

Nottingham College Student Finance – Bursaries policy 2018-19

1. Introduction

As a College, we receive Funds from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). These Funds are there to help you overcome financial barriers that might prevent or make it difficult for you to study, and to make sure that everybody has the opportunity to come and learn. Any student can apply for student finance support and we will assess your application based on the eligibility requirements set out in section 6.

2. Purpose of the Funds

The purpose of the 16-18 Discretionary Bursary Fund is to provide financial support towards some of the specific costs of coming to College, without which it might be difficult for you to take part in your course and stay in College.

The Government expects us to use the Funds to support you if you are struggling financially or where you have particularly high course costs, and expects that the support is enough to enable you to stay on your course

The Government has identified certain young people as being in need of extra support and if you fall into one of those groups (eg you are getting certain benefits in your own right or you are in care/a recent care leaver) then you might qualify for the Vulnerable Student Bursary (VSB) of £1,200 spread over the year if you are a full time student. If you are a part time student or studying for less than 30 weeks your VSB awards will be worked out based on a £40 per week rate.

The Discretionary Learner Support Fund (dLSF) is available to help you if you are aged 19 or older and you need support towards some of the specific costs of coming to College, without which it might make it difficult for you to take part in your course and stay in College.

Support from dLSF is available to you as an adult studying in College where you meet our eligibility criteria – but all support is subject to Funds being available and it is not therefore an entitlement

The Advanced Learner Loan Bursary (ALLB) is there to support students who meet our eligibility criteria where you have taken out an Advanced Learner Loan (ALL) to pay for your course fees.

If you meet our eligibility criteria it doesn't mean you will automatically be entitled to support.

Any support will be subject to Funds available – you do not have an entitlement to support.

3. Considerations

3.1. Nottingham College will:

- Consider any other support you might be entitled to – e.g. help through the Job Centre or help with childcare costs through Tax Credits – before we consider any support for you through the appropriate College Fund

- Develop clear criteria so you can see how Nottingham College will administer and distribute these Funds
- Assess your financial situation by asking you to provide us with evidence of your household income
- Identify what specific support needs you might have that might stop you from joining or staying in College, before we make an award
- Support you from the appropriate Fund by way of for example a bus pass or direct payment to a childcare provider or a regular payment which will be for other than living costs. This support should therefore not affect the level of benefits which you might be entitled to – although you should let DWP know about any payments you receive
- Let you know the outcome of any application and assessment and confirm any support
- Support you with Free College Meals if you are aged 16 to 18 (some 19+ students may qualify if very specific criteria are met) and where your household income is based on certain income based benefits; or where your household income is less than £16,190 and your household receives only Child Tax Credits (if you get Working Tax Credit you will not be eligible); or where the household gets Universal Credit (applied after 1st April 2018) with a household income of less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits you get). The value of the meal will be at least £2.41 as set by the Government

4. Priority Groups

If you are aged 16-18 and are in care, a recent care leaver, in receipt of Income Support or Universal Credit in your own name; or if you are in receipt of Employment Support Allowance AND Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in your own name then you may be eligible to receive the Vulnerable Student Bursary of £1,200 per year (for full time students – pro rata for part time students).

We will use our discretion in making awards to you as a 16 – 18 student so that we can best support your needs and circumstances. Support will be targeted at barriers to coming to College such as travel costs, meal support, books and equipment.

We will use our discretion in making awards to you as an adult student so that we can best support your needs and circumstances. Support will be targeted at barriers to coming to College such as travel costs, meal support, books and equipment, and childcare costs (students aged 20 or older).

