

## Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Policy

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This policy and procedure is subject to The Equality Act 2010 which recognises the following categories of individual as Protected Characteristics: Age, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion and Belief, Sex (gender), Sexual orientation, Disability.

# Advanced Learner Loans Bursary

## Introduction and Overview

1. This policy sets out the financial support available in 2023/24; the eligibility criteria and the conditions for continuous receipt of Bursary support for 19+ year old students who are in receipt of an Advanced Learner Loan attending Milton Keynes College.
2. Milton Keynes College of Further Education recognises that the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary has an important role to play in removing barriers for some learners accessing and completing further education courses. It is the aim of the College to optimise the impact of support linked to this funding on recruitment, attendance, retention, student progress and achievement rates.
3. The fund will be distributed in a consistent and transparent way and in accordance with the guidance issued by the Skills Funding Agency. Learner eligibility will be determined through assessments of student social and economic disadvantage.
4. It is the policy of the College to optimise the use of Advanced Loans Bursary to provide support to those people facing the greatest financial barriers to continuing in education. To ensure the funding has a positive impact, priority will be given to those defined as vulnerable or disadvantaged learners who are funding their learning with a loan and demonstrated a financial barrier which impacts upon their learning.
5. The Advanced Learner Loans Bursary may be used to fund hardship or childcare but not tuition fees. Hardship support can include course related costs (such as books, equipment, trips, exam fees or registrations with professional bodies), travel or support with domestic emergencies.
6. It can also fund learning support activity for 'in-learning' support for loans students, such as support for teaching assistants or reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.
7. Advanced Learner Loan Bursary funding should be utilised only to meet the eligibility criteria as outlined in the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Eligibility Criteria 23-24 and no funds should be utilised in conjunction with other discretionary learner bursaries.
8. Students aged 19+ are normally assessed as independent students and household income is assessed on their own income, together with that of their spouse/partner/parents if applicable. However, if a student has no income, household income will be based on the income of the person(s) on whom the student is dependent.

9. The Advanced Learning Loan Bursary is a discretionary fund and due to the limited nature of the fund, meeting the criteria does not guarantee funding. The bursary fund is income assessed and funds given to students within the allocation given to us by the ESFA. The College reserves the right to close the application process for students at any stage, with immediate effect, to ensure that spending does not exceed the allocation. Students are advised to apply at the earliest opportunity and ensure that all relevant supporting evidence linked to an application is provided in a timely way to access funding. The Bursary Team is on hand at both Chaffron Way and Bletchley sites to provide advice and guidance linked to bursary applications.

### **Eligibility**

- Students must provide evidence of how they meet the following strands of eligibility for financial support
- Age – Students must be aged 19+ on the first day of their course
- Advanced Learner Loan – Students must be in receipt of an approved Advanced Learner Loan for the course that they are studying at Milton Keynes College
- Household Income – Total household income must be below £35,000, evidence of all household income must be declared, and evidence provided.
- Vulnerability – students identified as a ‘vulnerable’ student, i.e. learning difficulties, health issues, disabilities, ex-military personnel and parents needing support with childcare, may be eligible for additional support.

### **Bursary Payments**

1. The amount of bursary provided will depend on individual circumstances and may be subject to change due to the availability of funds.
2. Payments will be adjusted for programmes that do not run over a full academic year.

### **Essential Course Costs**

3. Some courses have essential costs including books, materials, equipment, uniform, printing, trips exam fees or professional body memberships. A discretionary course cost bursary may be awarded, subject to household income and the availability of funds.
4. Essential course cost items must (wherever possible) be purchased through Milton Keynes College. All funds will be transferred internally from Bursary to the supplier.
5. The College will require the return of any equipment where a student withdraws from their course early. This equipment will then be available for reuse with consideration being given to hygiene and reasonable wear and tear.

## Meals

6. The meals bursary will be awarded for each day of timetabled attendance at College. This fund will be loaded onto the student's ID card to be spent at the College's food outlets. Any funds unspent at the end of each day will be cleared and new funds added for the next timetabled day that the student is in learning.

## Childcare Bursary (please see childcare guidance)

### Conditions and Procedures

7. The College awards bursaries based on a household income up to £35,000.
8. Learners who apply for the Bursary will be required to supply evidence of all household income and information about their actual need for support. This should be in the form of benefit or other official documents or verification from statutory or other agencies.
9. Payments are subject to satisfactory attendance, conduct and progress at college. The College reserves the right to suspend, delay or reduce payments where a student's attendance or conduct is giving cause for concern, in consultation with their curriculum area.
10. Staff administering the fund will examine attendance, disciplinary records and the timely submission of assessments for all bursary recipients on a weekly basis. Should the attendance of a student currently receiving bursary drop below 90% across a given four-week period, their award will be reviewed and may be either withdrawn or adjusted. This decision will be taken in consultation with relevant curriculum teams and will be informed by an understanding of the context of the issues linked to the performance of the student in question.
11. Should an applicant withdraw from their chosen course of study and decide to leave college, they may be required to repay monies or return equipment supplied/bought by the support fund.
12. Meal contribution will be accessed via student ID cards.
13. Students will be required to disclose any change of circumstances during the year, which may affect their eligibility for assistance. If a student in receipt of assistance withdraws or transfers before the completion of the course, they may be required to repay all or part of their award, or return any equipment purchased with their award.
14. Applicants will be notified in writing if their application has been successful including how payment will be made. Awards will be made to a third party or paid by internal budget transfer where possible. In all cases the application will

be judged on its individual needs as outlined in the ESFA guidelines. The amount awarded will be specific to each application.

15. Payments begin when a bursary application has been approved. The amount of bursary provided will depend upon individual circumstances and may be subject to change due to the availability of funds.
16. Applicants will receive written confirmation confirming the outcome of their application together with a payment schedule. Payments will be made by to providers directly wherever possible.
17. Incomplete application forms will be held until all requested information is received.
18. Full time students (students on a course detailed within the full time prospectus):
  - For students studying over a full academic year this could be an amount up to £400.00 per term
19. Part time students (students on a course detailed within the part time prospectus):
  - For students studying over a full academic year this could be an amount up to £250.00 per term
20. If a student is unhappy with their award decision, the procedure for appeal is outlined in the letter informing them that the application has been unsuccessful

### **Organisation and Responsibility**

This Policy reflects the Milton Keynes College Structure in May 2023. The policy is the responsibility of the Strategic Leadership Team.

The Bursary team are responsible for the administration of the fund.

### **Quality Assurance and Monitoring**

This policy will be reviewed annually.

Activity and budgets are reviewed on a monthly basis through the College Financial Review process.