

19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund (DLSF) & Loans Bursary **Policy and Procedure for 2024/25 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) and your income is: £33,453.85 per annum or under – those aged 19+

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 and meet any one of the criteria as listed below, plus the mandatory item f:

- a) Those in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Universal Credit (within the income limits) or an income based benefit, or on a low income
- b) The unwaged dependant of a person in receipt of JSA, ESA or an income based benefit and is seeking employment
- c) Those taking an English, ESOL or maths programme of study
- d) Adults undertaking a first full level 2
- e) Those aged 19+ and undertaking a first full level 3
- f) If you have received financial support in previous years, you must have completed the course of study with the required level of attendance

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 Skills Funding (ASF) funded course up to Level 2 or be funded at Level 3 as part of the entitlement under the National Jobs offer.

What can I get funding for?

Course and exam fees (Adult Skills courses up to Level 2 only under ASF)

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 (ASF, 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 £24.51 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 (ASF, 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 (ASF, 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 (ASF, 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 (ASF, L3 Jobs Offer 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 will 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, daily travel tickets, weekly travel tickets or monthly travel tickets. This is at the discretion of the College. Receipts and claims must be received by the College no later than 28 days (4 weeks) from the date of travel/lesson; any received after this date will not be paid.

* 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.

How do I apply?

In order for us to establish financial hardship and your eligibility to apply to either fund, you must complete the relevant [application form](#) and submit with proof of your income including any benefits. We will expect to see the following documents:

- ✓ A copy of at least 3 months' pay slips for all working learners
- ✓ Proof of any benefits awarded to any adult in the household
- ✓ A copy of your most recent bank statement

Please note, without acceptable evidence 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 bank transfer (paid monthly) or by pre-payment card (weekly). For all transport reimbursement you must provide evidence (eg. receipts) of payment and this must be handed to a member of the Learner Experience Team within 28 days (4 weeks) of the date of travel / lesson.

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.

Appeals

A learner who is not happy with a decision relating to their application may appeal, in writing to the Principal. Please email TACC@thurrock.gov.uk and address your appeal to the Principal.

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 £24.51 per session, per child.

Individual Bands - Percentage of support to be provided by the DLSF			
Band	Individual Status	% Contribution	
		fund	learner*
1	Individuals in receipt of JSA, ESA or Universal credit (earning under £892 per month (single household) or £1,437 per month (joint household) take-home pay# not including benefits) Individuals funded with a gross income under the earnings threshold (earning under £25,000 gross per year – unemployed or employed)	100%	0%
2	Unemployed: in receipt of benefits, joint claim income is over threshold but taking course to gain employment or improve work prospects	100%	0%
3	Unemployed: not taking course to gain employment or improve work prospects/does not want to work	75%	25%
4	Employed: in receipt of a means tested benefit (eg. Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Working Tax Credits)	75%	25%
5	Employed^: income between £25,000 - £29,228.97 per annum + taking course to improve career prospects within local labour market	75%	25%
6	Employed: income between £29,228.97 - £33,453.85 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 £24.51.

^ Any learner who is in paid/self employment, earning less than £25,000 per annum (gross) is eligible for full funding (on AEB/Adult Skills courses up to & including Level 3) providing they can evidence this.

#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 3) under the unemployed definition “take home pay” (stated on the Universal Credit statement) is less than £892 a month (sole adult in their benefit claim) or less than £1,437 a month (joint benefit claim with partner).

Foodbank Vouchers

The College is working in partnership with Thurrock Foodbank to offer food vouchers. If you, or another learner, finds themselves in a position of financial hardship and cannot put food on the table one week, please speak to a member of the Learner Experience Team, in complete confidence. We might be able to help you.