

# 24+ Advanced Learning Loans

Monthly briefing: Edition 5 – September 2012

## Contents

[Key dates – things to look out for](#) (p.1-2)

[Communications materials to be issued from September 2012 onwards](#) (p.2-3)

[Potential national promotional campaign](#) (p.3)

[Preparing for the introduction of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans](#) (p.3-4)

[Follow up to July seminars](#) (p.5-6)

[Package of support](#) (p.6)

[Key contacts](#) (p.6-7)

From the 2013/14 academic year, loans will be available for learners in Further Education and training aged 24 and above studying at Level 3 and above, including Advanced and Higher Apprenticeships.

**This is the fifth in a series of briefings from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, designed to provide colleges and training organisations and others with information about this policy.** The briefings are produced jointly with the Skills Funding Agency, the Student Loans Company and HM Revenue and Customs. Further briefings will follow every month, published with the [BIS FE and skills e-newsletter](#). The earlier editions of these briefings can be accessed on the [24+ Advanced Learning Loans page](#) of the BIS website. In addition to the briefings, the page includes key documents such as the [market research](#).

The Skills Funding Agency and Student Loans Company are working with colleges and training organisations to help them prepare for the introduction of loans. We want all providers to be informed to ensure early engagement and allow colleges and training organisations to prepare for loans. The Skills Funding Agency has issued a revised version of its [Guide to 24+ Advanced Learning Loans](#) which includes updated FAQs.

## Key dates – things to look out for

- Look out in the [Skills Funding Agency's Update](#) and further issues of this briefing for details of: regulations; loans funding rules; more detail on the loans facility and its management; learner materials; future awareness raising events (see below); and updated Frequently Asked Questions.

- The Student Loans Company has recently launched a dedicated [website](#) covering business to business administration processes between SLC and colleges and training organisations. The website will be a key resource for providers going forward in respect of the processes covering confirmation and payment of loans, containing: latest news and bulletins; seminar programme details; information on the Learning Provider Services Advisory Group; support and resources for using SLC systems; and contact details. More information will be added to the website over the coming months. The website will also contain the link to the Learning Provider Portal once this is operational in 2013.
- 13 September 2012 - BIS officials meeting with representatives from AoC, AELP, 157 Group of Colleges, NIACE, TUC, NUS, UCU and UNISON to share results of first tracker survey.
- Early September 2012 – LSIS prospectus.
- Late September 2012 – communications to learners begin with materials being made available to support discussions and communications with potential learners.
- Late September 2012 – initial allocation or “loans facility” issued to colleges and training organisations for 2013/14 academic year.
- December 2012 – final confirmation of “loans facility” to colleges and training organisations for 2013/14 academic year.
- 1 April 2013 – learners can begin to apply for a 24+ Advanced Learning Loan for courses starting in the 2013/14 academic year.

## Communications materials to be issued from September 2012 onwards

It is clear that communication is a key part of ensuring that the introduction of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans is a success. We have had clear feedback from the sector as well as through research with learners of the importance of clear and comprehensive communications. That is why from the end of September we will start to make resources available to colleges and training organisations that they can use in their interactions with learners. These resources will be available via a practitioner online facility that is currently being set up by the Student Loans Company. The first set of materials, a factsheet and Frequently Asked Questions, focus on the key facts and information that learners need to know. Both of these have been tested with learners and received positive feedback. So we are confident they meet the needs of learners at this time.

We will also provide messages and Frequently Asked Questions for employers at the same time. The National Careers Service and Jobcentre Plus will also have access to all this information.

In early September, LSIS will make the next version of the [Prospectus](#) available on the Excellence Gateway. LSIS will be developing four toolkits, which will include case studies. Toolkit theme proposals are:

- strategy and planning

- financial analysis and planning
- communications, marketing and engagement
- quality.

The first will be published on the Excellence Gateway in October, the second and third will be published before the end of the year, and the fourth in March 2013. The LSIS consultant team on loans will be available from October 2012 and the details of how to contact this team will be set out in a future briefing.

Detailed funding rules and guidance will give colleges and training organisations the information they need about how loans will operate. The first version will be issued by the Skills Funding Agency in September with the final version in January 2013.

We will refresh and update materials for learners and employers in January 2013 following feedback from tracker surveys and these will be reissued before the launch of the application system in April 2013. In addition, the Student Loans Company will also issue the application form and associated guides on how to apply by the end of March 2013.

## **Potential national promotional campaign**

In parallel to the materials we are developing, as detailed above, we have engaged a strategic marketing company, Oxford Strategic Marketing (OSM) to explore whether there are any additional activities we can carry out to support the communication activities of colleges and training organisations. This would be activity that would supplement what is already planned (as set out above) and what we know colleges and training organisations have planned. We asked OSM to speak to a range of representatives from the sector as part of their work. OSM will be reporting their findings and recommendations to us in mid-September. We will give details of these in the October briefing.

