

Student Services

Adult Support Fund Policy 2016/17

Introduction

1. This policy sets out the financial support available through, and eligibility for, discretionary learner support (DLS) for 19+ students attending all Bedford College campuses, including the Bedford campus, Shuttleworth College and the Bedford Sixth Form.
2. It does not apply to those students who are in receipt of and/or eligible to apply for the Advanced Learner Loan.
3. It is the policy of the College to optimise the use of discretionary adult learner support funding to support adult students who have a specific financial need which could prevent them participating in learning.
4. Bedford College brands 19+ DLS as the Adult Support Fund.

Context

5. Awards may be provided where a vulnerable or disadvantaged learner has demonstrated a financial barrier which impacts on their learning.
6. The Adult Support Fund is not open to HE students.

Levels of financial support

Cost Type/Household Income	< £16,190 (Band 1)	£16,191 to £26,000 (Band 2)
Residential bursary	£833/term	£664/term
19+ Tuition/ professional/ exam fees	50%	50%
Travel	50%	50%
Essential course costs	50%	50%
Discretionary hardship (stationery/materials)	Up to £100/term	£0

7. Students aged 19+ are normally assessed as independent students and household income is assessed on their own income, together with that of their spouse/partner if applicable. However, if a student has no income, household income will be based on the income of the person(s) on whom the student is dependent.

8. Means-testing will be rigorous but not excessive and evidence from other recent income assessment will be used wherever possible.

Eligibility

9. Applications will be judged in line with SFA funding guidance for 2016/2017.
10. The Bedford College Adult Support Fund is open to students aged 19 and over studying on SFA funded courses at Bedford College and its incorporated sites, The Bedford Sixth Form and Shuttleworth College, and who have a household income of less than £26,000. It is not open to students who are eligible to apply for the Advanced Learning Loan.
11. The College will take into account the following indicators of financial need:
 - Care leavers
 - Those in receipt of means-tested benefits that are not eligible for concession fees e.g. income support.
 - Those on probation or supervised by the Youth Offending Service
 - Those with learning difficulties or disabilities
 - Those who experience a sudden change in circumstances, such as redundancy.
12. Students that have been mandated to training (full- or part-time) by Jobcentre Plus will have their travel and childcare costs met by Jobcentre Plus where required.
13. The Chair of the Bursary Panel (Director of Student Services) will have the right to waive the College's criteria in cases of extreme hardship providing SFA requirements are met.
14. Students not eligible for the Adult Support Fund may be considered for support via external educational charities (where available and subject to conditions). International students are not eligible for any support funding.

Conditions

General conditions

15. Levels of support awarded are assessed against household income.
16. Payment will be to a maximum of 50% of costs.
17. Applications will be accepted from 1 June 2016 until 21 October 2016. Subject to availability of funds, applications will reopen in January 2017 for courses starting January onwards. The panel reserves the right to

extend closing dates.

18. The panel reserves the right to make awards outside of the criteria to students in income band 1 in cases of extreme or unique hardship which may otherwise result in a student withdrawing from their course.
19. Wherever possible, payments will be made direct to a supplier, including internal transfers.
20. We may suspend or reduce payments where a student's attendance is giving cause for concern, in consultation with the personal tutor. We expect students to attend all their classes, and if attendance drops below 95% payments may be affected.
21. Students may make more than one application to the fund in an academic year due to a change in their circumstances or for further support on a secondary course.
22. We reserve the right to request repayment of all or part of any payment received and/or return of equipment provided if a student withdraws from their course. Students may be asked to return books or equipment at the end of their course.

Fees

23. The guidance permits the use of DLS to support tuition fees for 19+ students who are not eligible for a concession fee and are not eligible for the Advanced Learner Loan.
24. The maximum tuition fee support will be 50% of fee costs. External and examinations fees and any professional membership fees/ accreditation will also be awarded to students up to 50%.
25. In order to manage the limited funds, support for tuition fees will be by exception. Priority groups will include LDD students and those in exceptional hardship who fall outside other sources of funding e.g. fee waivers and entitlement funding.
26. HE students who require support with the cost of course fees should apply to Student Finance England www.gov.uk/studentfinance.

Childcare

27. There will be no childcare support from the Adult Support Fund in 2016/17, other than for continuing students who received help in 2015/16.

Travel

28. Travel is paid only for students not in receipt of other subsidised travel and living over 3 miles from college, unless they require support with transport costs incurred as a result of a mobility difficulty. The

cheapest form of travel is paid.

29. For adult students travelling by car, the Google Maps distances and AA mileage rates apply. Parking is not funded.

Books/equipment/materials/trips

30. Payments for books, kit, materials/equipment and uniform which are deemed by the course manager as essential to the course are prioritised.
31. Counselling supervision is funded up to a maximum of £25 per month.
32. A book grant of £50 towards costs will be given to students at The Bedford Sixth Form applying for help with course costs.
33. Adult students may be identified as eligible for discretionary hardship in the form of a stationery and materials award (such as print credits) if they are assessed in the 'band 1' level of household income and in exceptional hardship. Stationery and materials awards will be made as a termly grant of up to £100 subject to availability of funds.
34. The College reserves the right to request the return of any equipment, for example where a student withdraws from the course. Such equipment would then be available for reissue. However, due consideration is given to hygiene, health and safety, and wear and tear.

Accommodation (Shuttleworth only)

35. Fees for halls of residence may be supported. Applications are means-tested on household income and prioritised by distance from the student's home and/or availability of transport to Shuttleworth College.

Payment

36. Wherever possible payment is made direct to the supplier or by internal transfer. Payments direct to students are by BACS and may be monthly, termly or one-off as appropriate. Students are required to have satisfactory attendance before payment is released.

Monitoring

37. Monitoring of the Adult Support Fund is the responsibility of the Director of Student Services with the Financial Controller. Expenditure is monitored monthly and reported to the Bursary Panel via panel meetings.
38. Take-up of the Adult Support Fund is monitored annually in relation to retention and reported in the self-assessment report.

39. Feedback from students on the impact of the fund on their learning is collected annually.

The Bursary Panel

40. The bursary panel comprises the Director of Student Services (chair), Financial Controller, Student Finance Manager, Student Wellbeing Manager and Student Support Advisers (Shuttleworth and BSF). A Student Finance Adviser provides administrative support to the panel.
41. The panel meets fortnightly during July, August and September, and thereafter as required, to approve Bursary payments. Panel dates are published in advance.
42. The panel has the right to vary the above criteria in exceptional circumstances, and chair's action is permitted in cases of urgent hardship. The panel reviews the criteria annually and makes recommendations for changes to the College Executive.
43. Appeals against decisions of the panel must be raised in writing to the Quality Manager within 10 days of the decision being notified. Appeals are acknowledged within 3 working days of receipt and resolved within 21 working days.

Lesley Ferguson
Director of Student Services