We can only support students from the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary if you have applied for and have had your Advanced Learner Loan (to meet tuition fee costs) approved by the Student Loan Company. This applies now to most adult students studying on level 3,4,5 or 6 FE courses

5. Eligibility

The residency eligibility criteria for the Funds is aligned to the residency criteria addressed in the document *Student Eligibility Guidance*, part of the overall Education Funding Agency (EFA) 16 – 19 /Adult education budget *Funding Guidance 2018/19*. These documents can be downloaded from the websites at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-bursary-fund-guide-2018-to-2019-academic-year#eligibility-criteria

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/721238/2018-19_AEB_funding_pm_rules_V2.pdf

Residency criteria are broadly determined by the following statements:

- You are a citizen of the United Kingdom and Islands, have Right of Abode (the right to live permanently in the United Kingdom without any immigration restrictions), or are a citizen of a country that is within the European Economic Area (EEA) including those with bilateral agreements such as Switzerland
- You have been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom and Islands or the European Union (EU) or the European Economic Area (EEA) continuously for at least the previous three years on the first day of learning
- If you or a relevant family member have applied for an extension or variation of your current immigration permission in the UK, you are still treated as if you have that leave. Keeping this permission applies as long as the application was made before your current permission expired. Your leave continues until the Home Office make a decision on your immigration application
- You or relevant family member, are considered to still have the immigration permission that you held when you made your application for an extension, and your eligibility would be based upon this status

You can find further information on eligibility from the UK Council for International Student Affairs.

Asylum seekers aged 16 – 18 are eligible to apply for support from the 16 – 18 Bursary fund.

Asylum Seekers aged 19+yrs are eligible to apply for dLSF:

- If you have lived in the UK for six months or longer while your claim is being considered by the Home Office, and no decision on your claim has been made, or
- You are in the care of the local authority and are receiving local authority support under section 23C or section 23CA of the Children Act 1989 or section 21 of the National Assistance Act 1948 or
- You have been refused asylum and you have appealed against a decision made by the UK government against granting refugee status and no decision has been made within six months of lodging the appeal or
- You have been granted support for yourself under section 4 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999

As an adult Asylum Seeker we can only support you with a travel pass or by paying for books or equipment on your behalf. Under no circumstances are we allowed to give you any cash payments as directed by the Government.

We can only consider support if you are enrolled onto an appropriately funded course that is funded by the Education Funding Agency or Skills Funding Agency.

We will take into account any other sources of funding that you might be getting when assessing your support needs (eg. New Deal for Lone Parents, New Deal for Partners, the mobility component of Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment or childcare support from Tax Credits.) If you are getting support from the New Deal for Lone Parents scheme or through Tax Credits, then this support will be taken into account when we consider your needs for childcare support from the College. If you are taking part in any other New Deal schemes, then you are not eligible to apply for support through the College Funds as your support needs should be met through the New Deal scheme.

You must be aged 20 or over to receive support from dLSF funding for childcare.

You will only be supported by the Advanced Learner Loan Bursary if you have an Advanced Learner Loan approved by the Student Loan Company (studying a level 3, 4, 5 and 6 programme)

If you are aged 19 or over on 31st August 2018 you may be eligible to apply for support from the discretionary bursary pot if:

You are continuing on a programme of study you began when you were aged 16 to 18

Or

You have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in place.

6. Assessment criteria

Support is based on an income assessment and your household income should be less than £30,000 NET income in the last tax year.

You will be required to provide parent/carers/partners/own income evidence in the form of one of the following:

- Tax Credit Award Notice for the current year (2018-2019) showing the income for 2017-18
- Benefit evidence (dated no more than 6 months prior to the application date if applying in July, August or 3 months if applying in September onwards) **and** the 2018-19 Council Tax bill
- Pay slips (2 months or 8 weeks consecutive) **and** the 2018-19 Council Tax bill. Or
- An official letter from an employer stating NET salary on company letter headed paper **and** the 2018-19 Council Tax bill
- Other relevant income evidence

If you want to apply for childcare support, we will need to see evidence that proves guardianship of the child(ren) such as a child benefit letter showing your name and address and that of your child(ren) or your Tax Credit Award Notice

If you are aged 16 – 18 and fall into one of the Vulnerable Student Bursary groups then we will need to see appropriate evidence such as:

- A letter setting out the benefit to which you are entitled e.g. Income Support, Universal Credit, Employment and Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment
- Written confirmation of your current or previous looked after status from the local authority which looks after you or provides your leaving care services

If you are identified as “Vulnerable” you will be supported from the guaranteed £1,200 VSB (pro rata for part time students). Your travel costs will be supported from the VSB award – usually by way of an appropriate travel pass, in addition to essential course costs/meals as appropriate. Any remaining balance will be paid to you on a regular basis by agreement.

