

Advanced Learner Loan Discretionary Learner Support Fund Policy 2023-2024

Introduction

This policy outlines the guidelines for the management and allocation of the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary for the 2023/2024 academic year.

These funds are provided to the College by Government to support learners 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.

The funds are available to students who have taken out an Advanced Learner Loan. Funds are limited, targeted at those most in need and 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 2023/2024 issued by the Education & Skills Funding Agency.

Eligibility to funding does not give the individual the right to funding as funding is not an entitlement. Assistance awarded to a learner will always be conditional on behaviour, commitment to the course and maintaining a **minimum of 90% attendance**. Colchester Institute reserves the right to remove support due to students' misbehaviour, fraud or if the reputation of the College is brought into disrepute. 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.

Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund – (Learners aged 19 and over at 31st August 2023 studying a level 3 or 4 programme)

The Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund is aimed at helping vulnerable and disadvantaged learners to overcome barriers which may prevent them from taking part in or continuing in learning

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.

Application Process

Applications will be assessed on the assumption that the learner will be awarded and will accept the Advanced Learner Loan to cover tuition fees. Should it transpire that the learner is not eligible for the loan or does not accept the loan, the learner will be responsible for repaying any awards made by the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund.

Learners should make Student Services aware at the time of submitting their application if they do not want their application assessed until the loan has been awarded and accepted.

Applicants must complete the relevant application form 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 form. 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 the learner's responsibility to tell the Department for Work and Pensions about any discretionary learner support received from the college, as discretionary learner support payments may affect eligibility to some benefits.

For courses starting in September 2023, applications should be submitted online by 1st November 2023. Applications received after this date will be considered on a pro-rata basis subject to need and availability of funds.

Hardship Fund

Please note that this policy refers to **Learner Support** to assist with the funding of course related costs (eg transport, books, equipment, compulsory UK trips and childcare).

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 BACS payment , and cost maybe a factor when assessing a travel award

Payment by BACS

Where a payment is made by BACS, the student **MUST** provide receipts for items / tickets purchased. Failure to produce receipts may result in the student being asked to return the BACS payment and may also affect future funding

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

Learning Support (including exceptional Learning Support) is also provided by the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary and is assessed by the Additional Learning Support Team. This includes, for example, support provided by Learning Support Practitioners.

20+ Childcare

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

Targeted support will be provided 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.

All Colchester Institute childcare awards will be subject to the provider being Ofsted registered. Providers can include nurseries, childminders, breakfast clubs and after school clubs

The Loans Bursary Fund will pay for:

- time spent in timetabled classes or placement and continued nursery and childminder places during the Christmas, Easter and half term holidays
- Travel time to and from college
- 100% fees for first two children, 50% for third and fourth. There is no assistance for any other children
- A maximum award of £7,000 per year per student
- Ofsted registered childcare

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.

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

- deposits, registration fees, make advance payments or be responsible for late payment fees
- any additional costs incurred as a result of changes in the number of days or hours a child attends their childcare provider, unless previously agreed by the childcare administrator.
- childcare if there is a partner at home who can look after the child/children

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.

Funding is limited and childcare applications received when the fund is low or exhausted may be refused

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

Childcare for students under 20

Please contact Care2Learn for assistance with childcare costs: <https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn>

Appeals

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

(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 2024 and still require financial assistance, a new application form must be completed and up to date supporting evidence supplied.