

Discretionary Learner Support Fund Policy 2018 - 2019

Introduction

This policy outlines the guidelines for the management and allocation of the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary for the 2018/19 academic year.

These funds are provided to the College by Government and are aimed at supporting students who are experiencing financial difficulties with essential costs associated with their studies. This could include transport, books and equipment, UK compulsory trips (overseas compulsory trips considered on individual basis) and other course related costs.

Funds are limited and targeted at those most in need. Funds are allocated on a first come, first served basis. All requests for funding will be considered although it may not always be possible to help. If the funding is exhausted, the College reserves the right to close the fund. Throughout this form the word 'student' will be interchangeable with the word 'learner', both referring to the individual undertaking the programme of study.

Eligibility and Conditions

Eligibility: Learners are eligible to apply for funding if they meet the requirements as stated in the Funding Rules 2018/2019 issued by the Education & Skills Funding Agency.

Eligibility to funding does not give the individual the right to funding. Assistance awarded to a learner will always be conditional on behaviour, remaining on the course and maintaining a **minimum of 90% attendance**.

If the learner does not meet the conditions or withdraws from the course then they may be requested to return equipment and any cash awards they have received.

Awards will be made in accordance with the published guidance from the Education & Skills Funding Agency. While it is recognised that learners face financial pressures, funding is not a right and the College has a duty to make sure that funds are awarded fairly and to the learners most in need.

Additional Eligibility

This bursary fund can only be allocated to those eligible learners who have had a loan approved by the Student Loans Company and who have accepted the loan.

An award from the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary fund is not an entitlement.

Application Process

Applicants must complete the relevant application form for the fund they are applying to, and clearly identify the support that they feel they need to achieve their course of study.

Applicants must demonstrate their financial need by providing the income information and supporting evidence as detailed in the application forms. Each application for financial assistance will be considered by a College Fund Administrator and decisions will be made based on the information provided and the eligibility criteria for the different type of award. These are detailed in the sections below.

Please be aware that it is your responsibility to tell the Department for Work and Pensions about any discretionary learner support that you receive from the college, as discretionary learner support payments may affect your eligibility to some benefits.

Applications will be assessed on the assumption that you will be awarded and that you will accept the Advanced Learner Loan to cover your fees. Should it transpire that you are not eligible for the loan or if you do not accept the loan, you will be responsible for repaying any awards made by the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund.

Please let us know if you would prefer us not to assess your funding application until your loan has been awarded and you have accepted the loan.

For courses starting in September 2018, applications should be received by the Student Services office by 1st November 2018. Applications received after this date will be considered on a pro-rata basis subject to need and availability of funds.

Appeals

Learners can appeal against decisions taken by the College Fund Administrators in writing to the Student Services Manager.

Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund – (Learners aged 19 and over at 31st August 2018 studying a level 3 or 4 programme)

The Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund is aimed at helping vulnerable learners such as those with learning difficulties or disabilities; parents who need help with childcare and ex-military personnel.

The fund will be distributed as decided by Colchester Institute College Support Fund Committee and in accordance with the specific rules detailed by the Skills Funding Agency.

Important: The college support fund will not make any reimbursements for items purchased by you prior to your form being assessed, unless authorised by the Student Services Manager.

Hardship Fund

Please note that this policy refers to **Learner Support** to assist with the funding of course related costs and childcare. **Learning Support** (including exceptional Learning Support) type activity for 'in learning' support is also provided by this Advanced Learner Loans Bursary and is assessed by the Additional Learning Support Team. This includes, for example, support by Learning Support Practitioners.

Travel As funding is provided by public money, we are required to ensure support given provides the best value for money. Travel support may be in the form of a bus pass, train pass or college organised transport, whichever is the cheapest option.

20+ Childcare

If applying for help with childcare, the childcare application form must be completed in addition to the student funding application form.

The Loans Bursary Fund provides targeted support for learners who are at risk of not starting learning, or not continuing learning, as a result of difficulty getting childcare due to the cost.

Colchester Institute may offer childcare funding to pay for childcare and all awards will be subject to the provider being registered with Ofsted.

If a learner withdraws from College or has funding declined because their attendance has fallen below 90%, the College will take no responsibility for payment of outstanding fees to childcare providers. Students who withdraw will be liable for any childcare costs incurred after their last day of attendance.

The Loans Bursary Fund will pay:

- For the time you spend in timetabled classes only
- Travel time to and from college
- 100% fees for a first child, 50% for a second child. There is no assistance for any other children
- A maximum award of £5,500 per year per student
- To a registered childcare provider during term time only

The Loans Bursary Fund will **not** pay:

- For Christmas and Easter holiday periods and periods of half term
- Deposits or payments in advance
- If the learner changes the number of days or hours their child attends their childcare provider and fails to inform the College childcare administrator.
- If there is a partner at home who can look after the child/children

Please note that any free government funding for 2, 3 and 4 year olds must be used for college and placement days before additional hours can be paid for with college funding.

Colchester Institute reserves the right to cap childcare fees if they are considered to be excessive.

Funds are capped and allocated at the discretion of the Colchester Institute College Support Fund Committee, in line with current policy. The funds are limited and applications received when the fund is low or exhausted may be refused childcare funding.

Colchester Institute reserves the right to alter or amend the childcare funding policy at any time.

Options for Childcare

Your children must be placed with either an Ofsted registered private nursery or an Ofsted registered childminder.

School age children must also be placed with an Ofsted registered childminder, or after school club.

(All figures correct at the time of printing)

Please Note: Applications for financial help are valid for one academic year only. Should you return to College in September 2019 and still require financial assistance, a new application form must be completed and up to date supporting evidence supplied.