

16-19 Bursary Fund Policy

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Contents

1	Purpose.....	3
2	Statement of Practice.....	3
3	Administration	3
3.1	Allocations.....	3
3.2	Administration Costs.....	4
3.3	Budget Management	4
3.4	Financial Reconciliation	4
3.5	Audit Requirements	4
3.6	Roles and Responsibilities.....	4
4	Eligibility	5
4.1	General Eligibility Criteria	5
4.2	Enhanced Bursary Students	6
4.3	Further Education Free Meals	6
4.4	Household Income.....	7
4.5	Required Evidence	7
4.5.1	Discretionary Bursary	7
4.5.2	Enhanced Bursary.....	8
4.5.3	Further Education Free Meals	9
4.7	Other College Priorities	9
5	Off-Site Provision.....	10
6	Types of Assistance Available	10
6.1	Further Education Free Meals	10
6.2	Discretionary Meals	10
6.3	Travel Assistance	11
6.4	Materials, Equipment & Uniform/Clothing.....	12
6.5	Essential Course Trips.....	12
6.6	Higher Education Costs.....	12
6.7	Laptop Loan Scheme	13
6.8	Supporting Industry Placements.....	13
6.9	Childcare	13
7	Payment.....	13
7.1	Methods of Payment	13
7.2	Conditions for Payment	13
8	Appeals.....	14
9	False or Fraudulent Applications.....	14
10	Reporting and Monitoring Mechanisms	15

1 Purpose

The purpose of the 16-19 Bursary Fund is to:

- Help young people to overcome financial barriers to access education.
- Support and retain these students.
- Promote a positive attitude to learning.

This includes the distribution of further education free meals.

You must be aged at least 16 and under 19 on 31st August 2025 to be eligible.

2 Statement of Practice

Discipline	Bursary will cease if the recipient is excluded from college. Students placed on a managed absence may have their bursary funding suspended pending the outcome of their meeting.
Frequency of Payment	Meal Credit – daily uploads to college ID card in advance, weekly BACS payments (in exceptional circumstances only), or a combination as appropriate. Transport – Weekly BACS payments in advance or annual pass as appropriate. Equipment, trips etc. – One off payment as necessary or as directed by the relevant curriculum area. Other essential costs – As they arise.
Attendance	Student attendance is monitored by Progress Coaches who work closely with the Funding Team. Where a student's attendance is highlighted as a cause for concern, appropriate action can be taken. This may include a temporary hold or complete halt to bursary funding.

3 Administration

3.1 Allocations

The college will be allocated budgets each year for Further Education Free Meals and the 16-19 Bursary Fund. These will be paid to the college in instalments during the year.

The college will submit our funding claims through our DfE Sign-In account for students on receipt of a completed application and the appropriate accompanying evidence.

First funding claim window:

- opens Monday 8 September 2025 and closes Wednesday 12 November 2025
- payments will be made in February 2026 after checks and validations have been completed

Second funding claim window:

- opens Monday 5 January 2026 and closes on Wednesday 11 February 2026
- payments will be made in April 2026 after checks

Third funding claim window:

- opens Monday 18 May 2026 and closes on Wednesday 1 July 2026, mainly for end year reconciliation
- we will recover unspent funds in September 2026

3.2 Administration Costs

The college may use up to 5% of the total allocation (discretionary 16-19 Bursary and Further Education Free Meals) for administration costs and will normally allocate the full 5% for these costs.

The college cannot claim administration costs for any enhanced bursary payments claimed and made.

3.3 Budget Management

There is no ring-fencing of the Further Education Free Meals budget, therefore the 16-19 Bursary Fund allocation and the Further Education Free Meals allocation will be considered as a single allocation. As such, the College will manage the two funds together while meeting the entitlement of eligible students to receive free meals.

3.4 Financial Reconciliation

The college will report the appropriate Learner Support Reason codes in the 'Learner Funding and Monitoring' fields in the ILR as required and as a minimum for the R04, R06, and R14 collections.

Any bursary underspend from the 2024 to 2025 academic year can be carried forward into the 2025 to 2026 academic year and added to that year's discretionary bursary allocation. Any funds carried forward must be spent before using allocated discretionary funds for the 2025 to 2026 academic year.

