

Student guide to

Financial support

2021-22



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Information in this booklet was correct at time of printing (June 2020) but may be subject to change.
For further details, please speak to any member of the Student Experience Team.

Introduction

West Thames College will carry out a financial assessment for each bursary applicant received to establish household income, whether there is an actual financial need to help students with the cost of travel, to buy essential books, equipment or specialist clothing (such as protective overalls, for example), field trips and other course-related costs and whether bursary support is available to contribute to the costs of attending industry placements, university interviews and open days. These are items the student would otherwise need to pay for in order to participate.

At the beginning of the term, if specialist equipment and/or a travel pass is needed, the college will purchase this and the cost will be deducted from the student's overall award. Books and equipment purchased for a student to complete their study programme must be returned once the study programmes is completed.

There are various ways that you may be entitled to financial help during your studies:

- Bursary (*see page 4*) for students in further education aged 16-18, aged 19 on a continuing course
- DLS (*see page 5*) for students in further education aged 19+ on a funded course at entry level, Level 1, 2 or 3
- Loan Bursary (*see page 6*) for students in receipt of the Advanced Learner Loan
- Welfare Fund (*see page 6*)

For more details, please read this booklet or contact Student Experience (*see page 14*). This information is also available on Moodle and the college website.

There are also other sources of financial help which are detailed in this booklet. Please speak to the Welfare and Support Adviser for further information.

Bursary (for students under 19)

If you are in further education and **aged 16, 17 or 18 as of 31 August 2021**, aged 19 on a continuing course, then you can apply for a Bursary. See page 7 for how to apply.

There are two types of Bursary for students under 19:

- **Vulnerable Bursary** (up to £1200 per year or pro rata)
- **Discretionary Bursary** (amount TBC).

You may also apply for additional money to help pay for kits, books, art or photography materials, essential trips, exam fees, DBS checks or travel costs for work placements or work experience (see page 8). If your application is approved, this will be paid to you or your department at the same time as your first bursary payment.

Vulnerable Bursary

The Vulnerable Bursary is for students who are either:

- In care (social services)
- Leaving care (social services)
- On Income Support or Universal Credit *and* living independently
- On Employment and Support Allowance *with* Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payments.

The Vulnerable Bursary is paid fortnightly (Term time only) into your bank account, subject to a minimum of 90% attendance at any given time. (All students are expected to maintain 100% attendance.) You must prove financial hardship to receive any money from this fund.

Discretionary Bursary

The Discretionary Bursary is for students who live with family/guardians or independently whose income is dependent on means-tested benefits or who are on very low income. (Income above £20,000 may not be eligible unless there are exceptional circumstances.) We need to see evidence of household income (*please see page 7*).

The Discretionary Bursary is paid fortnightly (term time only) into your bank account, subject to a minimum of 90% attendance at any given time. (All students are expected to maintain 100% attendance.)

Extra financial help

If you are in receipt of the Discretionary Bursary, you may also be eligible to receive financial help towards the costs of equipment, books, art supplies, photography materials, exam fees, DBS checks, travel costs for work placements or work experience, or any other compulsory costs associated with your course. (*See the table on pages 8-9.*)

Discretionary learner support (for students aged 19 or over)

Discretionary Learner Support (DLS) is for students who are in financial hardship and dependent on means-tested benefits or on a very low income. (Income above £28,000 may not be eligible unless there are exceptional circumstances.) We need to see evidence of income – see page 7.

You are eligible to apply for DLS if all of the following apply:

- You are aged 19+ on an FE course up to and including Level 3
- You are enrolled on a government funded further education course at West Thames College
- You have been assessed as a home student (ie, UK or EU student with settled or pre-settled status, ordinarily resident in the UK, refugee status or Leave to Remain)
- You can prove to the college that you are in financial hardship by showing the evidence

You are not eligible to apply for DLS if any of the following apply:

- You are aged 19+ and studying on a course at Level 3 or above and have applied for the Advanced Learner Loan. Instead, see the Loan Bursary (*page 6*)
- You are on a higher education course. Instead, you should apply for help from Student Finance England (www.gov.uk)
- You are on a full-cost course (not government funded)
- You have been assessed as an international student
- You are a waged apprentice.

For how to apply, please see page 7.

