

## **19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) & Loans Bursary Policy and Procedure for 2023/24 Academic Year**

The DLSF and Loans Bursary Funds are available to support learners who are undergoing financial hardship, which may prevent them from accessing and participating in learning.

To access these support funds, you must meet the personal eligibility rules set out in the Education Skills Funding Agency's guidance.

Funding is limited and any awards are made at the discretion of Thurrock Adult Community College. Once the annual allowance for support funds have been fully allocated, no further awards can be made in the remainder of the academic year. The College reserves the right to amend, or change offers of support to best meet the needs of the learners applying to this fund.

Continuing pressures on the College's budget and finances impact on our ability to offer support to individuals. We review our criteria and award amounts yearly to ensure we can offer help to as many learners as possible who are aiming towards finding sustained employment.

**You can apply to either fund only if you have lived in the UK for at least 3 years (or if you meet any of the exemption rules to the ESFA residency criteria), are aged 19+ (as at the 1<sup>st</sup> August) and you are unemployed, or your income is between: £20,319.01 to £27,189.80 per annum (gross)**

Your degree of financial hardship will be established as part of the application process. You will be required to provide evidence showing your personal income, inclusive of benefits.

Eligibility to claim from either fund does not automatically entitle you to an award and any award made is subject to satisfactory attendance, behaviour and achievement. Overall attendance can be no less than 90%, with full attendance required for every assessment and exams session.

It is your responsibility to tell the Department for Work and Pensions about any learner support you are receiving from us, as learner support payments may affect eligibility to state benefits.

**Eligibility** means those learners who are enrolled on an Adult Skills funded course (level 2 or below) or a L3 Jobs Offer course who are receiving either co or full funding for the course or who have an Advanced Learning Loan. You must also meet residency criteria and be fundable individual.

**There is no automatic entitlement. Applications are based on your personal circumstances which may include your total annual gross income.**

**Courses up to Level 2 & Courses at Level 3 under the National Jobs Offer scheme:  
Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF)**

Before making an award the learner's specific financial hardship need must be identified within the following areas: (DLSF guidance: Education Skills Funding Agency):

- ✓ 19 or over and in financial hardship
- ✓ 20 or over with childcare difficulties

You must be attending an Adult Education Budget (AEB) funded course up to Level 2 or be funded at Level 3 as part of the entitlement under the National Jobs offer.

### **Courses Level 3 and above: Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund**

You must be in receipt of an Advanced Learning Loan to access this funding.

Before making an award the learner's specific financial hardship need must be identified within the following areas: (DLSF guidance: Education Skills Funding Agency):

- ✓ 19 or over and in financial hardship
- ✓ 20 or over with childcare difficulties

If you are under 20 and require support with Childcare fees, for any course, you can find information on Care to Learn on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

## **What can I get funding for?**

### **Course and exam fees (Adult Skills courses only)**

The Discretionary Learner Support Fund may pay up to a 100% contribution towards your course and exam fees. Fees will be paid directly to the office where the learning takes place. You will be expected to pay any outstanding amount yourself. Contributions will be based on your total annual gross income (see table below).

### **Childcare (Adult Skills, L3 Jobs Offer and Adult Learner Loan funded courses)**

This is for learners aged 20 and over where childcare is a barrier to learning and who are not already accessing "[Care to Learn](#)" funding. The Discretionary Learner Support Fund or Loans Bursary may help towards childcare costs for the following:

- ✓ The days when you are timetabled to attend the course or examination
- ✓ Attending placements which are compulsory to the successful completion of the course

Your **childcare provider must be Ofsted registered**. A registered childcare provider can be a; Childminder, Crèche or Nursery.

The amounts awarded will depend on personal income and arrangements of student and provider, up to a maximum of £21.94 per session, per child (any additional/remaining balance will need to be paid for by the learner). Payment is made directly to the childcare provider and will cover only the period the learner is studying/attending lessons (at a venue or online), plus an allowance for travelling time.

### **Educational Visits and Placements - Travel (Adult Skills, L3 Jobs Offer and Adult Learner Loan funded courses)**

Either Fund may pay a contribution towards the cost of travel for educational visits and placements essential to the course. You cannot claim for travel if you live within 1 mile of the educational visit venue or placement for your course. If you do not drive you must use public transport where available. You will be required to supply evidence such as bus/train tickets. You will not be reimbursed for taxis unless in exceptional circumstances (at the discretion of the College). Mileage is reimbursed at 14.3p/mile.

### **Books & Equipment - essential (Adult Skills, L3 Jobs Offer and Adult Learner Loan funded courses)**

One or two books might be 'core texts' which are essential for the completion of the course of study. The cost of materials/books is supplied by the Programme Manager/Tutor and any award made will be based on this information. Equipment must be essential to your study, for example: specific clothing required for the course, tools for the trade, devices to aid online access to learning materials etc. This can only be provided where if you were not to have this equipment it would be a barrier to learning. This is at the discretion of the College.

All equipment remains the property of the College and must be returned to the Learner Services/Reception on completion of your course. Failure to do so will result in the cost of any equipment or materials becoming payable.

