

19+ Advanced Learning Loans Bursary Fund Policy 2023 – 2024

Author	Student Bursary Coordinator
Date	March 2023
Person Responsible	Vice Principal Information and Learning Resources
Approval/ review bodies	Senior Leadership Team
Frequency of Review*	12 months

**Policies will be reviewed more frequently if legal changes or good practice require*

Review History:		
Date	Reviewed by	Reason for review
Aug 2013	Student Services Manager	Policy written
Dec 2013	Student Services Manager	Policy updated
Dec 2014	Student Services Manager	Policy re-written
Jan 2017	Student Services Coordinator	Policy Update
Feb 2017	Student Financials Support Coordinator	Annual Review
Jul 2018	Student Financial Support Coordinator	Annual Review
May 2019	Student Financial Support Coordinator	Annual Review
Jun 2020	Student Financial Support Coordinator	Annual review
Feb 2021	Student Financial Support Coordinator	Annual Review
Apr 2022	Student Bursary Coordinator	Annual Review
Mar 2023	Student Bursary Coordinator	Annual Review

Contents

1.	Policy Statement.....	2
2.	Eligibility Criteria	2
3.	Travel Awards.....	5
4.	Child Care Awards.....	6
5.	Tuition Fee Awards.....	8
6.	Application Procedure.....	8
7.	Student Commitment	9
8.	Appeals.....	7
9.	Fraudulent Claims.....	10
10.	Data Protection	10

Related policies/documents:

16-18 Bursary Fund and Free Meals Policy;
19+ Discretionary Learner Support Fund Policy;
19+ GLA Discretionary Fund Policy; and
Residential Bursary Fund Policy.

1. Policy Statement

North Kent College ("the College") is a multi-sited Further Education institution and incorporates Hadlow College ("Hadlow").

The Education and Skills Funding Agency ("ESFA") provides a 19+ Advanced Learner Loan bursary fund which is distributed by the College to help learners who are receiving a 19+ Advanced Learning Loan to fund their tuition fees for a Level 3 or 4 course.

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

- 1.1. Discretionary Learner Support ("DLS") for hardship - assistance may be given with course registration fees, course materials fees, essential books, kit, equipment, uniform and travel and with childcare for students who are aged 20 or over.
- 1.2. 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. (This is not means-tested but is based on learner need).
- 1.3. Residential funding is available for students who meet the eligibility criteria as specified in the Residential Bursary Fund Policy. A maximum of 80% can be awarded towards Residential Accommodation costs (Hadlow students only).

The College distributes the fund to learners in accordance with ESFA Funding Guidance.

The College reserves the right to make changes to financial support provision in response to Government guidance and other mitigating factors.

ESFA guidance is updated regularly and may affect eligibility for funding. Any changes to this policy and financial support guidance will be communicated with all members of the College community at the time of any change.

Students who are in receipt of any state benefits, must ensure they inform the Department for Work and Pensions ("DWP") of any learner support they receive from the College, including any Bursary awarded.

Any bursary awarded covers term time only.

2. Eligibility Criteria

Students must have been approved for a 19+ Advanced Learner Loan for the full fees for a Level 3 (or above) course before applying for the 19+ Advanced Learner Loan Bursary. The bursary will only be approved once the Advanced Learner Loan has been approved and the student has enrolled.

Priority applicants for the 19+ Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund are for learners who may be disadvantaged or vulnerable due to:

- 2.1.** having a learning difficulty and/or disability;
- 2.2.** having a medical condition;
- 2.3.** being ex-military personnel;
- 2.4.** being a parent with childcare responsibilities who needs additional help with child-care costs; or
- 2.5.** severe financial need (learner may be at risk of withdrawing from learning without financial support).

The 19+ Advanced Learner Loan Bursary awards for hardship are made to students whose household income is less than the threshold set by the College. Where household income has dropped significantly, an award may still be made depending on the student's personal circumstances. In this case, the Student Bursary Coordinator at the College campus will make the final decision. This may be in the form of a partial award i.e. assistance with travel only.

