

**2011/2012
ADULT LEARNER SUPPORT FUND
POLICY & GUIDANCE (over 19)**

What is it?

Adult Discretionary Learner Support (DLS) funding is available to help those who are finding it difficult to commence or continue their study through financial hardship.

Support is very limited and can not cover all costs associated with all courses. It is always advisable to consider the availability of other strands of financial support and enquire, for example, about what financial assistance is available through the Department of Works and Pensions (DWP) as DLS must not be used where other sources of funding are available. Please speak with a DWP Advisor as soon as possible as early applications are essential to allow processing time before your enrolment.

Each application is individually assessed and assistance is not an entitlement. Means testing will be rigorous but not excessive. Supporting evidence of personal circumstances and/or relevant benefit evidence will be required. Other sources of financial support will be taken into consideration when processing applications.

Who is eligible?

To be eligible for support you must be classified as a 'home' student for fee assessment purposes, enrolled on a funded course and be able to demonstrate a genuine financial hardship which is causing a barrier to learning. Household income must not exceed £15,276.

Priority groups

The Government guidance identifies priority groups. These are Learners who are facing financial hardship and are eligible for tuition fee remission:

- Learners in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance
- Learners in receipt of Employment Support Allowance (income related)
- Learners undertaking a first full level 2
- Learners undertaking a full level 1 who are level 2 entitled
- Learners aged 19-24 undertaking a first full level 3

In addition priority will be given to

- Learners enrolling on to the 2nd year of a course
- Existing learners progressing to the next level

The following groups are **not** eligible for DLS

- Waged apprentices
- Learners on HE courses
- Learners in prison or released on temporary license

Learners on full time courses

Levels of support fall into two categories. Learners may fall into one or both categories.

Category 1

All learners, who meet the eligibility criteria, may apply for financial help **up to £500** towards course costs, books, transport or other related costs needed to complete the course. Funds will generally be paid to a third party, not directly to the student. Payments will be linked to attendance and meeting college expectations of coursework and behaviour.

What do I do now?

Check the prospectus carefully to ascertain what costs are attached to the course you wish to study.

The DLS fund is available to help with the following costs:

Tuition fees: With evidence of a low income £150 towards the fees may be applied for.

Compulsory course costs / materials / books: Costs, quoted in the prospectus, which are payable at enrolment may be paid from the fund.

Re-sit examination fees: Cases will be individually assessed and applications will require supporting evidence of exceptional hardship.

Travel: Payment of the contribution towards the college travel scheme may be made providing you live further than 1.5 miles from the campus on which you will study, and/or there are exceptional circumstances causing financial difficulty. For more information please refer to the College Travel Scheme.

Discretionary payments: One-off discretionary payments can be considered for college associated costs which have been identified as a barrier to participating in learning.

Category 2

Learners who are in receipt of a low or no income, **not** in receipt of out of work benefits, may also apply for an additional award of **up to £200** per academic year towards the ongoing costs associated with attending college.

- Awards will be paid in two equal instalments, in October 2011 and January 2012.
- Learners will be required to have a bank account for BACS transfers.
- Payments will be subject to attending all required lessons and meeting college expectations of coursework and behaviour. Absences need to be discussed with personal tutors and if not authorised may result in non payment of awards.

How do I apply?

Complete a Financial Support application form. All applications are assessed on receipt of a correctly completed application form, within the priority groups. As funds are limited an early application is advisable.

Applications must be received by 1st August 2011. Applications received after this date will not receive priority assessment.

Later applications will be accepted and assessed in order of receipt.

Learners on part time courses

All learners, who meet the eligibility criteria, may apply for financial assistance to a **maximum of £250** towards course costs, books or other related costs needed to complete the course. Funds will generally be paid to a third party, not directly to the student. Payments will be linked to attendance and meeting college expectations of coursework and behaviour.

What do I do now?

Check the prospectus carefully to ascertain what costs are attached to the course you wish to study.

The DLS fund is available to help with the following costs:

Examination fees: Fees quoted in the part time prospectus, payable at enrolment, may be paid from the fund. DLS can also assist learners with other examination fees which are a course requirement on production of an entry form.

Financial assistance is available to cover personal registrations or membership fees to professional bodies (e.g. AAT).

Materials / Books: Costs payable at enrolment may be paid from the fund, up to £35.

Tuition fees: With evidence of a low income 15% of fees may be applied for.

How do I apply?

Complete section 9, (Financial Support) of the part time course application form. Learners enrolling onto the 2nd year of a course should complete a 'Financial Support for part-time courses' application form. All applications are assessed on receipt of a correctly completed application form within the priority groups. As funds are limited an early application is advisable.

Applications must be received by 1st August 2011. Applications received after this date will not receive priority assessment.

Later applications will be accepted and assessed in order of receipt.

Childcare

Childcare: For Learners aged 20+, on a funded full or part time course. Help will be towards College term time care costs only (up to 36 weeks). It is the students responsibility to find a term time only carer or be responsible for covering any additional costs.

Who is Eligible?

Learners in receipt of one of the following relevant benefits:

- Job Seekers Allowance
- Employment Support Allowance (income related)
- Income Support

Conditions:

- Childcare providers must be registered on the Ofsted Early Years Register and/or the compulsory part of the Ofsted General Childcare Register. Where a childcare provider is related to the child, for example a grandmother or aunt, that childcare provider must also prove they are providing registered childcare services for children they are not related to.
- Childcare will be for timetabled days only and paid at 90% of the total term time cost minus any available Government funding to a maximum of £160 per term time week per child with a ceiling of £7,500 per learner.
- An application form must be completed in advance.
- The childcare provider must complete the Childcare Provider section of the application form.
- Attendance will be monitored monthly and Tutors contacted for confirmation that:
 1. there is a valid reason for any non attendance
 2. all coursework is up to date
 3. the learner is on course to achieve the qualification
- If ok, payment will be made on receipt of an invoice from the carer. However, payment can be withheld if conditions are not met.
- A cheque made payable to the carer must be collected and signed for by the learner.
- Up to date benefit evidence must be provided termly for the assistance to continue to the end of the academic year.

It is expected that holidays will not be taken during term time but should this occur, please note, childcare costs for the period of absence will not be paid from DLS.

When will I know my application has been accepted?

All assistance is subject to the availability of funds.

Confirmation of the outcome of your application will be sent in writing or emailed after the closing date.

Applications received after the closing date will be assessed in order of receipt.

If all funds have been allocated your details will be recorded on a waiting list and you will receive written/emailed confirmation.

When do I provide the benefit evidence?

You will be sent a date and time to attend for enrolment. Please bring the evidence with you. If you do not, you risk reserved funds being reallocated.

If you do not attend for enrolment reserved funds will be reallocated.

At enrolment you will be asked to complete and sign an application form to the discretionary Learner Support Fund. Your benefit evidence will be held with the application. Please note that periodically you may be asked to provide evidence that your entitlement to support continues.

Additional Information

Where there are exceptional circumstances, reasonable adjustments to the policy can be made.

As funds are limited an early application is advisable.

Where appropriate the funds will be paid to a third party, not directly to the student.

The information provided is correct at time of publication but may be subject to change in line with Government guidelines.

If you require advice or information please contact Lynne Sterry on ext 3404 or at sterryl@chelmsford.ac.uk

This policy applies to the academic year 2011/2012 and is reviewed annually.

All financial assistance is subject to the availability of funds.