



24+ Advanced Learning Loan Bursary Fund Policy 2014-15

1. Introduction

The Bursary provides a single flexible budget to fund support for disadvantaged and vulnerable learners. All learners who have had a loan approved by the Student Loans Company (SLC) and have registered for their course are potentially eligible, dependant on need.

The Bursary helps remove the barriers that Loans-funded learners might face by providing for:

- Discretionary Learner Support (DLS) for hardship and other difficulties such as childcare and travel. The fund can be used at the discretion of the provider to react to a learner's emergency needs and local circumstances
- Additional Learning Support (ALS) including exceptional ALS activity, for "in-learning" support such as for teaching assistant support, specialist equipment, technology and necessary adjustments under the Equality Act 2010).

The Bursary Fund is distributed at the discretion of the provider and is not a learner entitlement. However the Pilot IMS notes its Adult Learner Support responsibility under the Equalities Act 2010.

2. Policy and Procedures

The SFA has allocated the 24+ Advanced Learning Loan Bursary Fund to support learners aged 24+ who have had a loan approved by the SLC. In determining the policy that will govern the allocation of grants from the 24+ Advanced Learning Loan Bursary Fund, Pilot IMS has followed the guidelines provided by the SFA.

Priorities

Priority applicants for the 24+ Advanced Learning Loan Bursary Fund are learners who may be disadvantaged or vulnerable as a result of:

- having a learning difficulty and/or disability
- having a medical condition
- being ex-military personnel
- being a parent with childcare responsibilities who needs additional help with childcare costs
- an emergency short-term financial need (a learner may be at risk of withdrawing from learning without emergency support)

To meet its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, Pilot IMS will prioritise support for learners with disabilities who make timely applications to the 24+ Advance Learning Loan Bursary Fund.

(a) General Eligibility

Prior to application to the SLC

In order to qualify for substantial financial assistance towards disability support or childcare/additional childcare costs a learner must fulfill the following:

- have been interviewed and assessed by a member of Pilot IMS's enrolment team
- be identified as in need of support
- have had support needs identified and costed prior to approval

or

- have been identified as needing substantial financial assistance
- and have childcare needs confirmed and costed prior to approval

To have confirmation of required support from the 24+ Advanced Learning Loan Bursary Fund, a learner must:

- Have a loan approved by the SLC- verification will be required

(b) Income Criteria for financial support for childcare, course associated costs or exceptional circumstance.

One of the following criteria must be applicable to the applicant:

- On a low income / be a dependant of someone who is on a low income, in receipt of a means tested benefit e.g. Income Support / Jobseekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance and or be in receipt of the highest level of Child Tax Credits.

(b i) Financial assessment

A financial assessment will be carried out in all cases. The learner will be required to provide recent proof of income & rent/mortgage payments:

- A current income support/pension/working tax credit certificate, recent correspondence from the DWP/HMRC which specifies the benefit being received, a signed and stamped letter from the benefit agency. (Pro forma letters are available from faculty administration offices).
- A P60

Income from Disability Living Allowance will not be counted as income in the financial assessment.

Original documents must be presented for assessment. Learners may be asked to re-present these if required for audit purposes.

(c) Other

- Students, who are in receipt of other state funding to support their study e.g. enrolled on JCP courses will not be eligible for 24+ Advanced Learning Loan Bursary Fund support

(d) Amounts Allocated

Childcare: maximum allocation per child is £175 x maximum of 43 weeks = £7,525

(di) Eligibility for funding for childcare

- *Arrangements will be made with students on an individual basis.*

- *Registered child minders and targeted nurseries will be used where there is availability.*
- *Childcare will only be paid for days when a student is attending Pilot IMS unless there are exceptional circumstances to support extra childcare support.*
- *Nursery places will be subject to a contract between Pilot IMS/student/nursery.*
- *Childcare payments are made subject to students reaching 85+% attendance on a monthly basis.*
- *Students will only be eligible for a maximum of 3 years childcare funding per family.*
- *Students will only be eligible for a maximum of £175.00 per child, per week towards the cost of childcare. Students requesting funding for more than 2 children will have their request consider by Pilot IMS.*

(dii) On course costs:

- Learners can apply for course associated costs (e.g. travel or books) however applications will only be considered if funds are available after the priority payments are allocated.

(diii) Exceptional Circumstances:

- The Student Advisors may make one-of-payments to students in case of exceptional hardship.

(f) Application Process

Applications will be considered by a Panel whose members include the Operation manager, Quality manager and Project Managers.

(g) Monitoring of Expenditure

Where activity takes place the company's Director will prepare a financial summary for the consideration of the panel. This will include a statement of the total allocations agreed to date, the total funds paid out to date, and the uncommitted balance. In addition to a financial summary, this will include an analysis, by age and mode of attendance, of the applications received and the decisions made as well as a report showing the percentage retention rate for students in receipt of Funds.

Learners allocated 24+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary Fund payments will be indicated on the allocated ILR field.

(h) Other relevant information

The 24+Advanced Learning Loans Bursary Fund cannot be:

- Used to pay tuition/ exam fees
- Vired between either the co-existing DLS or ALS fund, nor the 16 – 19 Bursary fund

- **All applications will be considered on a first come, first served basis. Being eligible does not guarantee funding.**
- Grants are awarded for the duration of the student's course subject to the continuing availability of funds and there being no change in income available to the student. A financial assessment will be carried out each year. Monies unallocated at the end of the first two terms will be used to increase support for the current recipients/support additional applications.

(i) Appeals

Should a student be unsuccessful in an initial application for support from the 24+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary Fund, s/he will be encouraged to seek advice in writing from Pilot IMS's Director who will be able to identify if grounds exist for a re-submission to the Panel, offer advice on alternative possible sources of help and assist the student in preparing an appeal if necessary.