If you are aged 19 (age as of the 31st August 2018) or over and living with parents / carers, you may be assessed independently, if you are working and receiving a wage yourself. This wage must be a minimum of £5,000 NET (£96 per week) income per annum. If you do not earn this amount you will be assessed on your parents’ / carer’s income. If you are living with parents and are in receipt of benefits such as JSA, we will still consider you to be independent.

If you are a 19+ student, studying on a level 3,4, 5 or 6 FE programme, in addition to the normal income and residency evidence required the College will check that your Advanced Learner Loan to cover your course fees has been approved before any assessment for financial support is carried out.

Nottingham College will not include Disability Living Allowance/PIP when assessing income of disabled students (*the mobility component however will be considered where an application for travel support is requested*).

If you are applying as a financially independent student but you have dependants yourself, then an additional £1,000 extra per dependant can be added to the income threshold. If you are dependent upon parent’s/carer’s, then again £1,000 extra per

additional dependant can be added to the income threshold. This will be capped at a maximum of £3,000. However, if you are assessed as independent but living with parents/ carer's there will be no allowance made for additional siblings living in the parental home.

You may be eligible for funding from an external source e.g. funding through the Job Centre, and we expect you to access the external fund before any dLSF support will be considered. Funding which is provided by an external source e.g. DWP – mobility component of DLA, will be taken into consideration when making any financial award for travel.

All awards will be made on the basis that you should be aiming to achieve an acceptable level of attendance each term, which will ensure success on your programme of study; and that you comply with the Student Code of Conduct. Payments and support will be stopped if you are excluded from college. If you do not achieve an acceptable level of attendance you will require an intervention with your Personal Success Coach/ Learner Achievement Coach or Student Finance Team. At this meeting intervention strategies for improving attendance will be discussed. Short term goals will be set to improve attendance levels. You will receive support from your Personal Success Coach/Student Achievement Coach, Student Services and your tutor to meet these goals. Further spot checks of attendance may be carried out by the Student Finance Team.

All awards are made subject to the availability of Funds allocated in September by the Funding Agencies/Government. Awards will be made on a first come first served basis, and there is no guarantee that late applications will be funded. You should aim to submit your application with full supporting evidence as close to your enrolment date as possible, applications will be assessed in date received order. Therefore, there are no guarantees that awards will continue to be made due to budget restrictions.

Appeals will be assessed by a panel of which will include Customer Operations Managers and Team Leaders. The Head of Customer Operations may also sit on the panel. The Student Finance Team will aim to complete 90% of appeals within 10 working days of receipt, when received into the Student Finance department with all evidence. Appeals will be automatically rejected if you do not provide adequate evidence to support your appeal. The Appeal Panels decision is final and no further appeal will be accepted without additional evidence. Previous successful appeals do not guarantee continued support.

Students entitled to the Vulnerable Student Bursary who are studying less than 30 weeks a year will be awarded on a pro rata basis at a rate of £40 per week. Other part time students may be supported with travel/course costs on a pro rata basis.

The College reserves the right to request the return of any equipment or travel pass provided by the College should you withdraw before the end of your programme. If you are required to return anything and it is not returned to College within a reasonable period then you may be invoiced for the associated costs.

7. Course fees for 19+ students

dLS funding will not be used to generally fund tuition fees for students, however in exceptional cases you may supply a letter of appeal with related income evidence to prove that you would not be able to participate in education or training, due to exceptional hardship. Support will be considered on a first come first served basis, subject to budget restrictions, potential increased employability chances, and barriers to progression. The 19+ Advanced Learner Loans Bursary cannot be used to fund tuition fees.

dLS funding can be used to support exam and registrations fees and accreditation fees/professional membership fees and any fees/charges payable to external bodies for any student who is in financial hardship, and in receipt of means tested benefit or low income.

8. College-related childcare costs

If you are aged 20 (age on 31st August 2018) or older and require childcare support whilst attending College, you will be expected to use fully all other forms of support available to you first before seeking support from the dLS Fund from College. You must provide proof of guardianship when requesting childcare. This can be in the form of a current Child Benefit letter, all pages of means tested benefit or Tax Credits Award Notice with the child's name included.