Residential support is also available for Hadlow students who meet the above criteria and:

- 2.6.** who have a complex journey to the College and it takes more than two hours daily to get to and from the campus they are studying at (Hadlow);
- 2.7.** are enrolled on a full-time course which lasts for at least 10 weeks of the year;
- 2.8.** need to be on campus for early and late duties as an integral part of the course; and/or
- 2.9.** enrolled on a Land Based Course

Students who are aged 19 on 31 August (for September start) and continuing a study programme they began aged 16 to 18 (19+ continuers) or have an Education, Health and Care Plan ("EHCP") must provide evidence of household income including that of their parent(s)/carer(s).

For students who live with their parents (regardless of age), household income means the income of the parent(s), guardian(s), and/or the parent's partner(s) that they live with.

For student who live independently from their parents: household income is the student's own income, plus the income of any co-habiting partner, where relevant.

All residential bursary students must supply evidence of household income, including parent(s)/guardian(s)/partner(s). If a residential student is 19 and over and living with their parent(s)/guardian(s), then it will be the full household income that is used to determine eligibility.

It includes any income from employment or self-employment and income from any state benefits received. These include (but are not limited to):

- 2.10.** Income Support ("IS");
- 2.11.** Job Seekers Allowance ("JSA");
- 2.12.** Employment Support Allowance ("ESA");
- 2.13.** Tax Credits (Child and Working);
- 2.14.** State Pension Credit;
- 2.15.** Universal Credits;
- 2.16.** Housing Benefit;
- 2.17.** Council Tax Benefit;
- 2.18.** Personal Pension;
- 2.19.** Carers' Allowance; and/or
- 2.20.** Other income.

Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence payments and disability elements of tax credits are not included in the calculation of household income. However, evidence of these benefits is still required in order to consider the individual circumstances.

When applying for funding, students are required to provide full evidence of the household income before a bursary award can be made.

Eligibility for a 19+ Advanced Learner Loan bursary does not mean that the student is automatically entitled to an award. The 19+ Advanced Learner Loan Bursary fund is a limited fund and awards are allocated on a first come-first serve basis.

The student's attendance is monitored and any payments due will be withheld if their attendance falls below 90% (in all subjects). This is monitored on a monthly basis and the dates viewed are: 18th of the previous month to the 17th of the current month the bursary is due.

Any payments withheld or reduced due to attendance (residential fees), students/ parent(s) / guardian(s) are liable for any shortfall/difference in the reduced monthly payment for the month the attendance falls below the required 90%.

Bursary awards are tailored to the needs of the individual student and will depend upon the course that the student is on and where they live. Bursary awards made may include the following and are only a contribution towards costs and may not cover the full amount required:

- 2.21. course contribution/materials fee (this will depend upon the course and is a one-off payment);
- 2.22. the cost of essential books required for the course (as determined by the Head of Curriculum and is a one off payment);
- 2.23. essential kit, equipment or uniform required for the course (as determined by the Head of Curriculum and is a one off payment);
- 2.24. registration fee (this is a one off payment);
- 2.25. an award for travel (paid monthly in arrears - see below);
- 2.26. trips – deposit only. This is for mandatory trips that are required for the student to pass their course. **Not all trips are mandatory.** (Maximum £100 for the deposit only, this is a one off payment);
- 2.27. childcare – a contribution towards childcare for one nursery aged child (subject to terms and conditions and paid directly to the childcare provider); and/or
- 2.28. Residential Accommodation (Hadlow students only) – subject to meeting the College criteria. (Paid in monthly instalments to Hadlow) See separate Residential Bursary Fund Policy).

Note: Where students have applied for funding for course equipment or trips this funding will be made 'in kind' where possible or paid direct to the curriculum. If funding is paid to the student by BACS, this will not be paid until after the first half term.

All payments will be applied from the date of approval and not the date the application was submitted.

3. Travel Awards

An award for travel is made to students who live more than two miles away from the campus they are studying at or (for students studying at Dartford only) from Dartford Railway Station (since a free shuttle bus from the station is provided by the College). Travel payments are calculated using Google Maps.

