



## **Student Finance**

### **Adult Support Fund**

### **Advanced Learner Loans Bursary**

### **2017 to 2018**

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## Adult Support Fund / Advanced Learner Support Fund Policy 2017/18

### Introduction

1. The ESFA publishes guidance, which set out the criteria for funds received to help students facing financial hardship through the Adult Support Fund and the Advanced learner loans bursary. This funding is designed to support those most in need with the associated costs of attending and completing a learning programme in College.
2. Support is available to students who are fully funded, co-funded or in receipt of and/or eligible to apply for the Advanced Learner Loan where they meet the criteria for the bursaries.
3. The criteria for support are the same for both student cohorts. Students in receipt of a loan will be awarded support from the loans bursary while eligible non-loans students would be supported from the Adult support fund.
4. Support is available to adult learners aged 19years and over, attending all Bedford College campuses, including the Bedford campus, Kempston campuses, Shuttleworth College, Tresham Campuses and the Bedford Sixth Form.
5. It is the policy of the College to optimise the use of funding to support adult students who have a specific financial need which could prevent them from achieving their qualifications.
6. Bedford College brands discretionary bursary fund as the Adult Support Fund and maintains the use of the government-named Advanced Learner Loans Bursary.
7. This policy sets out the financial support available, the eligibility criteria and the conditions for continuous receipt of this support.

### Adult Support Fund Allocation 2017/18

8. From 2016/17, 19+ Discretionary Learner Support (DLS) is incorporated into an institution's overall AEB allocation. It is no longer permitted to vire funds between the Adult Support Fund and the Advanced Loans Bursary Fund.

	<b><u>2017/18</u></b>
19+ Hardship	£272,000
Less 5% Administration	-£13,600
<b>Total funds available</b>	<b>£258,400</b>
HE Access to Learning	£tbc
Harpur Trust (16-18 <b>and</b> 19+)	£20,000
Connolly Foundation (16-18 <b>and</b> 19+)	£30,000

## Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Allocation 2017/18

	<u>2017/18</u>
Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Less 5% Administration	£204,013.00 £10,200.65
<b>Total funds available</b>	<b>£198,812.35</b>

### Context

9. Awards may only be provided where a vulnerable or disadvantaged learner has demonstrated a financial barrier which impacts on their learning. This includes support for domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation.
10. 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.
11. Means-testing will be rigorous but not excessive and evidence from other recent income assessment will be used wherever possible.
12. Tuition fees support will continue at 50% of co-funded rate with no cap in relation to proportion of overall allocation spent on fees, where eligible.
13. There will be no childcare support from the Adult Support Fund in 2017/18. Students in receipt of the loan can access childcare support through the Advanced Loans bursary.
14. Additional learning support is available to students in receipt of the loan, such as support for teaching assistants or reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.
15. Additional funding is received from the Harpur Trust and the Connolly Foundation to help students (not in receipt of a loan) who meet their specified criteria.

### Eligibility

16. Applications will be judged in line with AEB funding guidance for 2017/18.
17. All full time and part time students (including those in receipt of a loan) studying on an ESFA funded course, including traineeships, at Bedford College and its incorporated sites (Bedford campus, Kempston campuses, Shuttleworth College, UTC, Tresham campuses and the Bedford Sixth Form) are eligible to apply for support where they meet the following criteria:
  - a. Are aged 19 or over on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2017
  - b. have lived within the EU/EEA for the last 3 years
  - c. have a household income of less than £26,000

- d. are in receipt of a means-tested benefit or tax credits, not eligible for full fee remission

In addition, the following will be considered for the Adult support fund, those who:

- e. have learning difficulties or disabilities
- f. are care leavers (LLDD up to the age of 25)
- g. are on probation or supervised by the Youth Offending Service
- h. experience a sudden change in circumstances, such as redundancy

#### 18. Exceptions:

- a. Students that have been mandated to training (full-time or part-time) by Jobcentre Plus will have their travel and childcare costs met by Jobcentre Plus where required.
- b. 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
- c. If an asylum seeker is eligible for support, we can only provide support in the form of course-related books, equipment or a travel pass. We are not permitted to give the student support in the form of cash.

