
Adult Learner Support Fund Policy 2021-22



Introduction

1. This policy sets out the financial support available through, and eligibility for, bursary funding for students aged over 19 who are not in receipt of an Advanced Learner Loan attending further education courses at the University for the Creative Arts (UCA).
2. UCA is committed to ensuring the Adult Learner Support Fund (ALSF) is targeted towards those learners facing the greatest financial barriers to continuing in education after the age of 19.
3. This policy sets out how the University will allocate funds for the Adult Learner Support Fund and should be read in conjunction with the [Adult Education Budget: Funding Rules 2021 to 2022](#).

Context

4. The Adult Learner Support Fund provides targeted support to learners who could not participate or remain in learning without financial assistance for essential costs like transport, equipment and childcare. In 2021/22 the allocation is £10,200.
5. There are three schemes within ALSF to meet these specific needs:
 - Residential Access funding for those aged 19+
 - Hardship funding for those aged 19+
 - Childcare for those aged 20+
6. Due to the limited nature of the fund and following referral to the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), no awards will be given for accommodation. The fund cannot help with tuition fees.
7. Funds cannot be transferred between the ALSF and the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary Fund (see separate Policy).

Eligibility

8. To be eligible for the ALSF Bursary in 2021/22, students must be aged 19 or over on the 31 August 2021 unless they are either continuing on a course they began aged 16-18, or they are aged 19-24 and have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). In such cases students should apply to the 16-18 Bursary Fund.
9. Students must satisfy the residency criteria set out by the ESFA by fulfilling one of the following criteria:
 - i. A UK national or other person with a right of abode in the UK who has been ordinarily resident in the UK or British Overseas Territories or Crown Dependencies (Channel Islands and Isle of Man) for at least the previous 3 years on the first day of learning.
 - ii. A UK national living in the EEA on or before 31 December 2020. In addition students must have lived in the EEA only or the EEA and UK only for at least the previous 3 years on the first day of learning, and have lived continuously in the EEA only and/or the EEA and the UK only between 31 December 2020 and the start of the course.
 - iii. EEA nationals who have obtained either pre-settled or settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme and have lived continuously in the EEA, Gibraltar or UK for at least the previous 3 years on the first day of learning.

If students have any other residency variations they need to contact the Specialist Adviser on their campus. Full details of eligibility for funding can be found in the [Adult Education Budget: Funding Rules 2021 to 2022](#).

General conditions

10. Applications for the ALSF will be accepted throughout the academic year or until the funding has been fully allocated, whichever is sooner.
11. In addition to meeting the income criteria, students must demonstrate that they have a clear financial need. Awards may not be granted where students have over £1000 personally available to them once all course and travel costs have been paid.
12. Applications can be accepted and awards agreed provisionally prior to the start of the academic year.

13. The University reserves the right to request repayment of all or part of any award received if a student withdraws from their course or consistently fails to meet the attendance requirements.
14. Where applicable students are required to make a new application for the second year of their course.
15. All award payments are subject to a minimum attendance rate of 90% whilst on course. If a student has a lower rate of attendance their award payments may be suspended or refused. However, the student will be provided with an opportunity to submit any extenuating circumstances to their Specialist Adviser.
16. Students must complete an application form and provide evidence of household income to include where relevant; benefit notices, Tax Credit Award Notices, P60 and any other required evidence of personal status.
17. If the student is living at home supported by their parent(s)/guardian(s)/partner, they will be assessed against their own and their parents'/guardians'/partners' income, except in exceptional circumstances.
18. If the student lives independently or with parent(s)/guardian(s) but the Specialist Adviser is satisfied that they are not supported by them, then only their individual income and/or any partner's income will be taken into account when assessing their application.

Means-testing will be rigorous but not excessive and evidence from other recent income assessments will be used wherever possible.

Assessment

19. Initial assessments will be undertaken by the campus Specialist Adviser. The application will then be checked by a second Specialist Adviser as follows:
 - Canterbury applications will be considered by the Farnham Specialist Adviser.
 - Epsom applications will be considered by the Canterbury Specialist Adviser.
 - Farnham applications will be considered by the Rochester Specialist Adviser.
 - Rochester applications will be considered by the Epsom Specialist Adviser.

Where an application is complex or does not meet the standard criteria, then referral will be made to a third Specialist Adviser to ensure a decision is reached.