Full time second year, continuing students will receive funding as a priority.

The College will consider applications in date received order and by place availability within the chosen setting. This will continue until funds have been exhausted.

NB: You should not place their child in any setting until confirmation has been received from the Student Finance Team that funding has been approved. You should make provision for the care of your child(ren) during the first few weeks, or have the means to pay for the care in a setting during this time. If you are eligible for support then reimbursement of any fees paid will take place once the application has been fully assessed.

dLSF funding will only support childcare for your timetabled hours plus reasonable travel time to and from college.

If you are eligible for support through the dLSF 20+ Childcare Fund or 19+ Advanced Learner Loan Bursary Fund you will be expected to pay a contribution towards childcare costs of **20%** (that is 20% of costs up to the capped amounts, we can support – see below for detail). This will need to be paid daily or weekly according to the childcare setting. If this is not possible then you should contact the Student Finance Team to discuss your options which may include you having to arrange alternative childcare for one timetabled day per week. If you should incur a debt and wish to continue to access childcare support in subsequent academic years this may be put on hold by the childcare setting until such debts are cleared. **NB due to limited funds Student Funding cannot pay the student contribution.**

Children aged two, three (the term following their 3rd birthday) and four are entitled to 30 hours free childcare a week. Wherever possible we would expect you to use these hours while studying at College. Consideration will be taken as to how individual nursery settings distribute their Nursery Education funding.

The Funds will contribute towards meals, snacks, drinks and any other charges that fall below the agreed childcare cap levels. You would be liable for any charges over the agreed cap amounts, this is in addition to the 20% charge. Any changes to sessions required must be notified in advance and in writing to the Student Finance Team.

We would encourage you to use the College Nursery in the first instance where appropriate. Where you are using the College nursery and where you are fully enrolled on a course and are eligible for dLSF support, you will be informed by the College nursery if they have an internal nursery place within 2 working days. If a place cannot be offered within this timescale the student will be informed that they can seek a place with an alternative OFSTED approved childcare provider.

Nottingham College Nurseries do not provide breakfast or after school club provision, in these cases you should investigate a suitable place and provide the Student Finance Team with details. You should not use the setting until your application has been fully processed unless you are able to pay their own fees.

Nottingham College places a limit on the amount of support for childcare costs. There will be a cap of £50 per day, £30 per half day, £10 for breakfast club sessions, £12 for after school clubs' sessions and £6 per hour for Childminders. A maximum limit of £5500 per annum will apply per household.

If you have a partner at home who is not working they will be expected to care for the child(ren) whilst you are at College. There may be circumstances where a partner cannot care for the children whilst you are attending college, in these cases evidence of the reasons for this will be required. If you have a partner who is also studying, timetables will be considered and if there is an opportunity, partners will be expected to look after the child(ren). If circumstances change then the Student Finance Team can reconsider support with supporting evidence. You may wish to seek support from your Personal Success Coach/ Learner Achievement Coach.

You must provide details (School holiday calendar or letter or text from school) of any inset days or school holidays where childcare support will be required which fall outside of the College terms, at least at the beginning of each term, but ideally at the start of the academic year, so that Funds can be allocated. If you do not provide this the College cannot guarantee that funds will be available, due to limited budgets available in 2018-2019.

Subject to availability of dLS Funds, from April onwards a study leave Childcare support scheme may be available. This may entitle every childcare funded student to receive up to *6hrs of funded childcare to be used for extra study/ revision activities which are not formally timetabled. These need to be arranged in agreement with the Nottingham College childcare setting/external childcare provider and through the

Student Finance Team. Evidence of Exams or a supporting tutor statement will be required.

9. College-related transport costs

Travel costs will only be considered if the student lives over 1.5 miles from the College campus at which they study. There may be some exceptions where support can be considered even though the Student lives closer than 1.5 miles e.g. the Student has a medical condition that makes walking difficult (evidence would be required) or the student is a Carer and needs to be able to get home quickly (referrals should be made via PSCs/LACs).

Students who have a Concessionary Travel Pass (covering all hours) will not normally be eligible for transport costs. Consideration may be given where the Student cannot use their Concessionary Pass before 9 am, for example, which would prevent them from attending a 9am class.