## **Preparing for the introduction of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans**

We know that many colleges and training organisations are already using the information that is available to you to plan and prepare for the introduction of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans. Those of you that have an Adult Skills Budget contract with the Skills Funding Agency should be speaking to your Skills Funding Agency relationship manager, or if you are a sub-contractor then you should be in discussions with your lead/prime provider about the implication of loans for you and your provision. You will need to consider what impact the introduction of loans will have across your organisations including systems, processes and people. You will find the materials provided at the July seminars (see below) helpful in doing this. These materials can also be used to cascade the messages to relevant teams and staff in your organisation.

We asked Leicester College to set out what they had done to prepare for the introduction of loans and what their plans and priorities are in relation to loans. We hope that this case study is helpful to people and would like to thank Leicester for taking the time to set this out.

To prepare for the introduction of loans, we have set up a cross college steering group to advise on strategy and to lead the planning across Leicester College on the key aspects of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans such as curriculum course planning, MIS systems, IAG and admissions and Marketing and Communications.

Each lead on the steering group is ensuring that all their relevant staff are briefed on 24+ Advanced Learning Loans, and that they have time to consider the impacts and plan in changes and amendments to existing processes, systems and customer communications.

A cross college action plan has been drawn up and is monitored at the regular steering group meetings to ensure progress is being made. For example we have modelled a comparison of our learners in 2010/11 with 2011/12 to review which learners are aged 24 and above, which ones are eligible for fee remissions and which courses these learners are studying on. This has given us key courses and subject areas to focus on for planning in 13/14.

The major activities we have planned for the coming months are to produce our own Leicester College 24+ Advanced Learning Loans guides (available on and offline) from autumn 2012 onwards which are aimed at learners and parents. Separate communications linked in to existing College employer channels eg employer newsletters will be issued to this audience. Our initial planning timelines for these guides have been amended and we have adapted our planning during summer 2012 to ensure that the messages contained within our guides match those being issued by the learner and employer factsheets from BIS in September 2012.

We will also be providing separate staff/internal briefings/factsheets in the form of FAQs available on and offline with online

staff forums for staff to raise queries and concerns.

We have built training time into our dedicated staff development day in November 2012, for each team across the College to train their staff on 24+ Advanced Learning Loans on both product knowledge and on adapting systems, processes and procedures. This training will not only be for front line staff on dealing with learner queries, providing advice on financial support bursaries, learner IAG etc but for all course team leaders who could have queries from existing learners they teach/tutor, to support staff who input data, manage MI systems etc.

Looking ahead, we believe there will be several key strands to the activities we expect to undertake next year as we draw closer to the launch of the application system in April 2013: systems, learner IAG and quality assurance. A key focus is on our systems within College and how we monitor pending applications, updates on loan approvals as well as reporting on attendance, ensuring fee income is received accurately and timely etc. There will be substantial robust testing of our systems to ensure they are fit for use.

Learner IAG is key as this is a brand new product for our learners as well as us and they will be unsure of how the new loans systems will work, what fees can be taken as a loan, what financial support they will have available for childcare, transport etc and how secure their place is on the course. As a College we need to ensure that all our IAG and communications have consistent, high quality accurate messages which all staff fully understand and are confident in discussing with learners.

Quality assurance is vitally important across all our systems, processes and communications.

