Free Meals will be assessed during each academic year that you are on programme.

Application Form and evidence submitted are NOT accepted:

- You will be notified that you are NOT eligible to receive Free Meals Funding
- It may be that the documents submitted do not meet the 'evidence required' criteria. We may request that you submit additional documents to support your application
- You will not receive Free Meals Funding until this is resolved

Healthy Options

We would encourage that you look to purchase healthy meal options. Guidance on healthy eating can be found on the following websites:

www.nhs.uk/change4life

www.nhs.uk/healthyeating

www.nutrition.org.uk

www.takelifeon.co.uk

16 – 19 BURSARY FUND

Student Eligibility

There are 2 types of 16 to 19 bursaries that students may be eligible for. Students must be over 16 and under 19 at 31st August 2026 when starting on programme to be eligible to receive 16-19 Bursary funding in the 2026 to 2027 academic year as well as meeting the criteria for vulnerable or discretionary bursary funding. Students must also satisfy the residency criteria set out in the ESFA Funding Regulations Guidance 2026-27.

Students who turn 19 during their programme will remain eligible for Bursary funding.

The bursary can be used to help with any costs you face to attend your programme at Juniper. These costs could include: food, travel costs if you live more than 1 mile away, essential clothing, equipment for your course, help with educational visits, books etc.

VULNERABLE BURSARY

You can apply for a vulnerable bursary of **up to** £1,200 if you fall in to one of the categories below:

- You are in care
- You are a care leaver
- You are receiving Income Support or Universal Credit in your own name
- You are receiving Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit **and** Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in your own name

To get a vulnerable bursary you must be receiving the benefits in your own name. If you are not receiving them in your own right, you will not be eligible for a vulnerable bursary, but you may still be able to apply for a discretionary bursary.

You will need to submit supporting documents with the application form for us to assess your eligibility for a vulnerable bursary. See the following page for further details.

If you are 19+ with an EHCP you will not be entitled to vulnerable bursary and would need to apply for discretionary bursary (page 9).

WHAT EVIDENCE NEEDS TO BE SUBMITTED WITH THE APPLICATION FORM TO SUPPORT MY VULNERABLE BURSARY CLAIM?

Please see table below. You will need to submit documents as detailed in the 'Evidence' column to correspond with the category you are applying for vulnerable bursary under:

CATEGORY APPLYING UNDER	EVIDENCE REQUIRED
You are in Care or a Care Leaver (including unaccompanied asylum seeking children)	Letter or email from the Local Authority confirming current or previous looked-after status.
Income Support in your own name	Income Support letter or Bank Statement with 'IS'/'Income Support' printed by the transaction (not dated more than 3 months ago)
Universal Credit in your own name	Universal Credit award statement (3 most recent monthly awards). Bank statements are not acceptable.
Employment Support Allowance or Universal Credit AND Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments in your own name	Benefit letter (all pages) confirming receipt of ESA or UC AND DLA or PIP; or Bank Statement showing eligible benefits printed by the transaction (not dated more than 3 months ago)

Please note: If you are awarded a vulnerable bursary and receiving DLA/PIP and ESA/UC, parents can no longer receive certain household/family benefits for you, such as child benefit.

DISCRETIONARY BURSARY

You can apply for a discretionary bursary if you do not fall into any of the vulnerable groups, but you need financial help to stay in education and meet the age and residency criteria.

In order to assess your financial need for discretionary bursary funding, we will take into account your household income and the number of dependent children in the house. If your household income exceeds £44,000 you will **not** be eligible for a discretionary bursary payment.

WHAT EVIDENCE NEEDS TO BE SUBMITTED WITH THE APPLICATION FORM TO SUPPORT MY DISCRETIONARY BURSARY CLAIM?

DOCUMENT / EVIDENCE SUBMITTING	EVIDENCE REQUIRED
P60	P60 End of Year Certificate (most recent Tax Year) (all people in household)
Tax Credit Award Notice	Tax Credit Award Notice TC602 (all pages) (to be dated within the current tax year)
Wage Slips	Wage slips clearly showing the persons' name and the date of payment (last 3 wage slips) (all people in household)
Self Employed Earnings	Official Tax Return (most recent Tax Year) (all people in household)
Universal Credit	Universal Credit award statement (all pages) (3 most recent monthly awards). Bank statements are not acceptable.
Benefits* / Pension Credit Letter	Benefit Letter (all pages) not dated more than 3 months ago. *Please note: Housing Benefit or Child Benefit letters will not be accepted as evidence of household income;

IF I AM ELIGIBLE FOR 16 TO 19 BURSARY FUNDING, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

When you submit your application form and supporting evidence online, this is then sent to Juniper's Central Support Services. Your application form and evidence is checked to ensure it meets the criteria.

Application Form and evidence submitted are accepted:

- You will be notified that you are eligible to receive either vulnerable or discretionary funding within 3-5 days (up to 10 days in busy periods).
- Based on your application, an award will be made to you. This will be paid in arrears into your Bank Account weekly by BACS payment.
- Students eligible for a discretionary/vulnerable bursary award will receive an award based on their individual needs, for example re-imbursement of travel costs, meals, essential clothing or equipment.

Application Form and evidence submitted are NOT accepted:

- You will be notified that you are NOT eligible to receive a bursary award within 3-5 days
- It may be that documents submitted do not meet the 'evidence required' criteria. We may request that you submit additional documents to support your application
- You will not receive Bursary Payments until this is resolved.

Please note: A bursary award is paid to enable you to attend training with us and will only be paid if your attendance and behaviour meet the required standard. Further details can be found in the Student Declaration section of the Application Form.

Please be aware we pay bursary funds in arrears based on attendance. You will not receive any payments until the end of the second week on programme.

ONE-OFF BURSARY PAYMENT REQUESTS

For students already in receipt of bursary funding, you may submit a request for one-off payments to cover the cost of:

- Clothing – to suit training and placement requirements (for Sport learners up to £150.00 total)
- Equipment
- Other – items deemed to be a barrier to your participation in training not previously applied for

You will be notified within 3-5 days whether or not this payment has been approved.

CARE TO LEARN BURSARY

The Care to Learn scheme can help with childcare costs while you study. You must be aged under 20 at the start of your course.

19+ ADVANCED LEARNER LOAN BURSARY

You may apply to get money from the Loan Bursary Fund after you've received a letter approving your Advanced Learner Loan.

The money can help pay for things like:

- travel related to your course
- course materials and equipment
- childcare

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Should you be dissatisfied with the outcome of your application for Free Meals and/or 16 to 19 Bursary Funding, please speak to the Performance Manager at your Centre in the first instance. If this cannot be resolved, then please follow Juniper's Complaints Procedure, a copy of which is located in Centre.



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