



From the start of the 2026/27 academic year, all students from households in receipt of Universal Credit will be entitled to receive a free meal. Any transitional protection for free meals ends at the end of the 2025/26 academic year. Therefore, to receive a free meal from the start of September, all students must meet the eligibility criteria even if they have previously received a free meal either at school or at college.

Students may apply for a Free College Meal by ticking the relevant box on the online application via this link <https://sjdc.paymystudent.com/portal/> to confirm they or their family is in receipt of Universal Credit and therefore meet the eligibility criteria.

The rules for eligibility for a Free College Meal have been set out by the Government and are different from those for the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary. It is likely that if you are eligible for Free College Meals you will also be eligible for a 16-19 Discretionary Bursary. Eligibility for the Bursary will be assessed separately from that for Free College Meals. Eligibility for a Discretionary Bursary is dependent on your parents' or carers' total household taxable income. Eligibility for Free College Meals will be assessed based on you or your parent/s or carer/s providing evidence of receipt of Universal Credit.

The same online application is used to apply for Free College Meals and the 16 – 19 Bursary.

The value of a Free College Meal for 2026/2027 will be £4.00 per day and a meal deal is available from the cafeteria for this price. You may also receive this allowance if you are off site, attending a work placement or on work experience.

How do I apply ?

You should complete the online application that is used for both the 16-19 Discretionary Bursary and Free College Meals using the same link <https://sjdc.paymystudent.com/portal/> or through the College website. If you have any difficulties with the application, please contact Liz Woods on 01606 664917 who can help.

How will the system be administered?

We currently use a token system, so if you qualify for Free College Meals you will be given tokens with a value of £4.00. (Similar tokens are used throughout the College for student rewards and college visitors). You can use these in the cafeteria to pay for a meal deal at this price (published at £4.10) or up to the value of £4.00 if you can buy other food not included in the meal deal. If you wish to buy a meal that exceeds the £4.00 value of the token, you can pay the difference with cash/card.

Further information can be obtained by emailing bursary@sjbf.org.uk or by contacting Liz Woods or any member of the Finance Department. Details can also be found on the College website <https://www.sjd.ac.uk/student-support/financial-support/>