

Student Services

Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Policy 2016/17

Introduction

1. This policy sets out the financial support available through, and eligibility for, the advanced learner loans bursary funding for 19+ students who are in receipt of and/or eligible for the Advanced Learner Loan and attending all Bedford College campuses, including the Bedford campus, Shuttleworth College and the Bedford Sixth Form.
2. It is the policy of the College to optimise the use of advanced learner loans bursary funding to support adult students who have a specific financial need which could prevent them participating in learning.

Context

3. Awards may be provided where a vulnerable or disadvantaged learner who is funding their learning with a loan has demonstrated a financial barrier which impacts on their learning.
4. The Advanced Learner Loans Bursary may be used to fund hardship, childcare and residential support, but not tuition fees. Hardship support can include course related costs (such as books, equipment, trips), travel or support with domestic emergencies.
5. It can also fund learning support activity for 'in-learning' support for loans students, such as support for teaching assistants or reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.
6. No funding may be vired between the Adult Support Fund, the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary and the 16-18 Bursary.

Levels of financial support

Cost Type/ Household Income	< £16,190 (Band 1)	£16,191 to £30,000 (Band 2)
20+ Childcare	80% of costs	50% of costs
Essential course costs	90%	50%
Travel	90%	50%
Meals bursary	£2.50/day	£0
Discretionary hardship (stationery/materials)	Up to £100/term	£0

Residential bursary	£833/term	£664/term
Additional learning support	Cost	Cost

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 Advanced Learner Loans Bursary is open to students who have been approved for the Advanced Learner Loan and have a household income of less than £30,000. Students on courses which qualify for the Advanced Learner Loan but who choose not to apply for the loan are not eligible for the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary.
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. Students not eligible for the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary may be considered for support via external charities (where available and subject to conditions). International students are not eligible for any support funding.
14. The Chair of the Bursary Panel (Director of Student Services) will have the right to waive criteria in cases of extreme hardship.

Conditions

General conditions

15. Levels of support awarded are assessed against household income.
16. Payment will be to a maximum of 90% of costs, except for childcare where the maximum support will be 80%. Support for additional learning support will be at actual cost.
17. Applications will be accepted from 1 June 2016.
18. Students may apply to the loans bursary throughout the academic year, subject to availability of funds.
19. The panel will reserve the right to make awards outside of the criteria in cases of extreme or unique hardship which may otherwise result in a student withdrawing from their course.
20. Wherever possible, payments will be made direct to a supplier, including internal transfers.
21. 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.
22. 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.
23. 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

24. The Advanced Learner Loans Bursary cannot support tuition fee costs.

Childcare

25. Students aged 19 must apply to the Government's Care to Learn scheme for childcare support.
26. 20+ childcare funding may be used towards the cost of a registered childminder, nursery or pre/after-school club. Only childcare with a provider who is registered with Ofsted may be funded.
27. Applicants awarded childcare funding are contacted immediately prior to the start of term to verify that they still intend to start their course.

Enrolment checks will also be made before the first payment is sent.

28. The availability of free childcare and education for all 3 and 4 year olds (and some 2 year olds) is verified with each student, and also with their nursery. If they are eligible for 2, 3 and 4 year old funding, childcare is only supported where the student's timetable exceeds the number of funded sessions.
29. Childcare is funded at up to 80% of costs, to a maximum equivalent to that paid by Care to Learn.
30. Confirmation of support for childcare is subject to the student supplying a copy of their timetable and completing a childcare contract in Student Services. Support for childcare is given only for timetabled teaching hours.
31. Nursery deposits and childcare retainers payable during college holidays are not funded. This is communicated to students and childcare providers along with the initial award letter.

Travel

32. 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. Only the cheapest form of travel is paid.
33. For adult students travelling by car, the Google Maps distances and AA mileage rates apply. Parking is not funded.

Books/equipment/materials/trips

34. Payments for books, kit, materials/equipment and uniform which are deemed by the course manager as essential to the course are prioritised.
35. Counselling supervision is funded up to a maximum of £25 per month.
36. 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. Stationery and materials awards will be made as a termly grant of up to £100 subject to availability of funds.
37. 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)

38. Fees for halls of residence can 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

39. 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

40. Monitoring of the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary 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.
41. Take-up of the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary is monitored annually in relation to retention and reported in the self-assessment report.
42. Feedback from students on the impact of the fund on their learning is collected annually.

The Bursary Panel

6. 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.
7. The panel meets fortnightly during July, August and September, and thereafter as required, to approve Bursary payments. Panel dates are published in advance.
8. 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.
9. 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