

# **LEARNER SUPPORT FUND – 2020-2021 GUIDANCE FOR STUDENTS**

## **AGED 19 AND OVER**

For students aged 19 or over &  
For students on the Advanced Learner Loan Scheme

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*Information in italics have been put in place because of the COVID-19 pandemic.*

## 1. Introduction

The Learner Support Fund Bursary Scheme and the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund Scheme exist to help students continue with and complete their course where they would otherwise be unable to do so on financial grounds. The amount granted to students should make a significant impact on them coming to College or being able to remain on their course.

For students aged 19 and over the following bursaries are available:

- 19+ Hardship Fund
- Advanced Learner Loan Fund
- 20+ Childcare Fund

The details in this guidance follow the guidelines given to the College by our funding agency, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

There is no entitlement to receive a bursary even if a student meets all the eligibility criteria. If the student does not have any additional costs associated with coming to College or if there are no funds available, no further bursaries will be given.

## 2. Who Can Apply To The Learner Support Fund?

### 2.1 Criteria ALL Students Must Meet

ALL students must:

- Be enrolled on an ESFA funded course at Bradford College (excluding courses in the Community Section of the prospectus).
- Aged 19 or over on 31 August 2020. There are some exceptions to this and these students will be funded through the 16-19 Learner Support Fund Bursary.
- Need financial support to enable them to be able to afford to come to College.
- Meet the income requirement which is having a gross household income of £25,000 or less.
- Be fully engaged with their learning activities – this includes attending their classes/placements regularly and undertaking any on-line learning activities set for them (see section 5).
- Students must meet the residence requirement. Information about this will be gathered at enrolment. See section on Asylum Seekers for exceptions.

In addition, students must meet ONE of the following:

- Be studying up to and including a Level 2 course.
- Be aged 19 to 23, studying a Level 3 course and be receiving full tuition fee remission under ESFA regulations.
- Be aged 19 or over, studying a Level 3 or Level 4 course and be in receipt of the Advanced Learner Loan.

ALL students must NOT

- Be eligible to receive financial support from other funds, e.g. waged apprenticeships, work based learning.
- Be on day release from prison or released on temporary licence.

- Be studying a Higher Education course. Bradford College and other HE institutions have other funds that students on Higher Education courses can apply to.

### 2.1.1 Household Income

Students will meet the income requirement if they are in receipt of:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Pension Credit (Guarantee Credit)

This includes joint claims with their partner, if they are named on the award letter.

For other students their household income will need to be calculated. We take all the following income into account for the relevant people within the household:

- Wages/earned income
- Contribution based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Any Employment and Support Allowance that is NOT income related
- Working Tax Credits (discounting the childcare element)
- Standard Universal Credit payments – Universal Credit assess net income (ie after tax, national insurance and superannuation has been deducted). The Learner Support Fund income threshold is £25,000 gross (ie before these deductions). If tax, national insurance and superannuation are taken off £25,000, the net threshold for the Learner Support Fund is £19,920
- Carers Allowance
- Unearned income such as rent being paid to the student/partner or their guardian(s)

We do NOT count:

- Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payments
- Child Tax Credits or Child Benefit
- Childcare element of Working Tax Credits
- Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit
- Universal Credit payments made in replacement of any of the above

If a student can demonstrate that they do not have an income (either their own or with their partner) they can apply to the Learner Support Fund if:

- They are aged under 25 and a care leaver (as defined by the Children Act 1989).
- They have sufficient savings to support themselves during the year.

If a student has no means of support they will not be eligible for the Learner Support Fund.

## 2.1.2 Whose Income Will Be Assessed

### Financially independent students who do not have a partner

The income of the student is the income that will be assessed. To be classed as financially independent the student must have an income of £5,000 or more and be responsible for paying household bills or reasonable board payments.

### Students who have a partner

The income of both the student and their partner will be assessed.

### Students who are not financially independent

The people whose income will be assessed, will depend on who is in the household for example:

- If a student lives with parent(s)/carer(s), the income of parent(s)/carer(s) will be assessed.
- If a student lives with both parents/carers and their grandparents, it is the income of both parents that will be assessed. The grandparents' income will not be included.
- If a student lives with their parent and partner (who is not the student's parent) it is the income of both the parent and their partner that will be assessed.

