

Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund Policy and Procedures 2025/2026

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1. Policy Statement

The College is committed to distributing Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund in a fair and consistent way. Funding is to be provided to increase access, retention and achievement. It can be used to help students overcome financial barriers to learning and promote wider access to ensure that people from all backgrounds can take part in learning. This policy is inclusive of all students, including those from underrepresented or marginalised groups. The College is committed to ensuring that no student is disadvantaged in accessing travel support due to their gender identity, disability, ethnicity, religion or any other protected characteristic.

2. Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund (ALL Bursary)

The ALL Bursary is to support those students who are on an Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) approved course at level 3 or 4, who are in receipt of a loan and who are aged 19 and over when their course starts.

The fund covers two areas;

- Financial hardship, including childcare
- Course related costs including trips, books and equipment, transport costs for getting to and from college, professional membership fees and any fees or charges due to external bodies.
- In exceptional support with domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation provided by others, or by providing items, services or cash direct to the learner. This can be in the form of a grant or repayable loan provided by you for course related costs
- Learning support for students with learning Difficulties / disabilities

3. Application Process and Documentary Evidence

3.1 ALL Bursary

The application process for funds will be open from June 2024 and until such time as funds be used up. All applications will be considered based on the funding available.

Pay My Student

For 19+ funding, including applications for travel passes, students must complete an application using the on line student support bursary service, PayMyStudent <https://www.southport.ac.uk/student-portal/college-bursary-fund>. Documentary evidence is required to make an assessment of income and / or identification of being in a priority group (as laid down in the ESFA guidance). This could be pay slips, P60, proof of earning for self-employment, bank statements, Universal Credit monthly statement, proof of benefits (letters from DWP / Job Centre) this list not exhaustive.

The 'application date' will be the date the completed form is received along with all relevant documentation.

Students and course teams will need to provide evidence of items needed where possible to support their request e.g. College order forms for kit and uniforms, signed book list from tutors,

trips, receipts for individual items etc. If students are in digital poverty they can speak with their Progress Tutor/Course Leader or Safeguarding and Welfare Team, the College has a bank of loanable laptops which can be used for the duration of the course.

Students can apply for support with course related costs including essential course trips within England, books, equipment:

- Support with domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation provided by others or by providing items or services or cash direct to the learner (this may need to be repayed, this will be discussed with the Welfare Officer).
- Transport costs
- Examination fees
- Accreditation fees, professional membership fees and fees or charges due to the external bodies e.g. insurance for Diploma in Counselling students
- In exceptional circumstances, you can apply to for funds to assist with course fees, please see the Welfare Officer for further information.

3.2 Childcare Funds (ALL) 20+

Students can register their interest for funding from the point of an application being made for a course. Funds are allocated on a strict first come first served basis.

Applicants should note that there is government funded support in place but where learners need to continue with employment alongside their College course, students should ensure they accessing all of the government support on offer * and where needed the Childcare Funding can top up the extra costs, if a learner is working in addition to their course it maybe that proof of working days is required to support any top up fees. Funding for childcare is allocated based on the maximum number of days a student is timetabled to attend the College site (September-June, inclusive of College holidays and bank holidays). Contributions to the cost of deposits, booking or reservation fees will be considered once the learner has started their course and been on programme for the first semester.

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<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds-claim-benefits>

<https://www.gov.uk/check-eligible-free-childcare-if-youre-working>

3.3 Travel

Full time students who are aged 19+ and live more than one mile away from College can apply for a travel pass **by following the Pay My Student system**. For more information please see Travel Passes and Funds Policy and Procedures.

Students who do not wish to apply for a travel pass can apply for help towards travel costs e.g. petrol, 25p per mile per timetabled day. This cost will be capped at the cost of the cheapest ticket / pass available on public transport. Applications follow the normal ALL Bursary Fund process.

4. Eligibility

4.1 Eligibility criteria

Funding will focus on those individuals who are financially disadvantaged and who are in need of support in areas such as childcare, transport, books and equipment.

Eligibility is assessed in a few possible ways; if a student is in receipt of a means tested benefit then proof of this benefit is sufficient evidence for eligibility, or if they have a household income of less than £38,500 pa net again this would be sufficient.

Students would need to provide their most recent payslips, P60, most recent Tax Credit Award Notice, Universal Credit etc.

Disability Living Allowance (or Personal Independence Allowance), Incapacity Benefit, Employment Support Allowance and Child Benefit are not taken into account as an income.

4.2 Exemptions

Students in the following categories are not eligible for the ALL Bursary:

- for learners whose loan has not yet been approved and they have not passed the liability point
- for learner support for learners in custody or released on temporary licence

4.3 Residency Eligibility Criteria

The residency eligibility criteria are aligned to the residency criteria from the ESFA which can be found on their web page.

4.4 Refugees

Refugees are not required to meet the three year residency rule if their refugee status was confirmed in the three years prior to starting the course.