3.5 Audit Requirements

The college will maintain accurate and up-to-date records that:

- Evidence which students are eligible for which elements of the funds, including:
 - A completed application form.
 - Evidence of financial situation and/or other eligibility criteria.
- Evidence of how much each eligible student receives, any items purchased, and any payments made.
- Demonstrate appropriate use of funds.

3.6 Roles and Responsibilities

Task	Responsible Party
Reviewing evidence and attaching it to the application form	Funding Team or wider college staff during peak periods
Measuring walking distance from college and checking application details (e.g. permissions to share information, setting up LA information)	Funding Team or wider college staff during peak periods
Calculating annual income and allocating awards (e.g. York College Bus Pass or weekly BACS payments)	Funding Team
Declining applications due to not meeting policy criteria	Funding Team
Approving applications under exceptional circumstances	Funding Team and Student Experience Manager
Creating weekly payment document	Funding Team
Approving weekly payments from Bursary Support Funds	Director of Student and Apprentice Services

Approving same day payments from Bursary Support Funds	Student Experience Manager
Processing all payments through the Finance Manager System	Finance Team, including Finance Manager
Approving internal transfers to and from the Bursary Support Funds	Student Experience Manager
Handling informal complaints	Funding Team
Managing appeals and formal complaints	Student Experience Manager Director of Student and Apprentice Services
Budget management	Student Experience Manager Director of Student and Apprentice Services
Reporting to Senior Leadership Team and Board of Governors	Student Experience Manager Director of Student and Apprentice Services

4 Eligibility

4.1 General Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to receive a bursary, students must:

- Be aged 16, 17 or 18 on 31st August 2025 **or**
- Be aged 19-25 with an Education and Healthcare Plan (EHCP) **or**
- Be aged 19 and continuing a programme or learning that they started before they turned 19 **and**
- Satisfy the residency criteria in the document Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Funding guidance for young people 2025 to 2026 **and**
- Be participating in provision that is subject to inspection by a public body that assures quality, e.g. Ofsted. That provision must also be:
 - Funded directly by ESFA or by ESFA via a local authority **or**
- Otherwise publicly funded and lead to a qualification (up to and including level 3) accredited by Ofqual Require financial support to remove a barrier to their continuing participation in education.

In addition, to be eligible to receive further education free meals and the enhanced bursary, students must meet the additional criteria set out by the ESFA.

Bursaries will not be paid to young people who are:

- On Higher Education (HE) courses
- On waged Apprenticeships.
- In prison or a young offender institution or who have been released on a temporary license, for example, day release.
- Under 16 where the cost of learning is being met by the local authority.

The criteria identified in this policy document are guidelines to the decision-making process. Every effort is made by York College to consider each application on its own merits. In extenuating circumstances, the College reserves the right to make awards to individual students who do not necessarily meet all the listed criteria.

4.2 Enhanced Bursary Students

The Government, through the ESFA, have identified the following groups as being eligible to receive an enhanced bursary of up to £1,200 for the 2025-26 academic year. Students must be aged 16 – 18 years old on the 31st August 2025 to be eligible and meet one of the following criteria:

The defined vulnerable groups are students who are:

- in care
- care leavers
- receiving Income Support (IS), or Universal Credit (UC) because they are financially supporting themselves or financially supporting themselves and someone who is dependent on them and living with them, such as a child or partner
- receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in their own right as well as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or UC in their own right

and can provide appropriate evidence:

- letter or on-line statement from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) stating which benefit(s) they receive,
- OR written confirmation of their current or previous looked-after status from their local authority or key worker

Students who are 19-year-old continuers and students who are 19 to 25 with an EHCP will be assessed for a discretionary bursary and free meals only.

4.3 Further Education Free Meals

You may be entitled to apply for free school meals for your children if you receive one of the following income-related benefits:

- Income Support
- Income-Based Job Seekers' Allowance
- Income-Related Employment & Support Allowance
- Child Tax Credit combined with both a household income below £16,190 per annum and not in receipt of any Working Tax Credit
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Guarantee Element of state Pension Credit
- Universal Credit with annual household earnings of less than £7,400

You may also qualify if:

- Your employment has stopped for a temporary 4-week 'run on' period.