## 2.2 Criteria For Childcare Support

As well as meeting the conditions in Section 2.1 students must also be:

- Using officially registered childcare provision.
- Be the primary carer for the child/children who need childcare.
- Using any free Early Education/Childcare Funding (paid by the Government) for the time they are in classes.

In addition, student must not:

- Be aged 19 at the start of the course. Students who are aged 19 should apply to Care to Learn for their childcare costs. Application process can be found on the Care to Learn website.
- Have a partner at home who can look after the child/children.
- Be in receipt of the Childcare Element of Working Tax Credits or Universal Credit for the time they are in College.

## 2.3 Asylum Seekers

In order to be eligible for funding from the Learner Support Fund students must be in receipt of NASS funding or be dependent on someone in receipt of NASS funding.

### **3. How To Apply To The Learner Support Fund**

All applications will be processed on-line from 2020-2021. Students can use College facilities to access computers if they do not have access to one at home.

#### **3.1 On-line Application – Through PayMyStudent**

This is the quickest and easiest way to apply.

To register students must visit <https://bradford.paymystudent.com/portal/>. Students will need to verify they are a student via their College email account or SMS text.

A short application form will need to be completed and supporting documents provided. All pages of the documents should be uploaded and the document should be clear and easy to read.

If insufficient evidence is provided, an email or text will be sent to the student informing them that they have additional things to do. An application will not be considered as complete until all documents have been received.

#### **3.2 Telephone Application - By Appointment**

In the rare circumstances where students cannot apply on-line it is possible to book a telephone appointment with a member of staff. They will go through the on-line application with the student. An agreement will be posted out for the student to sign and return. *When this is returned with all supporting documents and the papers have been quarantined for an appropriate time, the application will be complete.*

All supporting documents must have the student's name and College ID number clearly written on them.

The College does not take any responsibility for papers that are lost in the post.

### **4. How Learner Support Fund Applications Are Processed**

Applications will be processed on a first come, first served basis. All applications will be date and time stamped when they are complete – see above for more information about this.

When a decision has been made this will be sent out by email (post will be used for those applying under 3.2). Students who apply on-line through PayMyStudent will be able to see the decision as soon as it has been made.

## 5. Attendance/Course Changes And Withdrawals

### 5.1 Normal Levels Of Participation/Attendance

Students are expected to engage in all learning activities that are set for them. This includes, but is not limited to, attending classes and placements, participating in on-line activities and completing any home studies set. Participation will be carefully monitored. Students whose participation is below the required level will have their payments reviewed. The first step in this process will be to monitor attendance of classes.

Any unauthorised absences (which includes sickness) will lower a student's actual attendance. Authorised absences do not lower a student's actual attendance. Students are expected to report any absence in line with Bradford College's attendance policy. *Where students are self-isolating this will be taken into account, but it will be the student's responsibility to notify us that they were self-isolating.*

### 5.2 Special Circumstances

Flexibility will be given to students with medical conditions and/or other special circumstances that are disclosed to FE Student Funding. However, all students must attend/participate at a level that will enable them to successfully complete their course.

Where a student is working with an adviser or member of staff to improve their attendance/participation their previous record can be ignored and their attendance/participation monitored from a specific date.

Where a student has signed an attendance/participation agreement with FE Student Funding/the College.

### 5.3 Suspensions

If a student has been suspended from College pending disciplinary action one of these options will be applied to their attendance:

1. If, when investigated, the outcome of the disciplinary procedures is that there is no case to answer, the time the student is absent will not affect their overall level of attendance.
2. If, when investigated, the outcome of the disciplinary procedures is that there is a case to answer, any suspension WILL count towards their attendance calculations.

### 5.4 Transfers

Where a student transfers to another course, their level of attendance will be judged only on their new course.

Where a student transfers to another course they may not automatically qualify for another course materials payment.

## 6. What Financial Support Can A Student Get?

All applications are assessed individually and how much money a student gets depends on personal circumstances.

The assessment that is done will be based on the courses the student is enrolled on at the time they apply to the Fund. If they enrol on additional courses after this, it is their responsibility to notify the Student Finance Team so they can be re-assessed.