What the DLS can help with

The DLS can provide financial help towards the costs of childcare, travel expenses, kit, books, art supplies, photography materials, exam fees, DBS checks or any other compulsory costs associated with your course.* (*See the table on pages 8-9.*)

Loan Bursary

This is for students aged 19+ on a course at Level 3 or above. To be eligible, you must be:

- Aged 19 or over on the first day of your course
- In receipt of the Advanced Learner Loan or have had your Advanced Learner Loan approved by the Student Loans Company
- In financial hardship (with the exception of Additional Learning Support – see below).

You are not eligible if you are:

- In receipt of student finance for higher education
- On an apprenticeship training scheme
- On a community learning course.

What the Loan Bursary can help with

The Loan Bursary can provide financial help towards the costs of childcare, travel expenses, kit, books, art supplies, photography materials, exam fees, trips, university interviews or any other compulsory costs associated with your course.* (See the table on pages 8-9.)

Additional Learning Support (ALS)

If you have any special needs or learning disability, contact the Head of Inclusion to discuss any requirements or adjustments that you need. The requirements will be paid for from the ALS component of the Loan Bursary Fund.

ALS is available on a needs assessed basis and is not related to your household income.

Welfare Fund

The Welfare Fund is for students who do not fulfil the eligibility criteria for DLS or the Bursary and who are in severe financial difficulty. The Welfare Fund can also help with the cost of the college gym (£15 for the academic year). Please go to the Information Centre for help with college gym fees.

* **Please note that** it is your responsibility to tell the Department for Work and Pensions about any learner support that you receive from us.

How to apply for a Bursary, DLS, Loan Bursary or the Welfare Fund

You can apply from 12 August if you are fully enrolled and have a new college ID card. You can walk in with your evidence of income and benefit during enrolment. You are required to book an appointment online (on TEAMS or by email) or via your SLA to apply for a bursary after main enrolment is over. **Download a checklist or collect one from Room A006 before your appointment date so that you know what documents to provide.** You must provide scanned copies or clear pictures of your documents shared on TEAMS or by email. Alternatively, you may be able to submit hard copies.

We will review your evidence and assess your application. If your application is successful, you will be notified by letter or email telling you how much you have been awarded and when it will be paid.

You will need to have a bank account in your name. If you need help opening a bank account, please contact the Information Centre at the Isleworth campus, or main reception at the Skills+Logistics Centre in Feltham (*see page 14 for contact details*).

Evidence you need to show us to receive financial help

- Income Support/Jobseekers Allowance/Employment Support Allowance: letter and bank statements no more than 3 months old
- If you are 18 and you get Employment and Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments: please bring both letters and bank statements
- Housing or Council Tax benefit: letter no more than 6 months old
- Universal Credits: award letter/web printout showing the breakdown of support categories and bank statements
- Working Tax Credit letter for 2021-22: pages 1-4
- If you are in care or a care leaver: please collect a form from Sanjeevani or email studentwelfare@west-thames.ac.uk. The form needs to be filled in and signed by your social worker or support worker.
- Last 3 months' or 6 weeks' payslips. If self-employed, please provide Working Tax Credit letter, P60 or self-assessment form, along with bank statements.

Please note: These funds are provided by the Department for Education (DfE) and the college must adhere to their guidelines.

Financial help for FE course-related costs

TYPE OF HELP AVAILABLE	WHO IS ELIGIBLE?		
	Students receiving Bursary	Students receiving DLS	Students receiving Loan Bursary
<p>Exam fee For students on an AAT accounting course, Professional Accounting with Business or other selected courses. £60 paid directly to your bank account.</p>	✓	✓	✓
<p>Art and photography materials • For students on art courses: £50 • For students on photography courses: £75 This is paid directly to your account.</p>	✓	✓	✓
<p>Books • Access course: up to £100</p>		✓	✓
• ESOL Adult or Threshold: up to £20		✓	
• GCSEs: up to £50	✓	✓	
• Level 2 Certificate of Progression (QCF): £20		✓	
• Level 3 Childcare/Health: £20	✓	✓	✓
• Maths/English for Work and Study: £20	✓	✓	
• Pre-GCSE Science/ESOL: £20	✓	✓	
<p>Childcare funding – college nursery The college nursery charges £30 per session (£60 per day). There may be funding to help with these costs—please phone the nursery on 020 8326 2318 for details. They can also offer advice on alternative funding for childcare.</p>	Please phone the college nursery.	Please phone the college nursery.	Please phone the college nursery.
<p>Childcare funding – external providers If your child is in full-time education but you need help to pay for childcare before and/or after school, we may be able to help—please speak to Student Experience. Payments are made directly to your provider, who must be registered with Ofsted, and payments are dependent on a minimum of 90% attendance on your course at any given time. <i>Please note that we are unable to allocate money towards full-time childcare.</i></p>	Please phone the college nursery.	✓	✓