#### Adult Support Categories

Cost Type/ Household Income	< £16,190 (Band 1)	£16,191 - £26,000 (Band 2)
Residential bursary	£833/term	£664/term
Tuition/ professional/ exam fees	50%	50%
Travel	£350 within Bedford / £450 beyond	
Essential course costs	50%	50%
Discretionary hardship	Up to £250	Up to £250

#### Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Categories

Cost Type/ Household Income	< £16,190 (Band 1)	£16,191 - £26,000 (Band 2)
Childcare	Maximum of 80% of ESFA funding received – new students only	
Travel	£350 within Bedford / £450 beyond	
Essential course costs	90%	50%
Meals bursary	£2.50/day	£2.50/day
Discretionary hardship	Up to £100 in terms 2 and 3	Up to £100 in terms 2 and 3
Additional Learning	Up to £250	Up to £250

## **Fees**

19. Available to students who have been fee assessed as co-funded only.
20. The guidance permits the use of our funding (in exceptional circumstances) to support tuition fees for 19+ students who are not eligible for full fee remission or for the Advanced Learner Loan.
21. All fees will be awarded at a maximum of 50% of cost. These include tuition, examinations and professional membership fees.
22. In order to manage the limited funds, support for all fees will be by exception and on referral from Student Services, Student Data, Enquiries or Finance Staff. 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.
23. HE students who require support with the cost of course fees should apply to Student Finance England [www.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.gov.uk/studentfinance).

## **Travel**

24. Travel will be awarded at a standard bursary rate in 2017/18. This will be £350 for students who live more than 3 miles from the college and the within Bedford bus route boundaries; and £450 for those who live outside of Bedford and beyond. The same principle will apply at Tresham College.
25. Travel is paid only for students not in receipt of other subsidised travel unless they require support with transport costs incurred as a result of a mobility difficulty. The cheapest form of travel is paid, being travel by bus.
26. For adult students travelling by car, the travel support will be the same as the bursary awarded to those travelling by bus.

## **Books/equipment/materials/trips**

27. Funding for trips, books, kit, materials/equipment and uniform which are deemed by the course manager as essential to the course are prioritised.
28. Counselling supervision is funded up to a maximum of £25 per month up to a maximum of 10 months; usually one session a month.
29. 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.
30. If a student is fully funded by the ESFA, funding must not be used for essential course costs, e.g. equipment or uniform, where the student cannot complete their learning aim without them.

## **Childcare (Advanced Learner Loans only)**

31. Students aged 19 but less than 20 years old must apply to the Government's Care to Learn scheme for childcare support.

32. Childcare funding may **only** 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.
33. Enrolment and attendance checks will be made before the first payment is sent.
34. 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 government funded sessions.
35. Childcare for new students will be funded up to a maximum of 80% of the approved advanced learner loan course income. Support will be maintained at 80% of the cost of childcare for continuing learners who received childcare funding in 2016/17.
36. Confirmation of support for childcare is subject to the student supplying a copy of their childcare contract. Support for childcare is given only for timetabled teaching hours.
37. 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.

### **Discretionary Hardship**

38. The discretionary bursary is for students experiencing exceptional financial hardship, to help with the additional costs of attending college and achieving their qualifications. This bursary is to be paid in February and July 2018 and dependent on 95% attendance by 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018 and 14<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

### **Accommodation (For adult learners not in receipt of ALL at Shuttleworth only)**

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

### **Meals Bursary (Advanced Learner Loans Only)**

40. Students will receive a free healthy meal each day they attend the college.
41. The meals bursary is also available for eligible students aged 19 to 24 subject to a Learning Difficulty Assessment (LDA) or Education Health and Care Plan (EHC Plan).
42. The meals bursary will be awarded at the level of £2.50 per day for each day of timetabled attendance at College.