Every care is made to ensure each student receives the correct assessment. However, if an error is made in assessing a student's grant and too much is awarded to the student, the College reserves the right to amend the award and, if already paid, ask for the money to be repaid. If too little has been awarded to the student this will be amended so the student receives the correct amount.

Below are the guidelines used to decide what help is available for each student.

*The information in this section is flexible and will depend on how the COVID-19 lockdown easing progresses.*

### 6.1 Course Related Costs

The maximum initial grant available for course related costs depends on the duration of the student's course:

Full-time students (for full year)	£100
Full-time students (for part year)	£50
Part-time students (for full year)	£50
Part-time students (for part year)	£25

Part year payments will normally be provided to students on courses that last 20 weeks or less. The figures given are not for each part-time course, but for ALL part-time courses being studied. Therefore, initially, a student studying 1 GCSE will be eligible for the same maximum payment as a student studying 3 GCSEs.

Where students are on courses that have very low or no course costs students may be awarded less than the maximum amounts shown above. Where students are on high cost courses and the amounts given do not cover the costs, if funds are still available in March/April, students will be invited to bring in receipts/price lists (signed by their tutor) to claim additional funding. The maximum that will be awarded to any student is £500 even if the student is taking a number of courses.

Where a student is funded by tuition fee remission or the Advanced Learner Loan non-essential equipment/materials will be considered to enhance a student's chances of passing their course or improving their grades.

## 6.2 Travel Costs

Where a student lives more than a mile from their place of study they will be considered for help with travel costs. Where there are medical or other reasons why a student cannot walk a mile and third party evidence is provided about this, consideration will be given to giving help with travel costs.

The following help is available:

Where a student is in College 3 or more days per week and uses First Buses:

First Termly & First Monthly Student Bus Passes

Where a bus pass is lost or stolen a charge of £20.00 will be made for a replacement. This is only available once in any academic year.

Where a student is in College 3 or more days per week and uses other transport:

Payments equivalent to the cost of the First Termly & Monthly Student Bus Passes

Students in College 1 or 2 days per week:

Payment equivalent to the cost of First Day tickets

If funds are still available (usually in March/April), additional payments can be made based on a student's actual costs – providing the student is travelling by the cheapest reasonable method of travel.

## 6.3 Taxi Fares

If a student must use taxis because:

- They have an injury which means they cannot use public transport:  
Amount payable: Full cost of taxi up to a maximum of £500.
- They have a disability and cannot access public transport and are not entitled to transport or funding (e.g. Mobility Element of Disability Living Allowance) for transport through another means:  
Amount payable: Up to 50% of the actual costs, maximum of £1,000 per year

It will be the student's responsibility to notify the Student Finance Team that they fall into one of these categories and to provide appropriate supporting information.

At least one taxi receipt will be requested to confirm the cost of the journey. If possible this should also be done in emergency situations, but this must not delay support being given.

## 6.4 Tuition/Examination Fees

Eligible students will receive 50% of their tuition fees and 100% of their examination fees.

The maximum payable for tuition fees is: £525.00

The maximum payable for examination fees is: £250.00

## 6.5 Childcare Costs

Students will receive childcare support for the number of days they have to attend College classes, any compulsory non-paid placements and any other essential learning activities they cannot do with their child/children present.

Where children are eligible for Early Education/Childcare Funding, this must be used for the time the student is engaged in essential learning activities.

Maximum payable:

1 child £40 per day

2 or more children £80 per day (no individual child will receive more than £40 per day)

If the maximum levels set do not cover the full childcare costs the student will need to pay the additional costs.

The amounts that the Learner Support Fund will pay so not include payment for meals whilst in childcare. It is the student's responsibility to pay for their children's meals.

If a childcare provider charges during school holidays – regardless of whether the child attends the nursery, the Learner Support Fund will pay over the following College holidays: Half term holidays, Christmas holiday and Easter holiday.

## 6.6 Meals Whilst At College

In exceptional cases students may be put onto the Learner Support Fund Meal Scheme which provides them with a meal whilst at College. This is usually as a result of a referral from an appropriate member of staff within the College.

## 6.7 Asylum Seekers

Students who are Asylum Seekers can only receive payments that can be made in vouchers (usually travel passes) or where payment can be made to a third party for services (e.g. to a childcare provider).