Free meals have been allocated through the Further Education Free Meals scheme at a rate of £2.58; however, the college will use its 16-19 Bursary allocation to increase the value of free meals to a rate of £4 per timetabled day in college, on work placement or on other essential course-related activity. This amount is based on the price of a meal deal provided by the college catering service.

4.4 Household Income

Students will normally only be eligible for a discretionary award if their earned household income from employment, self-employment or pension is below £35,000 (gross or before deductions income). However, students in receipt of, or dependent on somebody in receipt of, income-based benefits¹ will also be awarded funding, where they meet the income criteria. Students will normally be assessed on the income of those they live with. This is in line with Universal Credit and benefit assessments and therefore, households will be assessed as follows:

- Students who live with both biological or adoptive parents will be assessed on the income of both parents combined.
- Students who live with a lone parent will be assessed on the income of that parent.
- Students who live with a biological/adoptive parent and a stepparent or parent's partner will be assessed on the income of both.
- Students who live with somebody else, where that person claims Child Benefit in respect of the student, will be assessed on the income of the adult(s) named on the Child Benefit award (evidence of this will be required).
- Where a student lives by themselves, they may or may not be considered independent based on the following criteria:
 - If a student's living costs are being paid by a parent, then the student is considered dependent on that parent and will be assessed as outlined above.
 - If a student meets their living costs in full through work and/or benefits, then as long as nobody is claiming Child Benefit in respect of the student, the student will be assessed as independent, and no other income will be considered.
 - Students who live with a partner (who do not have a child), will be assessed on their income combined with that of their partner, unless they also live with their parents in which case, they will be assessed as outlined above.
- Students who live with a partner and a child will be assessed as a parent and therefore will be assessed on their income combined with that of their partner.
- Where a student lives with somebody other than the situations outlined above, their circumstances will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Where a student (or their family) meets the income threshold, but has savings of £16,000 or more, it is unlikely that they will be able to demonstrate that they are facing financial barriers to participation and need help to stay in education and would therefore not normally be eligible for a bursary. This is in line with benefit assessments, where claimants are not eligible for most income-related benefits if they have savings of more than £16,000.

4.5 Required Evidence

To receive a bursary, students will need to provide appropriate evidence of their eligibility, as follows:

4.5.1 Discretionary Bursary

<u>Eligibility Criteria</u>	<u>Evidence Required</u>
Income Support	Most recent benefits letter

¹ For the purpose of this assessment, income-based benefits includes Child or Working Tax Credits, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Income-Based Job Seekers Allowance, Income-Based Employment and Support Allowance, Pension Credit Guarantee Credit and Universal Credit. It does not include Council Tax reduction schemes.

Employment & Support Allowance	Most recent benefits letter
Universal Credit	Full, most recent Universal Credit statement ensuring we can see the claimants name and the dates at the top of the statement and covering all the way down to 'total payment for this month', including details of entitlements and deductions (if any). and If your statement shows earned income of any kind, we will also require wage slips or the most recent self-assessment tax return
Other income-based benefits	Tax Credit Award Notice covering the current financial year or recent benefit letter
Household income	Tax Credit Award Notice covering the current financial year, P60 covering the previous financial year, most recent wage slip or self-assessment tax return
Savings limit	Bank statements may be required to show that savings are below £16,000

4.5.2 Enhanced Bursary

In addition to the evidence above, we require the following:

<u>Eligibility Criteria</u>	<u>Evidence Required</u>
In care or care leaver	Letter from the Local Authority or Social Worker
Universal Credit (financially independent)	Full, most recent Universal Credit statement ensuring we can see the claimants name and the dates at the top of the statement and covering all the way down to 'total payment for this month', including details of entitlements and deductions (if any). and We also require additional evidence to confirm the student's independent status, for example – a tenancy agreement in the student's name, proof of housing benefit or in some circumstances a letter from a Support Worker or Social Worker can be accepted.
Universal Credit (Disability Benefits)	Full, most recent Universal Credit statement ensuring we can see the claimants name and the dates at the top of the statement and covering all the way down to 'total payment for this month', including details of entitlements and deductions (if any). and Evidence of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in the student's name.

Special arrangements will be made for students who cannot provide additional documentation to confirm their independent status because the documentation does not exist. For example, if a student is homeless or sofa-surfing, a victim of domestic abuse or in an informal living arrangement without a tenancy agreement. These declarations will be supported by our Safeguarding team.

