



# Free College Meal (FCM) Policy

Policy for the disbursement of Free College Meals 2017/2018

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## Contents

1. Overview.....	2
2. The Isle of Wight College commitment .....	2
3. Eligibility assessment criteria for Free College Meals (FCM) .....	2
4. Application process .....	4
5. Procedures.....	4
6. Entitlement.....	5
7. Administration process .....	5
8. College Meal Voucher Guidance and Rules.....	5
9. Work placement and franchise learners.....	6
10. Appeals process and complaints .....	7

## 1. Overview

- 1.1. Further Education and independent learner providers are required by law to provide Free College Meals (FCM) to qualifying disadvantaged 16 – 24 year olds. The Isle of Wight College has developed a procedure and application process in order to provide all eligible learners with FCM and an administration process to track and monitor those in receipt of FCM.

## 2. The Isle of Wight College commitment

- 2.1. The Isle of Wight College has devised a procedure and application process that is clear and informative to learners enabling an easy application for FCM.
- 2.2. The Isle of Wight College raises awareness of FCM by publishing a statement on the College website, and provide information regarding FCM in the start letter sent to all learners before their first term starts. Information is also included in the College Student Handbook.
- 2.3. A set of rules have been produced providing clear instructions on how to use the vouchers, please see section 8 below: 'College Meal Voucher Guidance and Rules'.
- 2.4. The College works closely with providers (including franchise providers) to ensure eligible learners can access FCM.

## 3. Eligibility assessment criteria for Free College Meals (FCM)

- 3.1. Learners must be age of 16-24 years old on the 31st August 2017, must satisfy the residency criteria as set out by the EFA, and must be on an eligible course e.g. Apprenticeships cannot access FCM.
- 3.2. A learner's household or a learner who is in receipt of benefits in their own right (i.e. they get benefit payments direct, instead of through a parent or carer) must be in receipt of one of the following:
  - Income support
  - Income-based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)
  - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
  - During the initial roll out of the benefit, Universal Credit (UC)
  - The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
  - Child Tax Credit (provided that you 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)
  - Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
  - Working Tax Credit run-on – paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit

Working Tax Credit is not a qualifying benefit for free meals, and a parent or learner in receipt of Working Tax Credits only (or contribution-based Job Seekers Allowance or Employment and Support Allowance) is not entitled to FCM. However, the learner's household or learner is in receipt of Working Tax Credit but is additionally in receipt of one of the entitling benefits listed in the eligibility section, for example income support, they would then be entitled to FCM. In other words, receipt of one of the qualifying benefits listed in the eligibility section essentially over-rides any additional benefits they may be in receipt of.

For further information about eligibility for FCM please see: [16 to 18 education: free meals for academic year 2017 to 2018](#)

- 3.3. In addition to the above benefits criteria students age 19+ must also meet one of the following:
  - Have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP)
  - Be a 19+ Continuer - on the second year of a course started when age 16-18
- 3.4. Students who have a 16-18 Vulnerable Bursary and who are not already eligible for FCM can opt to have these from their bursary.
- 3.5. Under exceptional circumstances learners may be given Free College Meal vouchers after a discussion with one of the Student Progress Advisors or the Student Support Officer. This may be for learners who are not eligible for Free College Meals in the usual way. This will apply in exceptional circumstances only and will be funded by Discretionary Learner Support Funding.

## 4. Application process

- 4.1. Application forms for FCM are part of the 16-24 Bursary application which are available to download from the [College website](#) or to collect from the Student Services.
- 4.2. Learners are required to complete the form and provide all the evidence requested demonstrating eligibility for FCM. Copies of evidence are retained for future reference and audit purposes.
- 4.3. Completed bursary application forms should be submitted to Student Services where eligibility will be checked and confirmed by the team.
- 4.4. Upon confirmation of eligibility learners will be issued with FCM vouchers. These will be issued immediately once all correct evidence has been verified and copied and the students have been enrolled on their course.
- 4.5. Upon receipt of the FCM vouchers, learners must sign a usage declaration form to demonstrate that they have read and understood the guidance and rules of usage.
- 4.6. Occasionally it will be deemed appropriate for vouchers to be issued to the curriculum manager or learning support in department to distribute to learners. (Student Services will work very closely with the Pathways department to ensure learners who are entitled to FCM receive their vouchers). For example, if learners are not able to come to the Student Services Office and sign for the vouchers themselves, alternative appropriate arrangements will be made.

## 5. Procedures

- 5.1. Learners will receive individual, named vouchers which will be linked to a tracking system.
- 5.2. Vouchers will be issued in the form of named booklets; these booklets will contain the number of vouchers required for the duration of the half term.
- 5.3. Vouchers are issued at the start of each half term.
- 5.4. Learners are required to sign a declaration form confirming their agreement to abide by the rules and guidance for FCM. Learners will be given a copy of the rules and guidance and these are also printed on the front page of the booklets of vouchers.

