

Advanced Learner Loan - Discretionary Learner Support Policy 2021-2020

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Author: Louise Noon (Head of Student Services)

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Advanced Learner Loan Discretionary Learner Support Fund consists of a limited amount of funding; certain criteria have to be introduced to ensure that the fund can help as many students as possible. The ALL Bursary is to support those students who are on an Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) approved course at level 3 or above, who are in receipt of an Advanced Learner Loan and who are aged 19 and over when their course starts. The fund will offer eligible students assistance with childcare and/or travel as a basic but not exhaustive offer.
- 1.2 5% of the total Discretionary Learner Support allocation will be used towards administration costs.
- 1.3 Eligible students can apply for a basic package of support to a maximum of £5370 per annum plus individual participation costs for uniform or kit. This will cover the following items
 - Travel payments up to £450
 - Childcare cost up to £4920
- 1.4 Eligible student may also be awarded additional support to cover the following expenses;
 - Stationary, books, equipment and uniform required for the programme of study
 - Educational trip or visits which contribute to the aims of the programme of study
 - Applications for UCAS or travel to university interviews
 - Travel payments or childcare payments may be increase based on individual circumstances
 - Consumable costs related to the programme of study which may mean a cost is being passed onto the student may be covered, this includes such things as make up or hair products or building materials
 - General hardship, assessed on individual need
 - Funding to cover the cost of any diagnosed additional needs such as dyslexia for example.

2. Eligibility Criteria

Students must be enrolled on an Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) approved course at level 3 or above, at the College and be receiving an advanced learner loan to cover the cost of their learning. Students have to be in receipt of a means tested benefit or to be dependent on someone in receipt of a means tested benefit e.g. Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, Full Council Tax Benefit, Universal credit or on a low wage (less than £16,190 per annum) or dependent on someone on a low wage income.

2.1 Childcare

- 2.1.1 In the case of childcare support, students must be aged 20 plus and would normally have to be studying during the day for seven hours per week or more. Hours have to be those that are taught. Hours spent in self-directed study will not be taken into consideration.
- 2.1.2 The bursary fund will make a 100% contribution to the childcare costs of 1 dependent child upon sight of the child's full birth certificate and other documentary evidence of dependency for example Tax Credit Award Notice. Applications for funding additional children can be made in writing to Head of Student Services and will be assessed on individual circumstances.
- 2.1.3 Assistance will be withdrawn when a student has completed their course or if any non-attendance at the College exceeds four weeks of unauthorised leave, unless, in the College's view there is a satisfactory reason for the absence. Expenses incurred whilst not attending College will be the personal responsibility of the student.
- 2.1.4 Eligible students that apply to the Discretionary Learner Support Fund for help with childcare fees by 2nd October 2020 will receive up to 100% of their childcare fees. Eligible students applying after the 2nd October 2020 may receive a percentage of their childcare fees paid by the fund depending on funds remaining. This percentage will be agreed by Head of Student Services and may vary over the course of the year. The childcare provider must be Ofsted-registered (Early Years Register for Children aged 0-5, Compulsory Childcare register for 5-8 and Voluntary Childcare Register for over 8's). This can be verified by checking the approved lists provided by Liverpool, Knowsley and Sefton Social Services.
- 2.1.5 The College will inform the child care provider by letter that the College agrees to pay all or part of the childcare fees for the student. The letter will explain the claim periods for the current academic year.
- 2.1.6 No Childcare support payment made will exceed £150 per week unless otherwise agreed by Head of Student Services.
- 2.1.7 Funding cannot be used to fund informal childcare, such as that provided by a relative.

2.2 Travel

- 2.2.1 To be eligible for help with transport costs to and from College, students have to be 19+, receiving an advanced learner loan to cover the cost of the study, studying normally more than seven hours per week, and to live at least 1.5 miles from the College.
- 2.2.2 Adults who are eligible for help with transport and attain a minimum rate of 90% attendance, and whose behaviour reflects that of the College

expectations and standards will receive a termly payments of between £100 and £150 depending on hours studied. Partial payments for attendance between 80% and 90% will be considered depending on individual circumstances and funding availability.

- 2.2.3 Only in exceptional circumstances the Progress Coach or Tutor will be able to appeal the decision. This appeal can only be made on the ground on an ongoing medical condition. Evidence must be provided and statements stating why travel support from the fund should be reinstated. The evidence will be checked and agreed by Head of Student Services. Students who are refused access to travel support will not be supported for any further travel support from the College hardship fund and will referred to the Curriculum Assistant Director should this be required

2.3 Hardship

2.3.1 Applications for the Hardship Fund are assessed by the Retention and Progression team and considered by Head of Student Services on an individual basis. The Discretionary Learner Support Fund sets limits on how much a student can claim from the Hardship Fund and is normally a maximum of £150. Staff and or students will not be able to appeal these decisions.

2.3.2 The fund can be used for;

- Course-related costs, including course trips, books and equipment
- domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation
- examination costs
- accreditation/professional membership to external bodies
- transport in exceptional circumstances
- UCAS application

2.3.1 This is not an exhaustive list and all hardship decisions will be considered on an individual basis.

2.4 Support for Asylum Seekers

2.4.1 All support for eligible students who are asylum seekers will be provided in kind. No cash payments will be supplied. Instead students will receive support though course-related books, equipment or a travel pass for example.

3. Appeals Against Applications

3.1 The College cannot guarantee that all eligible applications are approved due to the College having a limited amount of Discretionary Learner Support Funds available.

The College will process the application on a first come first served basis and allocate funds to eligible students on the same basis with due regard to individual circumstances.

- 3.2 If a student's application for support from the Discretionary Learner Support Fund is not approved the student may appeal in writing to the Head of Student Services who will consider the appeal together with the Vice Principal People, Organisational Development and Culture. Appeals must be received within 14 consecutive days of the date of the letter declining the application. The panel will respond to the applicant within 28 consecutive days of receipt of the appeal. Only in exceptional circumstances will a request be paid if the criteria have not been met. The decision following consideration of the appeal will be final and binding.

4. Review

- 4.1 This Policy will be reviewed annually in line with the release of the Discretionary Learner Support Fund Guidance and is the responsibility of the Head of Student Services.

Hugh Baird College

Balliol Road
Bootle
Liverpool
L20 7EW

Telephone

0151 353 4444

Email

enquiries@hughbaird.ac.uk

www.hughbaird.ac.uk