

ADVANCED LEARNER LOANS BURSARY POLICY 2026/2027

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Section	Summary of changes	Date updated
1.0	Minor changes made to reflect UCS College Group	22.05.26
5.3	Changes to maximum caps for 20+ childcare from 90% to 80%. Max £5,000 for first child and 50% support with max of £2,500 for any further children	22.05.26

Contents

Section	Section Heading	Page
1.	Introduction	4
2.	Policy Statement	4
3.	Scope	4
4.	Key Responsibilities	4
5.	Support Available through the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary	4
6.	Eligibility	5
7.	Application Process	6
8.	Withdrawals	6
9.	Attendance & Behaviour Expectations	6
10.	Appeals	7
11.	Review of Policy	7

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy and procedure applies to all UCS College Group staff and students.
- 1.2 This policy and procedure must be followed when making UCS College Group Advanced Learner Loan Bursary awards and when considering potential student appeals.

2 Policy Statement

- 2.1. The Advanced Learner Loan Bursary is provided by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
- 2.2 The Bursary is awarded to assist students, who have taken out an Advanced Learner Loan to pay for their course, with the costs associated with coming to college therefore helping to breakdown any financial barriers that may discourage participation.
- 2.3 If you are receiving any state benefits it is your responsibility to inform the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) about any learner support you receive from us, because DWP may decide the learner support payment may impact those benefits.
- 2.4 The Bursary is discretionary, limited and subject to funding availability; therefore, early application is advised.

3 Scope

- 3.1 Students studying on an Advanced Learner Loan funded course who are on a low income or in receipt of income related benefits can apply for help from these funds.

4 Key Responsibilities

- UCS College Group is committed to a fair and transparent policy in respect of the award and administration of its Advanced Learner Loans Bursary.
- Responsibility for the assessment process for the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Scheme lies with the Student Funding Manager.

5 Support Available through the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary

5.1 Learning Support

- For students with additional needs
- Must be assessed by the Learning Support Team
- Funding to help such support will be provided through this allocation

5.2 Financial Hardship

- Support with course-related costs (books, trips, equipment)
- Transport to and from college
- Professional membership or external body fees
- Emergency support (e.g., domestic crises, temporary accommodation)

5.3 Childcare (Aged 20+)

- Up to 80% support covered (maximum £5,000 for the first child), and up to 50% for additional children (capped at £2,500 per child)
- Must use Ofsted-registered providers.
- Paid monthly in arrears after submission of a receipt and invoice
- Not to be used for informal childcare, or childcare already covered by other government schemes
- Childcare support will normally only be provided for timetabled learning hours.
- Where a student is eligible for free childcare entitlements, the value of these will be deducted from any bursary award

5.4 Travel

- For students living more than 2 miles away from their study site
- Based on the most cost-effective travel option. Maximum support award of £800 per academic year
- Distance calculated using Google Maps – for petrol support this will be paid at a rate of 15p per mile
- Travel support is discretionary and subject to funding availability

5.5 Residential Support

- Support for accommodation costs for students on specialist courses not widely available at other colleges, i.e., Agriculture, Motor Sport
- Students must live further than 15 miles from college, and over 3 miles from a public service or college operated transport route to be eligible
- Eligibility will be means tested using the same criteria as below and eligible students may be entitled to an award of up to the full cost of standard accommodation (excluding meal plans)
- If a student withdraws from the course or transfers to a non-specialist programme that no longer qualifies for Residential Support, the funding will be withdrawn, and the student will be expected to pay the remainder of the accommodation and meal plan fees for the remainder of the contract.

5.6 Technology Support

- Loaned devices for essential learning, subject to availability.

6 Eligibility

6.1 In order to be eligible to apply, students must:

- Be studying a Level 3-6 course that is designated for Advanced Learner Loan funding, or up to four full A-levels funded by an Advanced Learner Loan
- Have a loan approved by the Student Loans Company (SLC)
- Have a net household income (take-home pay) of
 - £40,000 or less if living with a partner
 - £27,500 or less if living independently
- Meet the residency criteria.

- Not be studying a Community Learning course, receiving Higher Education student finance, or under 20 and applying for childcare (see Care to Learn Scheme).

7 Application Process

- In order to apply the student must complete the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary application form, available on the Pay My Student portal
- Students requiring additional learning support to complete their course will have had their needs identified by the Learning Support Team. The cost of this support will be internally transferred from the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary
- Fully completed application forms will be processed, where funding permits, within 15 working days of the date of receipt. Confirmation of any funding will be made via email to the student, at the address given on the application form and College systems
- In order to ensure transparency in the allocation of funding, 20% of the funding available will be held back for programmes with in-year starts, and for applications that are received after September 2026. This is to ensure that that as many students as possible can apply for this funding

8 Withdrawals

- 8.1 Payments to Childcare providers, travel awards and accommodation payments may be cancelled for students whose attendance falls below 85%, or on withdrawal from the course.

9 Attendance & Behaviour Expectations

- Students receiving travel support must maintain a minimum of 85% attendance in timetabled lessons to receive payment (inclusive of authorised absences). Payments are released automatically based on overall attendance.
- Any payments that are not released due to attendance will be rolled over each week. Once attendance exceeds 85%, the rolled-over payments will be released automatically
- If attendance remains below 85% by the end of the month, the rolled-over payments will be withdrawn. The next month's payments will follow the same process
- Students facing attendance challenges due to disability or caring responsibilities should notify the Student Experience team for adjustments
- Reasonable adjustments will be considered in line with the Equality Act 2010
- In exceptional circumstances, we may agree to pay a percentage of the award based on attendance, after confirmation from the Deputy Head of Department that academic targets are still being met
- Students can request a Travel Appeal questionnaire to be added to their online bursary account to start this process
- Student behaviour must align with the college's Student Code of Conduct to remain eligible for financial support

10 Appeals

Students may appeal decisions relating to eligibility or level of support within 14 days of notification. Appeals must provide new or additional evidence and will be reviewed

by the Vice Principal of Student Experience and Safeguarding. Outcomes will be issued within 15 working days.

11 Review of Policy

- 11.1 This policy will be reviewed annually in accordance with government priorities and amendments.