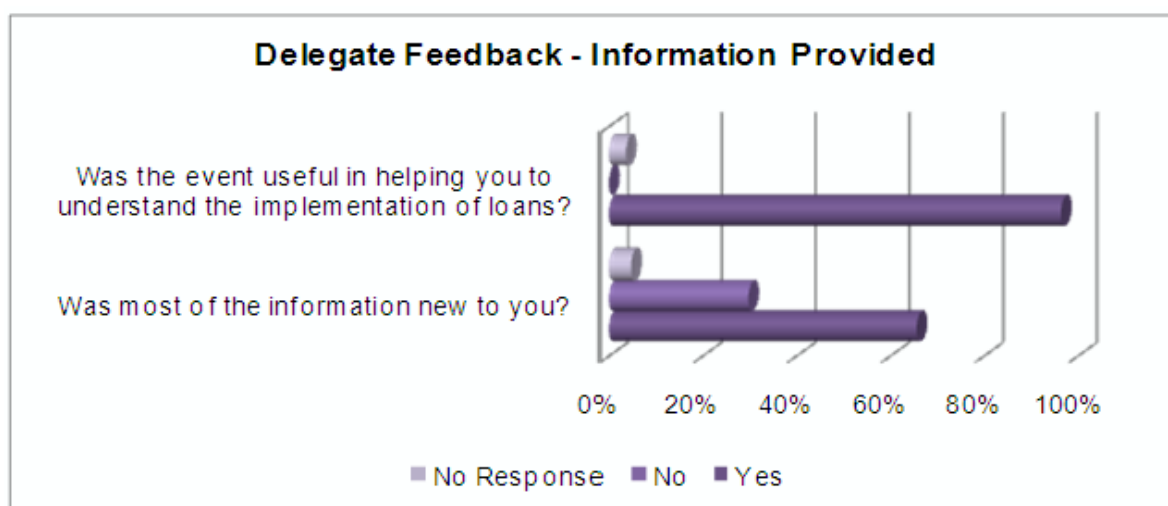
## Follow up to July seminars

During July 2012, the Skills Funding Agency and Student Loans Company ran four seminars for colleges and training organisations which were very well received. These seminars were supported by BIS, the Association of Colleges, the Association of Employment and Learning Providers and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service.

The seminars provided colleges and training organisations with the detail on the operating model for 24+ Advanced Learning Loans. This was presented in the context of a continuing programme of development ahead of implementation in April 2013.

Copies of [all slides and short films of each of the speaker inputs](#) are available along with information on the operating model for 24+ Advanced Learning Loans. You will also find the policy overview and frequently asked questions (FAQs) document on this page. The FAQs have been updated to reflect feedback and questions raised during these seminars.

Of the 616 college and training organisation delegates at the seminars, 276 (45 per cent) gave formal feedback. This chart shows a large majority found the seminars gave them new information and a better understanding of the implementation of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans.



Over 90 per cent of delegates who fed back reported that the speaker input and presentations were “excellent” or “good”. A sample of the comments received is as follows:

“The Learner Journey gave further information relating to the operating model enabling providers to look at their in-house processes in plenty of time” **(Training Organisation)**

“All information presented was useful and the discussion groups helped me understand there are lots of providers who have similar worries and concerns as I do.” **(Training Organisation)**

“I found the event very informative, on all aspects of the 24+ Advanced Learning Loan, in particular the operating model where information has not previously been made available. “

“This will allow for me to go back and cascade the information to members of the College Senior Leadership team and academic and support staff so we are well prepared for the implementation of 24+ Advanced Learning Loans.” **(College)**

We are building on the success of these seminars and looking at holding further events in the autumn. Details will follow shortly.

## **Package of support**

In the last edition of this briefing, we summarised the package of support announced by Minister John Hayes on 12 July. Below is a little more information about the detail of items included in the package:

### **Access to HE write-off**

This is an offer to individuals taking Access to HE Diplomas that on completion of their HE programme they can apply to the SLC to write off their outstanding loan amount. The write-off applies to Access to HE Diploma courses that are recognised by QAA (Quality Assurance Agency). If a learner completes his/her Access to HE Diploma he/she will be eligible to have this loan written off on completion (rather than achievement) of any HE course designated for Student Support. There is no time limit for progression from FE to HE and the Access to HE Diploma or the HE course can be undertaken on either a full or part time basis. Learners will enter repayment in exactly the same way as other learners and interest will also be applied in the same way. The SLC expect to be able to identify those learners that complete their HE course based on attendance confirmation for HE student support. Alternative evidence would be required if the write-off applies to those that do not access HE student support.

### **£50 million bursary fund**

The £50 million fund is designated to provide financial support to individual learners for learning related to costs that are not covered by the 24+ Advanced Learning Loan (transport, childcare etc) as well as costs associated with meeting additional needs of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The fund will be allocated to colleges and training organisations alongside their loan facilities in September, for them to use to support disadvantaged learners. The fund will be separate from existing Discretionary Learning Support (DLS) and Additional Learning Support (ALS) funds for grant funded learners.

### **Additional support through the National Careers Service**

In order to provide additional support to adult learners who are uncertain about loans, we are looking to develop some tools that would be used through the National Careers Service where they are working with learners in this category. We are working with NIACE and other partners on how best to develop these tools to respond to the issues that we have identified through the research with learners.

Further details on all items of the package of support announced on 12 July will be available in the next version of the Agency's FAQ document.

## **Key contacts**

If you have any questions about the Government's policy on the 24+ Advanced Learning Loan, please contact: Andrew King (BIS) on 0207 215 1585.

If colleges or training organisations have questions about the implementation of the 24+ Advanced Learning Loan, please contact your Skills Funding Agency relationships manager in 6

the first instance, or email [advancedlearningloans@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk](mailto:advancedlearningloans@skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk). If providers have any questions in relation to the administration systems and processes between SLC and providers, these can be emailed to [LPservices@slc.co.uk](mailto:LPservices@slc.co.uk).

© Crown copyright 2012

You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. Visit [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence), write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

This publication is also available on our website at [www.bis.gov.uk](http://www.bis.gov.uk)

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to:

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills  
1 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0ET  
Tel: 020 7215 5000

If you require this publication in an alternative format, email [enquiries@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@bis.gsi.gov.uk), or call 020 7215 5000.

**URN 12/P141/E**