### Travel

Where a student lives more than a mile from their place of study they will be given bus passes. The following passes will be issued:

Where a student can use First Buses

Students in College 2 or more days per week:

First Termly & First Monthly Student Bus Passes

Part-time students (1 day in College):

First Daily Vouchers

Where a student cannot use First Buses:

Where possible Metro, bus only tickets will be provided

## Childcare

The normal rules for childcare will be applied except that there is NO provision to pay the student directly if the childcare provider does not register with the College.

## **7. How We Pay The Learner Support Fund Bursary**

### **7.1 Payments For Travel, Books And Materials**

Payments for books and materials and, when bus passes are not provided will be made by BACs into a student's own account. Where a student is unable to have a bank account and a Power of Attorney is in place for the student (evidence required), payment can be made to a third party.

Students who are Asylum Seekers are not allowed to receive payments by BACs (or any other direct payment to them).

No award of less than £20 will normally be made.

### **7.2 Payment Of Tuition/Exam Fees**

Where payments are due for tuition/exam fees, these will be paid to the College unless the College Finance Office confirms that all fees have been paid. In this case payment will be paid into the student's bank account.

### **7.3 Payment Of Childcare Costs**

Childcare payments will normally be made in advance to the childcare provider. Childcare providers must register with the College by accepting the terms and conditions for childcare payments from the Learner Support Fund. They also need to provide their OFSTED (or other appropriate) registration and bank details.

Where a childcare provider is unwilling to register, the College reserves the right not to give childcare support.

In rare circumstances childcare payments will be made to the student. In this situation payments will be made in arrears and the student will need to prove they have paid their childcare provider.

Payments will be made in blocks, covering a number of weeks. Attendance will be checked before each payment is made. A schedule will be provided to both the parent and childcare provider.

Complete applications received by the Student Finance Team before half term (October) or within 4 weeks of a student's start date will be backdated to the beginning of the course (or the date when childcare started).

Applications received after this will only be backdated to the beginning of the week in which they are received. If funds are available later in the year, childcare might be backdated to the beginning of the course.

Childcare payments covering any one period of time for any child will not be paid to two different childcare providers. Therefore, if a student leaves one childcare provider and starts using a different provider, there will be no overlap in payment. If a student does not want to leave at the end of a specific payment period, they will have to pay any difference in funding themselves.

Normally childcare payments will end when the student's study finishes (usually the end of June). If funds are still available childcare may be paid to students who use registered childcare over the summer period. This is providing:

- The student is returning to study at Bradford College in September. The course can be either FE or HE, but must show progression, i.e. be a level or year higher.
- The childcare provider charges to keep the place available.
- The student's child does not reach school age by September.
- The student continues to use the same childcare.

## **8. Discretion In Special Circumstances**

In the majority of cases the Learner Support Fund – 2020-2021 Guidance For Students Aged 19 And Over will be followed. However, it is recognised that special circumstances may arise that cannot be written into guidance. Therefore, the Student Funding Co-ordinator has discretion to respond on an individual basis, if it is felt that there is genuine need. This is to ensure that a student can start or be able to continue their course.

## **9. Appeals/Complaints Procedure – All Funds**

Appeals can be made if a student feels this guidance has not been followed and this has resulted in them not being given a bursary, or not receiving as much as the guidance states they should.

Appeals must be made within 10 working days of the date on their decision letter and must be in writing, clearly stating the grounds of the appeal. Appeals should be addressed to The Student Financial Support Committee, c/o FE Student Funding and emailed to [studentfunding@bradfordcollege.ac.uk](mailto:studentfunding@bradfordcollege.ac.uk).

The decision of the Student Financial Support Committee will be sent in writing (usually by email) and their decision will be final.

If a student's situation changes during the academic year, there is no need to submit an appeal. They should contact the FE Student Funding (by email or telephone) so any new evidence can be considered.

## **10. Fraud – All Funds**

Where there is evidence of fraud, the evidence will be reviewed by the Student Financial Support Committee and, if fraud is confirmed, this will result in:

- The loss of all future payments. OR
- The loss of some payments not already made. OR
- The student being asked to repay ALL funding received and the loss of all future payments.
- Disciplinary action.

In certain circumstances the College may have a duty to pursue fraud as a criminal matter.