4.5.3 Further Education Free Meals

<u>Eligibility Criteria</u>	<u>Evidence Required</u>
Universal Credit	<p>Full, most recent Universal Credit statement ensuring we can see the claimants name and the dates at the top of the statement and covering all the way down to ‘total payment for this month’, including details of entitlements and deductions (if any). This must show earnings not exceeding £7,400 annually.</p> <p>A further two statements can be requested if another calculation may show that the student would be eligible.</p> <p>If the claimant(s) are self-employed, we will also require a copy of the most recent self-assessment tax return.</p>
Tax Credits	Tax Credit Award Notice covering the current financial year. This must show earnings not exceeding £16,190 and that the claimant is not receiving Working Tax Credits.
Income Support	Most recent benefits letter
Income-related Employment & Support Allowance	Most recent benefits letter
Pension Credit Guarantee Credit	Most recent benefits letter
Income-based Job Seekers Allowance	Most recent benefits letter
Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999	Immigration documentation

4.7 Other College Priorities

The college may use its discretion to make awards in ways that best fit the needs and circumstances of its students. Awards for financial assistance will be prioritised and administered by the college in accordance with best practice as defined by the ESFA and other relevant organisations such as The Association of Colleges (AOC), National Association of Managers of Student Services (NAMSS) and National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA).

The ESFA and college funding priorities are students who:

- Are economically or socially disadvantaged **and**
- Need support with transport, free meals or associated learning costs in order to engage in learning **and**
- Are facing financial difficulty.

Further to this, additional funding priorities are:

- Young parents.
- Young carers.

- Young people who are estranged from their parents (or who have no parents) and who have chosen to work rather than claim benefits (this does not include students who have chosen to live away from their family home for educational purposes).
- Young people who are homeless or are facing homelessness.
- Young people experiencing domestic abuse or otherwise at risk of domestic abuse.
- Young people from households experiencing significant levels of debt, including but not limited to the benefit cap, bankruptcy, IVA (Individual Voluntary Arrangement) or other debt management plan, or repossession or other eviction from their family home.
- Other young people facing significant barriers to continuing in education, including young people at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training).
- Young people where a safeguarding issue has been identified that may result in a significant financial impact or there is a risk of harm.
- Young people from military service families

Awards may be made to students in priority groups where their household income is outside the limits set in section 5.5.

5 Off-Site Provision

Where the College is the education provider for a student but the student attends at a place other than the main York College site, the student will be assessed using the same eligibility criteria stated in Section 5 and their funding will be calculated and provided, as far as possible, in line with the details given in Section 7.

The provision of free school meals will normally be paid as a weekly BACs payment to the student, using the same daily amount as stated in Section 5.3. This is necessary as students who do not attend the main York College site cannot be provided with free meal credit in the same way.

6 Types of Assistance Available

6.1 Further Education Free Meals

Students who fall into one of the specified groups listed in Section 5.3 will be eligible to receive a free meal each day they are timetabled to be in college, on a work placement or attending any other essential course-related activity on or off-site.

Free meals will allow eligible students to access a balanced meal whilst at college. Students on work placement, on essential trips or studying from home will be provided with weekly BACS payments equivalent to the value of the meals they would have received were they physically attending college.

Students will not normally be eligible for both free meals and discretionary meal credit, though additional credit may be allocated to students in certain situations, e.g. providing breakfast or an evening meal for a homeless student.

6.2 Discretionary Meals

Students who are eligible for an Enhanced Bursary, but not free meals, will normally have part of their award paid as meal credit to be used in the college food outlets or as BACS payments as appropriate. Meals will be allocated based on individual timetables and on a daily basis.

Additionally, discretionary meals will usually be awarded to students in the following categories, where they do not meet the income criteria for free meals:

- Young parents.
- Young carers.
- Young people who are estranged from their parents (or who have no parents) and who have chosen to work rather than claim benefits.
- Young people who are homeless or facing homelessness.
- Young people from households experiencing significant levels of debt, including but not limited to the benefits cap, bankruptcy, IVA (Individual Voluntary Arrangement) or other debt plan or repossession or other eviction from their family home.
- Young people with refugee status.
- Young people from military service families

There is no entitlement to discretionary meals for other students while they are in college; however, the Bursary can provide discretionary meals for students in exceptional financial hardship.