3.1. A Monthly Travel Payment

A travel payment may be awarded to students depending on where they live and the number of timetabled days. Funding is at the discretion of the College and will consider the discounts available to students and if the student already has support in place from the local authority. It will only be a **contribution** to assist with travel and may mean the student is awarded funding for monthly ticket options for example. The maximum award for travel is £1,500 per student for the full academic year.

Students travelling from a London borough to any of the College's campuses will be required to use their 18+ Oyster card within the Oyster catchment area, which gives discounted travel. The College may contribute towards the discounted travel amount. If the student is studying at the Gravesend, Tonbridge or Hadlow, additional funds may be awarded towards the onward journey which is outside of the Oyster catchment area. The contribution will not exceed the cheapest option for travel to College.

Discounts such as these are reflected in assessments of funding allocated to students and the College may contribute to the cost of passes.

Awards for travel will be paid directly into the student's bank account via a BACS payment, in monthly instalments.

The student remains liable for their travel costs until an award is agreed and reimbursement for travel costs is not paid before this time.

All payments are made in arrears and under no circumstances will they be paid in advance.

4. Childcare Awards

An award for childcare may be made for students who are aged 20 or over, on the first day of learning, to assist with the costs of their childcare while they are in college. Funding is provided for full daily childcare for one child only, although consideration will be given to funding for additional school-age children who are attending out of school provision such as after-school clubs. Where the child is eligible for "free for two" funding or the 15 hours' free Government funding for three- or four-year old's, the student is expected to use this free childcare during the time they are at College and the College will then contribute towards any remaining childcare costs from the 19+ Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund.

Young parents who are below the age of 20 are not eligible for childcare from this fund. However, they may apply for financial support towards childcare through the government's Care to Learn ("C2L") scheme). For further information students should information visit <https://www.gov.uk/care-to-learn>

4.1. The following terms and conditions apply for childcare awards:

- 4.1.1 applications for childcare support must be submitted with essential documentary evidence, birth certificate, passport or adoption papers for the relevant child(ren);
- 4.1.2 it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the Childcare Agreement, provided by the College, is completed and signed by both themselves and childcare provider. This duly completed form must be received by the College before payments can commence;
- 4.1.3 the College will only pay for childcare during College term time. The student will be liable for any costs outside of these dates;
- 4.1.4 if the student finishes the course before the end of term, the College will only pay childcare costs up to when the student finishes and not to the end of term.
- 4.1.5 it is the student's responsibility to keep the childcare provider informed of their end date together with any changes to timetabled hours/days;
- 4.1.6 the College will only pay for the cost of one child's childcare for the days and hours that the student attends College or placements connected with the course;
- 4.1.7 the College will only pay if the student's attendance is 90% or above, unless there are mitigating circumstances. If the attendance level drops below 90%, the student will become liable for all costs;
- 4.1.8 the College pays monthly in arrears, never in advance;
- 4.1.9 the College will pay up to a maximum of £79.50 for a full day; £54 for half days (am); and £49.50 for half days (pm). If the child is eligible for any Government Funding, this grant amount will be deducted from the funds awarded;
- 4.1.10 the College will pay the childcare provider directly into their bank account at the end of the month in arrears. **Under no circumstances will the College pay the student;**
- 4.1.11 the childcare provider must have a current OFSTED rating of Good or above and provide their OFSTED registration number;
- 4.1.12 if the childcare award is withdrawn, the student will become liable for any further costs. Both the student and the childcare provider will be notified of this in writing;

4.1.13 once the student's timetable is known, the College will agree with the student and the childcare provider the fees payable per week and calculate the total fees for the whole of the academic year. This is based on the weekly fee multiplied by 35 weeks unless otherwise agreed by Student Financial Support Coordinator; and

4.1.14 the College does not pay any deposits, administration or retainer fees and the student is liable for any such fees.

5. Tuition fee awards

Tuition fees are not covered by the bursary fund.

6. Residential Fees

See separate Residential Fees Policy

7. Residential Bursary

A maximum award of 80% towards accommodation fees can be awarded, subject to meeting the household income threshold and Residential Bursary and Accommodation Criteria.