- 5.5. Learners at UKSA and Platform One do not need to use their vouchers when at these venues but will need to show their ID card. Student Services will let Aaron Wight at UKSA and Dave Pontin at Platform One know who the FCM students are so that they can access FCM.
- 5.6. Anyone eligible for FCM identified through evidence submitted with their bursaries will automatically be given FCM vouchers unless they choose to opt out by letting Student Services know that they do not want FCM.

## 6. Entitlement

- 6.1. Learners are entitled to a FCM, every day for their timetabled days of study. Learners will receive a FCM everyday regardless of the time of study i.e. whereby a class finishes at 11:30am the learner will still receive FCM for that day.
- 6.2. The value of a FCM per day is up to the value of £2.41 at the main College site and CECAMM building and up to £3 at UKSA and Platform One.
- 6.3. Learners in receipt of FCM are entitled to a hot, healthy meal.
- 6.4. Learners are entitled to a FCM when they attend work placement or work experience, please refer to section 9.

## 7. Administration process

- 7.1. The College will track and record all FCM recipients and hold on file, the evidence obtained confirming eligibility.
- 7.2. Student Services will work closely with the Caterlink Manager/Area Manager and CECAMM Chef/Manager ensuring the vouchers are being used correctly, and will meet regularly to confirm the total expenditure for FCM. This will be recorded on a spreadsheet and the Caterlink Manager will pass on agreed totals to their Head Office, who will in turn invoice the College finance department. CECAMM invoice totals will be refunded through internal transfer.
- 7.3. Student Services will regularly meet with the Caterlink Manager and CECAMM Chef/Manager to keep up to date with FCM offers and advertise these to learners.
- 7.4. UKSA and the Double Decker Dinner at Platform One will regularly send through how much each student has spent on FCM.

## 8. College Meal Voucher Guidance and Rules

8.1. Learners will sign a declaration when they receive their FCM vouchers and confirm they understand and will adhere to the following guidance. A copy will be given to the learners.

8.2. (As written on the declaration form)

- *The vouchers issued are only valid for your use and cannot be used by anyone other than yourself*
- *You must not sell or give away your lunch vouchers.*
- *You must show your student identity card alongside the voucher when purchasing food or drink*
- *You can only use the meal vouchers on days that you are timetabled to attend College – only one voucher can be used per day unless agreed with Student Services under exceptional circumstances.*
- *Each Voucher has the equivalent value of £2.41*
- *Voucher books are issued from the Student Services Office at the beginning of each half term, you will need to come into Student Services to collect these on your first day of each half term.*
- *These vouchers allow you to access **Hot and Healthy Food** whilst at College (including CECAMM), so please select these options.*
- *Vouchers can be used in the refectory or if closed at Starbucks at the College and **MUST** be handed to the staff at the till when purchasing food and drink*
- *If you lose your vouchers please come to the Student Services Office.*
- *You **MUST** inform Student Services if your timetable changes so that we can ensure you have sufficient meal vouchers to cover your days at college. (Please note that we will need to confirm timetable changes with your course tutor prior to issuing any additional meal vouchers)*
- *If you leave or finish your course, you must return your unused vouchers to Student Services.*
- *If you are required to undertake work placements away from the College as part of your course, please advise Student Services as soon as this is arranged, so that arrangements can be put in place for lunch.*
- *Please be aware that checks will be made, to monitor how you are using your vouchers.*

## 9. Work placement and franchise learners

9.1. Learners that are entitled to FCM are entitled to these on their placement days and when they attend work experience outside College. Learners will be awarded cash in arrears to the value £2.41 per day they attended. Tutors will confirm work placement timetables and attendance and no cash will be issued until the tutor has confirmed attendance at the placement.

- 9.2. The College will closely monitor and review the use of cash to fund FCM in work placement, this policy and procedure may be subject to further amendment depending upon the outcome of these activities.
- 9.3. If a learner attends work experience outside their normal timetabled days at the College extra FCM vouchers will be issued to cover the extra days required. Learners must notify Student Services of extra days required at College so that these vouchers can be issued.
- 9.4. Learners studying at UKSA may use their FCM allowance in their restaurant and those at Platform One use the food van on site; the value of these will be up to £3.00 as the UKSA restaurant and the food van at Platform One are not able to provide a FCM offer for £2.41. It has been agreed that the bursary will top up the £2.41 FCM allowance by up to 59p daily as required.

## 10. Appeals process and complaints

- 10.1. Learners can appeal against a decision of an initial assessment regarding FCM. Any concerns regarding the administration, management or disbursement of FCM should be submitted through the College complaints procedure.