Discretionary meals may be awarded for a fixed period, for example, to help a student get their attendance back on track where finance has been identified as an issue; or for the full year, for example where a member of staff identifies that a student (or their family) has severe financial difficulties and may have limited access to food at home. Most students will require an interview with a member of the Funding Team, a Wellbeing Adviser, Progress Coach or the Safeguarding Coordinator/Manager before discretionary meals will be awarded.

6.3 Travel Assistance

The Bursary cannot replace a Local Authority's statutory duty to provide travel support or the student's responsibility to apply to the Local Authority. If a student receives funding from their Local Authority that provides free travel costs, they will not be eligible for further travel support from a bursary. If a student receives travel funding from their Local Authority and is required to contribute to their travel costs, they can apply to the Bursary for assistance with this contribution.

Travel assistance is available for students who:

- Live more than 2.5 miles from college as measured by the shortest, safest, walking route.

Special consideration will be given to:

- Students who live less than 2.5 miles from college and who have additional travel or mobility needs due to a disability or learning difficulty.
- Students who live less than 2.5 miles from college and have caring responsibilities which mean they need to be able to get home quickly.
- Students who hold a disabled person's pass and are required to attend college before the pass is valid, i.e. where a pass cannot be used until 9am but a student's lessons start before they would be able to reach college using the pass.

Travel awards will be calculated using the cost of the method of travel, the length of the course and the student's timetable. Students will be assessed for the cheapest method of transport from their home address. Where a student elects to use an alternative transport method, travel funding will be capped based on the lower amount.

Students who travel by train will be expected to use a Young Person's Railcard and/or relevant savings cards e.g. Plusbus, to reduce their costs where appropriate. Students will also be assessed for the cost of a Young Person's Railcard as this will reduce the cost of travel significantly and normally works out as better value.

Students who travel by car will be assessed for funding based on the shortest driving distance and will be funded at HMRC's current travel expense rate (0.45p per mile as of December 2024)

All travel is capped at a maximum amount of £10 per student, per timetabled day.

6.4 Materials, Equipment & Uniform/Clothing

Assistance with 100% of the cost of equipment, materials or protective clothing will be considered where items are deemed necessary by the Curriculum and Standards Manager and/or by Health & Safety regulations.

6.5 Essential Course Trips

An educational trip or visit will only be considered essential where the trip itself entails activities that if the student does not take part in those activities on that date, they will automatically fail the course.

6.6 Higher Education Costs

Travel to and from university open days and interviews will be considered for those students applying for Higher Education courses for the following academic year. Accommodation costs will be considered where it is not possible to travel to an interview and back on the same day due to public transport restrictions.

Students following non-Performing Arts courses are able to claim up to £150 towards travel costs to enable them to attend up to 3 open days and interviews during the UCAS application process. Performing Arts students are able to claim up to £250 towards travel costs and audition charges. It is common practice for Performing Arts Colleges to charge up to £50 per audition and the higher award level ensures these students are not disadvantaged.

Students can apply for travel costs for up to three visits to different institutions within the UK and for one visit per institution. Repeat visits to the same institution will not normally be considered unless the student is recalled for a second audition or is being interviewed for two different courses at one institution and they cannot be scheduled for the same day.

Students who travel by car will be assessed at HMRC's current travel expense rate (0.45p per mile as of December 2024) following the shortest route from their home address to that of the University they are visiting.

To be assessed for these costs, students must provide evidence of the open day or interview from the College or University. If the student has travelled by train, we will need evidence of the cost of the journey in the form of a receipt. Only the cost of the student's travel will be covered. The cost of travel for a parent/carer will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. This evidential requirement also applies to any accommodation costs.

Students are also able to claim for the cost of their UCAS fee. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the Funding Team to notify them that they require this cost.

6.7 Laptop Loan Scheme

In exceptional circumstances, students may be loaned a laptop to enable them to complete work at home. There are a limited number of laptops available, therefore eligibility is assessed on whether a student currently has access to a PC or laptop at home and is dependent on the student declaring their interest in being assessed to receive one on their application. Laptops will be allocated at a set point in the academic year, once a majority of our Bursary applications have been assessed to ensure as many students as possible have the opportunity to ask to be considered.