Financial help for FE course-related costs

TYPE OF HELP AVAILABLE	WHO IS ELIGIBLE?		
	Students receiving Bursary	Students receiving DLS	Students receiving Loan Bursary
<p>Compulsory course trips and university interviews For all courses – given when need arises.</p>	✓	✓	✓
<p>Feltham Skills+Logistics Centre • Personal Protective Equipment (PPE): £20 This is paid to your department or directly to your account.</p>	✓	✓	✓
<p>Hair and Beauty kits You may be able to get half of your kit cost. Payments are made to you.</p>	✓	✓	✓
<p>Sports/Public Services £50/£75 paid directly to the department. • Football with Brentford FC: £75</p>	✓	✓	✓
<p>Supported Learning £60 for material costs</p>	✓	✓	✓
<p>Travel expenses Amounts will depend on your college timetable. Travel and food costs and other expenses are paid for work placements. You may be eligible for extra assistance if you live very far from the college, ie East London. Payments are made directly to you and are dependent on a minimum of 90% attendance on your course at any given time.</p>		✓	✓
<p>Work Experience You can apply for the cost of travel, food, uniforms, DBS checks and other related costs.</p>	✓	✓	✓

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Q I don't know if I'm eligible to apply for help.

A If you're not sure, speak to the Welfare and Support Adviser (see page 14 for contact details).

Q What is "Hardship"?

A If you need help with something not mentioned, tick the "Hardship" box and fill in the "Hardship" section of the application form. Please be specific about why you need this help, how much you are asking for and exactly what you would spend the money on. The Welfare and Support Adviser may wish to interview you to discuss the assistance you need. You must bring documents to your interview that will show why you need additional assistance and the amounts. A panel will review your case and make a decision and the Welfare and Support Adviser will tell you whether your request for additional assistance has been approved.

Q Can I claim for as much money as I want?

A No. There are maximum amounts of funding for each category. These depend on a number of factors, ie the course that you are doing, the number of days/evenings you are taught each week, how far you live from college, etc. Contact the Welfare and Support Adviser for details.

Q What if I can't open a bank account?

A It's important that you try to open a bank account as the government guidelines require us to pay Bursary money into **your** bank account. However, we realise this is not always easy, so if you need help to open a bank account please contact the Information Centre at the Isleworth campus, or main reception at the Skills+Logistics Centre in Feltham (*see page 14 for contact details*).

Q How long will it take until I know if my application is successful?

A If you provide us with all the correct paperwork your application will be processed and an allocation letter will be sent to you within 3 weeks.

Q What if I apply but I'm not satisfied with the decision of the Welfare Office?

A You have the right to appeal any decision made by the Welfare Office. First, speak to the Welfare and Support Adviser to explain your reasons. If you are still not satisfied, put your appeal in writing and hand it in to the Welfare and Support Adviser who will pass it on to an appeal panel. The appeal panel will review your appeal and contact you. If you are not satisfied with the panel's decision, you may appeal in writing to the Student Experience Manager. Decisions made at this stage are final and no further appeals will be heard.

Other sources of financial help

Oystercards

If you are 16, 17 or 18 on 31 August 2021, are on a full time course and live in a London borough, then you are eligible for the **16+ Oystercard** which gives you free travel on all London buses and trams and half price on Tube and overground. Apply at www.tfl.gov.uk.

If you are 19+, on a full time course for at least 14 weeks, and live in a London borough, then you are eligible for the **18+ Student Oystercard**. This gives you a 30% discount on all weekly, monthly or annual travelcards (but not Pay as You Go). Apply at www.tfl.gov.uk.

If you are 18 or over and on an apprenticeship for at least 12 months, and you live in a London borough (the apprenticeship must also be in a London borough), you may be eligible for the Apprentice Oystercard. Apply at www.tfl.gov.uk.

If you have been in receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance, Universal Credit, Income Support or Employment and Support Allowance for at least 13 weeks, you can apply for the **Bus and Tram Discount Photocard**. This gives you a 50% discount on London buses and trams (but not on trains). Apply at www.tfl.gov.uk or contact your local Jobcentre.

People with disabilities (including epilepsy) can apply for a **Freedom Pass**. This gives free travel on London buses, trams, Tube (Underground) and overground. Apply via your local council or ask the Welfare and Support Adviser to print a form for you.