Hardship Awards

20. Awards are assessed on household income (including income from certain benefits) and are awarded where household income is below £28,000 or where there is receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support.
- Income- based Jobseekers Allowance.
- Income – related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.
- The guaranteed element of the State Pension Credit.
- Child Tax Credit provided there is no entitlement to Working Tax Credit and an annual gross income of less than £28,000, as assessed by HMRC.
- Universal Credit and have an annual gross income of less than £28,000.

If household income is above the maximum threshold but there are exceptional extenuating circumstances, an application and supporting evidence can be submitted. In these instances, any award will need to be agreed by three Specialist Advisers.

21. The fund can make awards towards the following:

- i. Course costs - equipment packs, printing costs, local day visits and trips,
- ii. Daily travel expenses to and from UCA:
 - If a student is attending UCA where another provider of the same course is available nearer to home this may affect eligibility for support with travel expenses.
 - The student is expected to take advantage of any subsidised travel passes and student travel concessions if available.
 - Payments for travel by car will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.
 - *Students must keep evidence of their travel costs as they will be asked to provide them.*
- iii. Childcare where childcare is provided by an Ofsted registered provider e.g. nursery, child-minder or after school club. Due to the limited nature of the

allocation, any award for childcare can only be a contribution towards these costs.

- iv. If your circumstances change during the year, students should contact their Specialist Adviser.

22. Awards are made as follows, however should the number of applications be greater or lesser than anticipated then awards may be amended accordingly.

Income less than £28,000 or in receipt of one of the benefits listed:

- Course costs: we will pay for your equipment pack and local day visits and a contribution of £50 towards printing costs
- Trip costs: where applicable we will pay for the UK trip or £200 towards the overseas trip
- Travel costs: we will pay travel costs up to a maximum of £1200*

*if a student is eligible to apply for a concessionary travel pass, such as the Student Oyster Card or Arriva student saver tickets, they will have their award capped at the cost of the pass rather than the figure quoted above.

When calculating income an annual deduction of £2780 will be made for each additional dependent child (excluding the student).

Payments

23. All payments are made subject to an attendance rate of at least 90%. Awards are not guaranteed to cover all costs.
24. Payments to third parties will require a signed authority from the student.
25. Course costs awards (e.g. equipment packs, study trips and local visits) will be made directly to the University.
26. Travel awards will be made to the student directly through a BACS transfer to accounts in their name only, unless otherwise requested in the application form by them. Awards are generally paid termly in advance. Students are required to submit their travel receipts at the end of each term in order for next terms payment to be made.
27. Childcare awards will be made termly in advance and in general paid directly to the provider e.g. child minder.

Monitoring

28. Monitoring of the Adult Learner Support Fund is the responsibility of the Director of Academic Services in conjunction with the University's Finance Department. Expenditure is monitored termly with the Finance Department's Ledger Manager and reported to the Head of Gateway Services & User Experience via the Gateway Services Managers meetings.
29. Take-up of the Adult Learner Support Funds will be monitored annually by the Specialist Advisers, with a report produced at the end of each academic year for the Director of Academic Services.
30. Feedback from students on the impact of the Bursary on their learning will be collected annually to provide additional anecdotal information for the end of year report.

Appeals

31. If a student wishes to appeal they are required to appeal in writing within 14 days from the date of the decision letter; enclosing any additional supporting evidence. Appeals should be sent to:

Head of Gateway Services & User Experience
UCA Epsom
Ashley Road
Epsom
Surrey
KT18 5BE

Alternatively appeals can be emailed to fefunds@uca.ac.uk

32. The Appeals Panel will comprise of the Head of Gateway Services & User Experience (Chair), a Gateway Services Manager, a Specialist Adviser not involved in the original decision and a representative of the Students' Union.
33. The panel will meet within 14 days of receipt of an appeal.
34. The panel's decision is final, and this will be communicated to the student in writing within 7 days of the panel meeting.

General Data Protection Regulations

35. As part of the application and assessment process for bursary support, students and any adults supporting the application will be asked to consent to the collection and processing of all personal data submitted as part of this process. All parties will be required to read the University's Student Data Protection Privacy Notice available at uca.ac.uk/data-protection-policies and be asked to give their consent by signing the statement at the bottom of the application form.
36. If students and/or adults supporting the application are not willing or are unable to give their consent, this may impact on our ability to process the application and this should be discussed this with the Specialist Adviser.