### **External Registration Fees (Adult Skills, L3 Jobs Offer and Adult Learner Loan funded courses)**

You can apply for support with DBS check fees, Professional Body Membership fees and any other relevant external fees related to the course if it is an essential requirement of undertaking the qualification. You cannot apply if this is already included in the course fee or where your employer is required to cover these costs (eg. if you are undertaking the course at the request of your employer or as part of your employment requirements). This is at the discretion of the College.

### **Other, eg. Transport (Adult Skills and Adult Learner Loan funded courses)**

In exceptional cases either fund may pay a contribution towards travel to or parking\* at the venue of your course, on lesson days, where this could be a barrier to attending. You will be reimbursed for the amount approved upon providing a valid receipt of travel. This could be copied by the College for audit purposes and held on file. Failure to provide the required receipt will result in no reimbursement being made. This only applies to those using public transport such as buses, trains and taxis (in exceptional circumstances and only if agreed prior to travelling). Either fund will not contribute towards private transport, car mileage, or weekly/monthly/annual travel passes. This is at the discretion of the College.

\* only an amount for the hours of your course can be reimbursed. If your ticket is for longer than your lesson plus 30 minutes, a calculation will be made and you will only receive the amount for your lesson plus 30 minutes. You will also be required to provide your car registration number and evidence of ownership (eg. your V5 log book or an insurance certificate showing you are permitted to drive the vehicle) before any reimbursements can be made to you.

## **Contribution rates**

Contribution rates are based on individual circumstances and total annual gross income. The table below defines the contribution percentage for the fund & individual within the rules stated above. Childcare has a maximum award of £21.94 per session, per child

<b>Individual Bands - Percentage of support to be provided by the DLSF</b>			
<b>Band</b>	<b>Individual Status</b>	<b>% Contribution</b>	
		<b>fund</b>	<b>learner*</b>
1	<b>Individuals in receipt of JSA, ESA or Universal credit</b> (earning under £617 per month (single household) or £988 per month (joint household) take-home pay <sup>#</sup> not including benefits) or individuals funded under Low Wage Funding (LWF)	100%	0%
2	<b>Unemployed:</b> available/looking for work and taking course to gain employment or improve work prospects	100%	0%
3	<b>Unemployed:</b> not available/looking for work and/or not taking course to gain employment or improve work prospects	75%	25%
4	<b>Unemployed:</b> not eligible for benefits and/or not permitted to work but receive regular payments totalling under £20,319.01 per annum (eg. Home office support payment, charity support, Au-Pairs 'pocket money' etc)	100%	0%
5	<b>Employed:</b> in receipt of a means tested benefit (eg. Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Working Tax Credits)	75%	25%
6	<b>Employed<sup>^</sup>:</b> income between £20,319.01 - £23,755.94 per annum + taking course to improve career prospects within local labour market	75%	25%
7	<b>Employed:</b> income between £23,755.95 - £27,189.80 per annum + taking course to improve career prospects within local labour market	50%	50%

\* this will be your contribution to the cost of the element you are applying to the fund for support. For childcare support, this is your contribution towards the maximum funded amount of £21.94.

<sup>^</sup> Any learner who is in paid/self employment, earning less than £20,319 per annum (gross) is eligible for full funding (on AEB/Adult Skills courses up to & including Level 2) providing they can evidence this.

<sup>#</sup> An unemployed learner may also receive an income alongside their benefit claim. In order to be fully funded (on AEB/Adult Skills courses up to & including Level 2) under the unemployed definition "take home pay" (stated on the Universal Credit statement) is less than £617 a month (sole adult in their benefit claim) or less than £988 a month (joint benefit claim with partner).

## How do I apply?

In order for us to establish financial hardship and your eligibility to apply to either fund, you will need to speak to a member of staff and provide any information or evidence as requested.

If you are employed, you will need to provide one piece of evidence from the list below:

- ✓ Last 3 months' / 6 weeks' pay slips
- ✓ P60 from last financial year
- ✓ Letter from employer, dated within 3 months, detailing your annual gross salary
- ✓ Financial statement from your accountant (for those who are self-employed)
- ✓ Tax return to HMRC (for those who are self-employed)

If you are in receipt of any benefits, you must declare this at the point of application, and this will be recorded as a self-declaration. You might be required to produce evidence of your benefits at any time during your application process where the College feels this is necessary.

**Please note, without all the required information or acceptable evidence (where applicable) your application cannot be processed.**

## Payment/Reimbursement

In most cases any payments that are to be made will be paid directly from the fund to the appropriate department or provider. The only exception to this is for transport costs, these can be reimbursed via a pre-payment card or bank transfer. For all transport reimbursement you must provide evidence (eg. receipts) of payment of travel and this must be for the day of your lesson.

## Appeals

A learner who is not happy with a decision relating to their application may appeal, in writing to the Principals PA. Email: [p.denmark@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:p.denmark@thurrock.gov.uk). This will be logged, passed to the Principal for consideration and you will be informed of the outcome.

## How we will use your information

We will use your information to provide the service requested. We may share your personal data between our services and with partner organisations, such as government bodies and authorities. We will do so when it is of benefit to you, or required by law, or to prevent or detect fraud. To find out more, go to [www.tacc.ac.uk](http://www.tacc.ac.uk).