The most cost effective transport should be accessed by the Student and in many cases the support provided will take the form of a pre purchased travel pass from one of the transport operators in the East Midlands area.

Payments for travel outside of travel pass routes will be made on a regular basis via Bank Automated Credit System (BACS) directly into the Student's bank account. However, Nottingham College reserves the right to award travel support in other forms for example pre-paid travel tickets.

Students wishing to travel by car will be paid 20p* a mile and 12p per mile for Students using a moped. This award would not normally exceed the amount which would be awarded equivalent to the travel pass – individual exceptions will be considered.

Nottingham College may consider funding travel costs under exceptional / emergency circumstances. Household income evidence should be sought but a discretionary award can be made in an emergency where this is not possible, for example homelessness. A referral through a tutor or PSC/LAC is also required. Emergency referrals should be made to the Customer Operations Manager/Team Leader but anyone from the SFT can make a short term award in an emergency in the absence of the above, this may be in the form of daily travel tickets, subject to arrangements with local transport providers, or food vouchers.

A limited number of bicycles will be available for students interested in cycling to College as an alternative method of transport. These will be available to students eligible for support on a long loan basis. Continuing students would not be issued with a new bike each year but the college will pay for a maintenance service.

10. College-related essential equipment

These costs are supplied by each curriculum area via the Head of Faculty/ Faculty Area Manager and will be approved by the Customer Operations Manager/Team

Leader prior to the start of the academic year in order for fair and consistent awards to be made.

If you are required to purchase essential equipment to support your learning, you should be notified at the application stage of the recruitment process. The College may charge you for this essential equipment, which can be kept by you; in some cases, the payment will be made to an external recommended supplier which has been sourced for best quality and price. You may also have the option of borrowing the clothing or equipment free of charge if it is required to comply with Health & Safety regulations.

You may be required to pay for other non - learning associated costs (e.g. library fees, printing costs) these costs are not eligible for support in the first instance. An appeal may be submitted to apply for help with these costs. However, any funding would be subject to the availability of funds and the priorities for funding being fully met by the budget at the time you applied.

11. Trips

The cost of any trips are supplied to the Student Finance Team by the curriculum area prior to the start of the academic year and will be approved by the Customer Operations Manager/Team Leader prior to the start of the academic year in order for fair and consistent awards to be made.

If a trip costs up to £100 we will meet costs in full. If the cost of the trip is over £100 then we will meet 50% of costs. Tutors must demonstrate that the trip relates to the course.

For any trip to be funded the tutor/course leader must supply information which details the students who may be eligible for funding and what funding is required. This must be sent to the Customer Operations Managers/Team Leader for consideration in advance of the trip - at least 4 weeks prior to the trip date - to enable the request to be given due consideration. All trips are subject to Fund availability.

Where a student is progressing onto university with proof we may contribute towards the costs of travel to a maximum of £200. The proof required will be interview invitation letters and valid travel documents.

12. Food

If you are aged 16-18 and your household income is from certain income based benefits, or is less than £16,190 and whose families are in receipt of Child Tax Credits only or you are on Universal Credit (applied after 1st April 2018) with a household income of less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including any benefits received) you will be awarded a free meal for every timetabled day for the duration of your programme of study. This also includes any day which you are on work placement as part of your programme of study. You will receive a minimum of £2.41 per day by way of a meal voucher.

For all other 16 – 18 year olds and 19+ students whose household income is below £30,000 NET, may be entitled to receive a contribution towards food whilst attending college. The amount of contribution will be dependent upon availability of funds each term. You will be notified of your awards when we have completed the assessment of your application.

13. Exceptional hardship circumstances

Should you find yourself in such a situation, in severe exceptional financial hardship, support may be requested via a hardship application or an appeal letter/email. This application must be supported by your PSC/LAC or tutor.

If you were in need of emergency hardship funding this need should be assessed by a Customer Operations Manager/Team Leader, working in collaboration with your PSC/LAC and tutor where appropriate to ensure that you can continue on programme until any longer term welfare issues are addressed. Travel tickets and meals in the College canteen will be provided until longer term solutions are found. The College will work with external agencies to ensure that you receive all the support available to you.