Free meals at college

Students aged 16-18 as of 31 August 2021, students aged 19 continuing the same course, and students aged 19-23 with an EHCP may be eligible for free meals at college if they or their parents/guardians are in receipt of:

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (NASS)
- The guaranteed element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit, provided they are not entitled to Working Tax Credit and have an annual gross income of no more than £16,190 as assessed by the HMRC
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after someone stops qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Universal Credit with net earnings not exceeding the equivalent of £7,400 per annum.

Residential Support Scheme (16-18)

This scheme is run by the government to help students pay for accommodation during term time if they cannot study their chosen course nearer to home. Contact welfare officer for more details.

Care to Learn (C2L)

Care to Learn can help young parents aged up to and including 19 with the cost of Ofsted registered childcare and related transport costs. To find out if you qualify and to apply, contact the Learner Support Helpline on 0800 121 8989 or visit www.gov.uk/care-to-learn.

You can also speak to the college nursery by phoning 020 8326 2318.

Professional and Career Development Loan

This scheme is now closed for new applications and has not been replaced with an alternative. However, You may be able to get a personal loan from the bank to fund your education. Please check with your bank if they can help you.

Dance and Drama Awards

West Thames College does not participate in the Dance and Drama Awards.

Charities

The Welfare and Support Adviser has a list of charities that may be able to assist students who are in financial difficulties. Each charity has its own criteria and application does not guarantee success, but some students have received help.

Part-time work

Another way of funding your education is through part-time work. Job vacancies are displayed in the Student Experience area. A careers adviser will help you search for vacancies, give advice on CVs, job applications, writing letters, making phone calls, etc. Job advertisements can also be found in Job Centres, national and local newspapers.

Higher education

For information on financial support for higher education students, please see:

- UCAS (www.ucas.com/students/studentfinance)
- GOV.UK (www.gov.uk/browse/education/student-finance).

Benefits and tax credits

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)

You may be eligible to apply for or continue to receive JSA while studying if:

- You are 18 years of age or older
- You are on a further education course of less than 16 hours per week
- You are actively seeking work and available for work.

For more information, go to www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance. If you need help with your application, contact the Welfare and Support Adviser. Please note that JobCentre Plus may prefer you to do a JobCentre course instead of your college course. If this happens, please see the Welfare and Support Adviser or speak to your tutor.

Universal Credit

Universal Credit is being introduced in stages across the UK and will replace Child Tax Credit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Income-Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Working Tax Credit. Universal Credit is a payment to help with your living costs. It's paid once a month into your bank account. Universal Credit is considered as income when assessing eligibility for financial support.

Income Support

Income Support can help you cover your costs if you're on a low income. You can only apply for Income Support if you either get the severe disability premium, or are entitled to it; or if you got or were entitled to the severe disability premium in the last month, and are still eligible for it. (If you cannot apply for Income Support you can apply for Universal Credit instead.) For more information, visit www.gov.uk/income-support.

Council Tax Reduction

You could be eligible for Council Tax Reduction (sometimes known as Council Tax Support) if you're on a low income or claim benefits. Your bill could be reduced by up to 100%. You can apply if you own your home, rent, are unemployed or working. Apply to your local council.

Personal Independence Payment

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is being replaced by Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for disabled people. Personal Independence Payment (PIP) can help you with some of the extra costs if you have long term ill-health or a disability. See www.gov.uk/pip for more information.

Working Tax Credit

Working Tax Credit has been replaced by Universal Credit for most people. Whether you can get Working Tax Credit depends on the hours of paid work you do each week and your income and circumstances. See www.gov.uk/working-tax-credit for details.

Need more info?

This booklet is only a guide. If you have further questions, please speak to your student learning adviser, the Welfare and Support Adviser, or any member of the Student Experience Team.

Isleworth campus

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Welfare and Support Adviser

020 8326 2412

Room A006 (Student Common Room)

Office hours: Mon-Thurs, 9.30am to 4pm

Feltham Skills+Logistics Centre

Student Enrichment Officer

studentwelfare@west-thames.ac.uk

020 8326 2130

Office hours: Mon-Fri, 9am to 4pm

Information leaflets

Please call 020 8326 2000 to request a copy of these leaflets or view them on our website:

- Advanced Learner Loan and Loan Bursary
- College for schoolstudents
- Data protection
- Fees and costs, concessions and payment by instalments
- Funding for childcare
- Term dates

A large print version of this booklet is available from the Print Room.



www.west-thames.ac.uk

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