Allocation of laptops is prioritised based on a number of factors, such as course type and attendance levels. The allocation of laptops is strictly at the discretion of the College.

6.8 Supporting Industry Placements

Students attending industry placements may find themselves facing financial difficulties due to incurring extra participation costs, for example, because they need to pay for additional travel to their placement.

Students attending mandatory placements can be assessed for assistance towards this additional travel cost, regardless of whether they meet the criteria for travel to and from college. The placement must be 2.5 miles or more from the student's home address and confirmation will be required from the Placements Team. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the Funding Team if they wish to be considered for this support.

6.9 Childcare

The Care to Learn (C2L) scheme offers financial assistance to young parents under 20 to help cover childcare costs, enabling them to continue their education after their child's birth. C2L provides up to £180 per child per week. This funding can be used for childcare during study periods, work placements, and industry placements that are integral to the study programme.

To be eligible, the young parent must be the main carer (in receipt of Child Benefit) and use an Ofsted-registered childcare provider. Applications must be submitted for each academic year, even if the study programme spans multiple years.

7 Payment

7.1 Methods of Payment

Wherever possible, Bursary funds will be used to purchase the necessary bus pass/equipment and supply these to the student. Where this is not possible, or the student has already purchased the required items, funding is provided by BACS transfer into the student's account. In exceptional circumstances, the student can nominate a named individual to receive a BACS transfer on their behalf.

Any award made to an accompanied asylum seeker will be paid in kind only and no cash payment will be made under any circumstance.

7.2 Conditions for Payment

Students must meet the conditions outlined in the Statement of Practice in Section 2 of this document to receive ongoing payments.

If a student leaves college, they will not be eligible for any further payments. Cash, meal credit and most advance travel payments will not normally be recovered. Kit, uniform and loan laptops will need to be returned. Where the Funding Team decides to request repayment of an award, this will be pursued through the Finance Department.

Students who choose not to repay, or do not reply to the correspondence, will not be funded in future years without agreement from the Student Experience Manager.

Students who are found to be passing bursary funding on to a third party will be deemed to have demonstrated insufficient financial need and will have their bursary funding withdrawn. This includes students who allow others to use their Student ID card for meals credit or lend others any college bus passes. Students who share or sell on any bus pass issued to them will be considered under the fraud clause below.

Students will be made aware that we are not able to provide back-payments for travel where we have not received the correct evidence to allow us to assess the application. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that they apply on time and provide the income evidence required for an assessment in a timely manner.

8 Appeals

Applicants will normally have the right of appeal. However, where a student's application is rejected because the college has allocated all available funds, an appeal will not be allowed.

Students who wish to appeal will need to write to the Director of Student and Apprentice Services within 10 working days of being notified of the decision, stating clearly the reasons for appeal and giving any additional information they think should be taken into consideration.

Appeals will be considered by the Director of Student and Apprentice Services who will not have been involved in the original decision. Notification of the outcome of the appeal will be within 10 working days of the appeal submission.

Students who disagree with the outcome of the appeal and believe that their application has not been assessed in accordance with the policy can then follow the College's Complaints procedure.

9 False or Fraudulent Applications

Where students are found to have intentionally given misleading or inaccurate information, the College will claim back the award made. Providing false statements may result in the student being sanctioned in accordance with the College Disciplinary Policy and/or prosecution.

In accordance with the College Fraud Policy, a record will be made of the fraudulent incidents, and subsequent actions taken. These incidents will be reported to the Strategic Leadership Team both as they occur and through an annual report.

If significant fraud is detected, it will be reported to the ESFA.

10 Reporting and Monitoring Mechanisms

To improve the clarity and impact of the Student Experience Report, the College will use a standardised reporting template for submissions to both the Quality and Curriculum Committee and the Board of Governors. This template will clearly outline the key performance indicators (KPIs) to be reported in each period, including financial performance, student engagement, and operational metrics

In addition to financial figures, the reports will include a broader range of data points that provide a more holistic view of the student experience. Key metrics such as student satisfaction levels, the number of rejected applications, applications on hold, and attempted fraud will be reported on a quarterly basis.