8. Raising awareness and application Procedure

The College has information on its website from April for the following academic year and information is marketed around the College. New applicants and returning students are sent a notification of the financial support available and the application process. The College works with the local authority and agencies in order to support students to access financial support.

The College has a single, online, Student Financial Support application form, which covers all the bursary funds. The online application form will be available on the College's website after Easter for the following academic year. Online applications help reduce the College's impact on the environment, however paper applications are available via the Student Bursary Team.

Bursary awards do not automatically carry-over from one year to the next and students will need to make a new application for each academic year. Along with their application, students will need to provide full evidence of household income for the current tax year. Where financial circumstances have changed from the previous year, a note needs to be made on the online application. This will be considered when the application is assessed. Applications submitted without full evidence of household income, cannot be processed and, in those circumstances, the Student Bursary Team will contact the student to explain what is required.

Students who are continuing at college for a further year should apply by 1 June for an award for the following academic year.

New applicants to the College are encouraged to apply before enrolment and, at the latest, by 1 August. Fully completed applications received by these dates will be assessed before the student enrolls; this will ensure that students who are awarded a bursary are notified before enrolment day and will, therefore, be aware if they need to make additional payments at enrolment.

Applications will be accepted after these dates, subject to funds being available. For applications received by 1 August, the College aims to assess these within 10 working days and will inform applicants if the assessment will take longer. Applications received after 1 August may take up to 30 working days to assess.

Students, however, will remain liable for any costs accrued at enrolment until the College has confirmed an award in writing.

The outcome of the assessment will be communicated to the student via their personal email held by the College, before enrolment. After enrolment any future correspondence regarding the bursary application will be sent via the student's College email and/or the student's personal email.

Application forms submitted without supporting documentation and evidence are not able to be processed. If applications are received without the required evidence, the Student Bursary Team will attempt to contact the applicant three times via telephone or email. If no response is received a final letter will be sent to the address the College holds on file. Copies of all correspondence sent regarding the Bursary can be found on the student Bursary portal along with the student's application.

9. Student Commitment

Awards are made on the understanding that the student maintains an attendance level of at least 90% (in all subjects), otherwise payments will be withheld or reduced.

The student's attendance is monitored on a monthly basis and the dates viewed are 18th of the previous month and the 17th of the current month the bursary is due.

If attendance drops below 90%, the payments will be withheld or reduced and the student is required to discuss with their tutor the reasons regarding the low attendance. If the tutor is happy with the reasons, then they must email Student Bursary (studentbursary@northkent.ac.uk) to request that the reduced payments be released. Consideration will be given to mitigating circumstances, such as: safeguarding, child protection; family illness; caring responsibilities; transport issues; and any other issues affecting the learner's attendance. For travel payments, the amount will be reduced to reflect the student's attendance. i.e. if the student has only attended 67% of the allocated time, then they will only receive 67% of the travel / residential award for the month.

10. Appeals

In the first instance, the student (or their parent(s) or guardian(s)) should contact the Student Bursary Coordinator and ask for a re-assessment of their situation. If the student is still not satisfied with the outcome an appeal can be made, in writing, within two weeks to the Head of the Department. The letter must clearly state why the award should be re-considered. The student may be asked to provide additional information or invited to discuss their individual circumstances as part of the appeal. The decision of the Head of the Department is final.

11. Fraudulent Claims

It is the College's duty to protect public funds from the possibility of fraudulent claims. The College asks for detailed information and may invite applicants for interview, so it can distribute the funds correctly. If the student's claim is considered fraudulent, i.e. through false representation of household income or other eligibility rules, during spot checks or auditing processes, the College will request that the funds awarded to them be repaid in full. If the student fails to repay this, the College may take legal action.

An application, which is found to be fraudulent, i.e. through false representation of household income or of other eligibility rules, may be cancelled and the learner may be subject to disciplinary measures by the College. The College will have the right to recover the monies awarded. The Government guidance advises that institutions that identify significant fraud should report it to ESFA.

12. Data Protection

College employees who are involved in administering the 19+ Advanced Learning Loan Bursary comply with the College's policy on the storage and transfer of information during the application process and payments of funds.