

2017/2018 ADVANCED LEARNER LOAN BURSARY FUND POLICY & GUIDANCE

Policy Statement

The Loans Bursary Fund is aimed at helping vulnerable learners who have been approved for an Advanced Learner Loan. The fund will be distributed in a consistent and equitable way and in accordance with guidance issued by the Skills Funding Agency.

The funds can be used by the College to provide:

Additional Learning Support (ALS) – support to access and participate in learning.

Discretionary Learner Support (DLS) – financial support for learners who are facing financial hardship.

Each application is individually assessed and **all assistance is subject to the availability of funds**. Learners who are eligible for support are not automatically entitled to it. If demand exceeds the available funds, reduced awards may be given and when the fund is fully committed, no further awards will be made.

Eligibility

To be eligible for support you must have been approved for an Advanced Learner Loan, however, priority will be given to

- Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
- Parents who need help with childcare
- Ex-military personnel
- Young Adult Carers

The following groups are **not** eligible for DLS

- Waged apprentices
- Learners on HE courses
- Learners in prison or released on temporary license

Levels of Support

Additional Learning Support Bursary Funds

These funds are non means tested to support learners with additional needs to access and participate in their learning. Support can include:

- The provision of in-class support
- 1:1 or group support
- Special exam arrangements
- Loan of equipment or resources
- Any other necessary adjustments under the Equality Act

How to Apply for ALS

To access Additional Learning Support you must contact Janet Maynard, Head of Extended Learning to discuss your needs and arrange an assessment interview. The Extended Learning Team can be contacted on 01245 265611 ext 3011.

Discretionary Learner Support Funds

Learners must be able to demonstrate a genuine financial hardship which is causing a barrier to learning (taxable household income must not exceed £21,000).

Support is very limited and cannot cover all costs associated with all Study Programmes. It is always advisable to consider the availability of other strands of financial support and enquire, for example, about what financial assistance is available through the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) as DLS must not be used where other sources of funding are available. Please speak with a DWP Advisor as soon as possible as early applications are essential to allow processing time before your enrolment.

Applications are assessed against household income. Means testing will be rigorous but not excessive and supporting evidence of personal circumstances and/or relevant benefit evidence will be required. Other sources of financial support will be taken into consideration when processing applications.

Funds will generally be paid to a third party, not directly to the learner.

Awards can be made within the following categories:

Travel: Bus/Rail passes only

The Bursary Fund may be able to help towards your travel costs to and from college. Full cost can be paid for the autumn term only. Further support will be subject to the availability of funds. Please refer to the College Travel Scheme for cost information.

Food Allowance: £3.50 per timetabled day

An allowance of up to £3.50 per timetabled day can be made towards food costs whilst in college. Regular payments will be made directly onto college cards to be spent in the college refectories. Where there is no access to the college refectories luncheon vouchers can be provided.

Discretionary One-Off Payments

In exceptional circumstances discretionary payments can be considered for costs which have been identified as a barrier to participating in learning.

Financial Hardship

Applications can be made where household income exceeds the guidelines and evidence of financial hardship can be demonstrated eg. redundancy, bereavement, debt management. Supporting evidence will be necessary to fully assess your application and determine level of support available.

Childcare

Financial assistance will be towards College term time care costs only (up to 36 weeks). It is the learner's responsibility to find a term time only carer or be responsible for covering any additional costs. Adjustments can be made where a learning provision falls outside college term time.

Conditions:

- An application form must be completed in advance.
- Childcare providers must be registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register and/or the compulsory part of the Ofsted General Childcare Register. Where a childcare provider is related to the child, for example a grandmother or aunt, that childcare provider must also prove they are providing registered childcare services for children they are not related to.
- The childcare provider must complete the Childcare Provider section of the application form.
- Childcare will be for timetabled days only and paid at **80%** of the total term time cost minus any available Government funding with a ceiling of £7,500 per learner.
- Learners supported with childcare costs are expected to pay for all ancillary charges eg. meals, nappies, trips etc.
- Childcare costs will not be paid if the learner is absent from college without good reason and has not followed reporting absence procedures – in such cases the learner will be expected to pay 100% of the cost of childcare for the duration of the absence.
- Learners must achieve a satisfactory attendance of 90% and above and meet college expectations of coursework and behaviour or payments will be withheld.
- It is expected that holidays will not be taken during term time but should this occur, childcare costs for the period of absence will not be paid.
- A cheque made payable to the carer must be collected and signed for by the learner.
- Up to date benefit evidence must be provided termly for the assistance to continue to the end of the academic year.

How to Apply for DLS

To apply for support from the Discretionary Support element of the funds you must complete an Advanced Learner Loan Discretionary Support Bursary Application Form, ensuring that you **enclose a copy of your evidence**. All applications are assessed on receipt of a correctly completed application form, within the priority groups. As funds are limited an early application is advisable.

Following assessment and if your application is successful you will be contacted by the Financial Support Co-ordinator. **Please do not assume childcare or other costs will be paid until you receive a confirmation letter.**

Application and Assessment Process

All applications to the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund will be assessed, within the priority groups, by a Panel comprising The Director of Curriculum, Head of Extended Learning and the Student Support Team Leader.

Applications must be received by 18th August 2017. Applications received after this date will not receive priority assessment. Later applications will be accepted and assessed in order of receipt.

Applications will normally be processed within 2 weeks of the closing date and you will be contacted by the Student Support Team with the outcome of your application.

If all funds have been allocated your details will be recorded on a waiting list. You will receive written confirmation of this and contacted as soon as funds become available.

Chelmsford College cannot take responsibility for any correspondence lost or mislaid in the post.

Additional Information

Bursary Award Conditions

In order to receive bursary awards learners are expected to achieve a satisfactory attendance of 90% and above across their study programme and meet college expectations of coursework and behaviour. If attendance does not meet college requirements payments may be withheld, subject to a progress review with learner's Academic Tutor. Personal circumstances will be taken into consideration when determining if payments are to be re-instated.

Part-time/Short Programmes

Where learners are studying on part-time or short study programmes financial assistance will be pro-rated and adjusted accordingly.

Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances discretionary payments can be considered for costs which have been identified as a barrier to participating in learning. Applications for discretionary payments will be referred to The Student Support Team Leader for assessment. Where there are exceptional circumstances, reasonable adjustments to the policy can be made.

Changes of Circumstances

Learners will be required to disclose any change of circumstances during the year which may affect their eligibility. If a learner leaves before the completion of their Study Programme they may be asked to repay their award or return any equipment.

Appeals

If you don't agree with a decision and wish to appeal please put it in writing to The Director of Learner Development and Inclusion within 7 days of receiving your letter. Appeals will be resolved within 21 working days.

Please Note:

The information provided is correct at time of publication but may be subject to change in line with Government guidelines.

This document can also be found on the Chelmsford College Website www.chelmsford.ac.uk and may be converted to other formats if appropriate (Braille, Large Print, Other Languages etc.).

This guidance applies to the academic year **2017/2018** and is reviewed annually.