### **Additional Learning Support (Advanced Learner Loans Only)**

43. Funding up to £250 will be given towards any learning support requirements for students who have indicated a form of learning difficulty or disability. This would be
  - a. specialist equipment, adapted materials and other resources to support a student's learning
  - b. special exam arrangements if required
  - c. support with accessing the College
  - d. dyslexia, hearing and autistic support specialists

Access to this support will be through the Additional Support Team.

## **Administration**

44. Providers are allowed to use up to 5% of the total spend for administration costs. This will be £13,600 and £10, 200 for the respective bursary funds in 2017/18
45. Students must complete a valid application form, which will be reviewed and processed by the Student Finance Team
46. Students will be informed of the outcome of their application within 4-6 weeks of receipt of a correctly completed application.
47. Bursary award letters are sent to successful applicants with details of their bursary payment dates.
48. All payments are made by BACS or internal transfer to the appropriate department.
49. Continuous receipt of financial support is dependent on 95% attendance and where a student leaves the course or attendance drops below 95%, they may be required to return funds or essential course materials/equipment received from the College.

## **Other External Funding**

50. The Harpur Trust has awarded £20,000 for 2017/18 to use for students living in Bedford Borough and on a low income. This will be targeted mainly towards students on vocational courses or courses that teach trade skills, including, in exceptional circumstances only, commercial courses or where the student does not qualify for other bursaries.
51. The Connolly Foundation has awarded funds for non-means-tested bursaries for apprentices on certain specified apprenticeship programmes and to support coaching qualifications for sports students.
52. The Academic Excellence Bursary at the Sixth Form is not means-tested and is available to anyone who meets the criteria and is available to new students to the Sixth Form, starting their course in September 2017. Students must:
  - have at least 8 GCSEs A\*-B including English Language and *Mathematics, with at least 4 GCSEs at A\* or A, AND*
  - *Study our full-time A-Level or equivalent Level 3 programme at The Bedford Sixth Form.*
  - Students who are eligible for the AEB cannot receive DLS.

## **Conditions**

### **General conditions**

53. Applications will be available to continuing students from May 2017 and from 1 June 2017 for new students until the specific fund closure dates or when funds are exhausted, whichever is sooner. The panel reserves the right to extend the closing date subject to availability of funds.
54. The College operates a household income banding system. Band 1 covers all household income less than £16,190 and band 2 covers all household income between £16,191 and £26,000.



55. Payment will be to a maximum of 50% of costs.
56. The panel will reserve 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.
57. Wherever possible, payments will be made direct to a supplier, including internal transfers.
58. The College reserves the right to suspend or reduce payments where a student's attendance falls below 95%, in consultation with the personal tutor.
59. 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.
60. 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.

### **Appeals**

61. Students can appeal their bursary decision in writing.
62. Appeals against decisions 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.
63. Appeals are presented at panel meeting. The Chair of the Bursary Panel (Director of Finance) will have the right to waive the College's criteria in cases of extreme hardship providing ESFA requirements are met.

### **Monitoring**

64. Monitoring of both support funds is the responsibility of the Director of Finance with the Financial Controller. Expenditure is monitored monthly and reported to the Bursary Panel via panel meetings.
65. Take-up of the Adult Support Fund is monitored annually in relation to retention and reported in the self-assessment report.
66. In-year management information is required by the Education and Skills Funding Agency in February, with an end of year return due in October. An annual report is completed for Harpur Trust funds.
67. Feedback from students on the impact of the fund on their learning is collected annually.

### **The Bursary Panel**

68. The bursary panel comprises the Finance Director (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.

69. The panel meets fortnightly during July, August and September, and thereafter as required to discuss Bursary matters. Panel dates are published in advance.
70. 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.

Pat Jones  
Director of Finance