5. Allocation of payments

All full and part time ALL students aged 19+ can apply for a maximum of £1000 per person per year. Need is assessed by the Student Finance Co-ordinator. Evidence could be College order forms for kits, signed book lists from course tutors, information provided from Student Records re exam and registration fees (this list is not exhaustive). Students must supply receipts for anything purchased.

Students cannot apply for funding towards the following:

- Leisure classes
- Full or part time tuition fees where a learner does not fit into the fee remission category
- Students cannot double claim funding

In the first instances funds for kits, uniforms and trips will be transferred directly to the relevant department. Other allocations will be made via Bank Automated Credit System (BACS), and in exceptional circumstances a cash payment maybe made.

Where an attendance issue arises for a student (e.g. attendance falls below 90%) the Positive Behaviour Policy may be invoked. This will happen only if the issues of attendance have not managed to be addressed informally with the Progress Tutor/Course Tutor and student. If this fails significantly for either a full or part time student then funding may be withdrawn. When funds are used to buy equipment for individuals, the equipment will remain the property of the College, this should be returned to the College when practical, taking into consideration such factors as hygiene, health and safety, and wear and tear.

6. Allocation of Childcare 20+

Students can register their interest for funding from the point of an application being made for a course. Funds are allocated on a strict first come first served basis.

Applicants should note that there is government funded support in place but where learners need to continue with employment alongside their College course, students should ensure they accessing all of the government support on offer * and where needed the Childcare Funding can top up the extra costs, if a learner is working in addition to their course it maybe that proof of working days is required to support any top up fees. Funding for childcare is allocated based on the maximum number of days a student is timetabled to attend the College site (September-June, inclusive of College holidays and bank holidays).

Contributions to the cost of deposits, booking or reservation fees will be considered once the learner has started their course and been on programme for the first semester.

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<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/free-childcare-2-year-olds-claim-benefits>

<https://www.gov.uk/check-eligible-free-childcare-if-youre-working>

8. Emergency Hardship Funds

Hardship funds are one off payments for students who are facing extreme crisis e.g. Homelessness, sudden change in domestic circumstances and need for food, travel, clothing (this list is not exhaustive). These funds should be primarily allocated by the Head of Student Services, so that any other necessary support is accessed/ arranged. In the absence of the **Head of Student Services**, a member of the welfare or safeguarding team can allocate funding. Any student receiving support from this fund must also be immediately referred to the welfare and safeguarding team to ensure all of their needs are being addressed.

9. Appeals

Any student, who is dissatisfied with the decision made regarding the allocation of funds, may appeal in writing to the **Head of Student Services** within 15 term time days of receipt of letter.

The Appeals Panel will be made of a member of the Senior Leadership Team and 2 managers.

The **Head of Student Services** or Student Finance Co-ordinator will present the information to the panel.

The student will be informed of the decision of the Panel within 10 term time days of receipt of the letter of appeal.

10. Essential Elements

This policy and procedures will operate transparent, consistent systems, with clear criteria for eligibility, allowing funds to be targeted to those students in financial hardship within the ESFA guidelines. This is ensured by:

- Procedures / guidelines for staff, updated annually
- Staff training and development meetings

A variety of methods will be used to publicise the availability of funds, including the application procedure and appeals procedure. This includes:

- Financial information booklet – updated annually, available on line and within the Student Hub
- Admissions / offer letters
- Information from admissions tutors at interview
- Information at the point of enrolment
- Information at Induction Fair
- Posters, multi media screens etc
- College web page

11. Monitoring effectiveness

Monthly updates will be provided to the Senior Leadership Team. An annual report to SLT, Corporation and Equality and Diversity Committee will report on funds spent and identify links between financial support and retention and achievement.

12. Confidentiality, data protection and retention

All personal and sensitive information will be managed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Common Law Duty of Confidentiality.

The Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) are not only restrictions on disclosure of information about the College, they are bound by a common law duty of confidentiality. This duty prevents the College from releasing information about students or other stakeholders, without their consent. This duty applies to manual records as well as information held on computers.

Information which must be treated as confidential includes the names and addresses of students and any other information about them which is not publicly known, i.e. “personal data”. Accordingly, to

ensure that the College does not breach its duty, no information, even if it only exists in printed form, should be disclosed unless all the relevant procedures have been followed.

All documents are held for the assessment of eligibility to the fund and audit purposes only. All information will be stored securely and treated sensitively. All documents will be kept by the College for 6 years.

13. Administration of the Fund

There can be no virement between 16-18, ALL Bursary funds and dLSF.

Administration of the fund is capped at 5% of the value of the spend of the 24/25 allocation.

14. Policy Update

The procedures will be reviewed annually in line with the release of the ESFA funding guidance and are the responsibility of the **Head of Student Services** and Student Finance Co-ordinator.

15. Other Sources of Funding

The College operates or has links to a number of other sources of funding. For further details of any of the funds listed below please contact the Student Information team.

- Travel Passes & Funds Policy and Procedure
- Hardship Fund
- 16-19 Bursary Fund
- 19+ Learner Support Fund
- Charitable Organisations e.g. Pinecone Trust, Bishop David Sheppard