

New College Nottingham  **ncn**

**16 – 18 Bursary scheme & ncn
Discretionary Learner Support
fund**

**Guidelines for the disbursement
of funds in 2011/12 academic
year**

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1. Background

1.1 1. A key priority of the Government is to eliminate the gap in attainment between those from poorer and more affluent backgrounds, and to ensure every young person participates in and benefits from a place in 16 – 19 education and training. The Government provides funding to tackle disadvantage both through the YPLA's funding formula and through support to help young people meet the costs of participating in education and training post-16.

1.2 The purpose of the Discretionary learner Support fund (dLS) is to provide help to support learners who are experiencing financial difficulty in meeting costs associated with learning.

1.3 All funds are available to support learners studying Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) and Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funded further education (FE) provision in colleges, external institutions (EIs), higher education (HE) institutions, school sixth forms and sixth form colleges. It cannot be used to support learners studying SFA-funded provision from Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL), University for Industry (Ufi) or provision funded through the employer-responsive model.

2. ncn 16 – 18 Bursary Scheme and dLS commitment

2.1 ncn will:

2.1.1 Consider the availability of other strands of financial support for learners (including support funding through DWP and Jobcentre Plus) ahead of consideration for the College bursary or discretionary fund and ensure that learners exercise their entitlement to other forms of financial support before they pursue an application for College bursary or dLS.

2.1.2 Develop clear criteria showing how **ncn** will administer and distribute the funds. These policies will be available to learners via our website www.ncn.ac.uk and upon request.

2.1.3 Assess the learner's financial hardship by carrying out an income assessment.

2.1.4 Identify the learner-specific financial need which may prevent the learner from participating in FE before making any financial award.

2.1.5 Pay 16 – 18 Bursary or dLS financial awards in the form of goods or services or one-off or regular payments which are for costs other than living. These will not affect the level of the learner benefit entitlement. **ncn** will make it clear at the time the payment is made to the learner, for what purpose the payment is given and whether it is one of a series, for services and goods or a lump sum payment.

3. Priorities

3.1 The priority target groups for the 16 – 18 bursary fund and 19+ dLS fund are as follows:

- Young people in care, care leavers, young people in receipt of Income Support and disabled young people in receipt of Employment and Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance will be eligible to receive a bursary of £1,200 a year.
- **ncn** will make awards to young people in ways that best fit the needs and circumstances of our students. Bursary awards will be targeted towards young people facing financial barriers to participation, such as the costs of transport, meals, books and equipment.
- Learners who are economically or socially disadvantaged are the priority group for the 19+ dLS at **ncn**. This includes those who need support for essential equipment, transport, childcare (for learners aged 20 and over) or associated learning costs and those who are facing financial difficulty.

4. Learner Eligibility

4.1 The residency eligibility criteria for dLS are aligned to the residency criteria addressed in the document [Funding Regulations](#), part of the overall Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA)/SFA *Funding Guidance 2011/12*. Residency criteria are broadly determined by the following statement:

“A person on the ‘relevant date’ who is ‘settled’ in the UK, and who has been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands (that is including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) for the three years preceding the ‘relevant date’ and whose main purpose for such residence was not to receive full-time education during any part of the three-year period. ‘Settled’ means having either indefinite leave to enter or remain (ILE/R) or having the right of abode in the UK”

4.2 Asylum seekers aged 16 – 18 are eligible to apply for support from the 16 – 18 Bursary fund. However, those aged 19 and over are not eligible to apply for dLS funding

4.3 Learners must always be enrolled onto an YPLA/SFA-funded FE learner-responsive programme of study before any dLS award will be considered.

4.4 **ncn** will consider the availability of other sources of funding to which the learner might be entitled, e.g. EMA/ALG or the New Deal for Lone Parents, New Deal for Partners and tax credits, within the overall assessment process. Participants in the EMA/ALG schemes will not be eligible for the full award of equipment or travel costs and those participants in the New Deal for Lone Parents programme may not benefit from full payment of childcare support from this scheme. Participants in those schemes are eligible to apply for dLS. **ncn** will take into account the level of individual New Deal benefits in assessing the level of need for support. Participants in all other New Deal options are not eligible for dLS, as their funding needs are met under the New Deal scheme.

4.5 Learners must be aged 20 or over to receive support from dLS funding for childcare.

5. Assessment criteria

5.1 All learners will be required to provide parent/carers/own income evidence in the form of benefit documents (dated no more than 3 months prior to the application date) or tax credit award notice for the current year and/or pay slips (3 months or 12 weeks consecutive). Alternatively, they will be required to provide an official letter from an employer stating salary on company letterhead stationery or other relevant income evidence.

5.2 Learners aged 16 – 18 who fall into the vulnerable learner group should provide evidence appropriate to their circumstance for example:

- A letter setting out the benefit to which the young person is entitled.
- Written confirmation of the young person's current or previous looked after status from the local authority which looks after them or provides their leaving care services.
- The learners identified as vulnerable will be issued a bus pass (if appropriate) and half-termly payments to the value of £1,200 in 2011/12.

5.3 Learners will not be required to provide income evidence should they receive transitional payments from Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) or Adult Learning Grant (ALG). The award letter stating the award of £30 (09/10-starting EMA) or £20 (10/11-starting EMA) will be required. This evidence is only required to be provided once a year. Learners receiving £20 or £10 a week (starting EMA in 09/10) or £10 a week (starting EMA in 10/11) do not qualify for 16 – 18 Bursary or dLS funding in 2011/12.

5.4 Learners aged 19 and over living with parent(s)/carer(s), may be assessed independently, if the learner is working and receiving a wage. If the learner is not working, the learner will be assessed on the parents'/carers' income.

5.5 ncn will not include Disability Living Allowance when assessing income of disabled learners.

5.6 Learners who are claiming independently but who have dependants themselves are allowed £1,000 per dependant. Where a learner is dependent upon parent(s)/carer(s) then again £1,000 per additional dependant is allowed. However, where a learner is assessed as independent but living with parent(s)/carer(s) there will be no allowance made for additional siblings living in the parental home.

5.7 Any learners who may be eligible for funding from an external source will be required to access the external fund before any dLS will be considered. Funding which is provided by an external source will be taken into consideration when making any financial award.

5.8 All awards will be made on the learner achieving at least 90% attendance, adhering to the Student Code of Conduct and adhering to the Learning Agreement. Failure to have achieved this may result in the Bursary or dLS payment being stopped or delayed until a satisfactory level has been achieved. The learner will receive support from the Attendance and Success Officer, Learner Engagement Officer, Student Services and their tutor to meet these criteria.

5.9 All awards are made subject to the availability of funds allocated in September by the Government. Awards will be made on a first-come first-served basis, and there is no guarantee that late applications will be funded. However, a small 16 – 18 Bursary contingency which is being held back by the Government will be made available to providers in January 2012.

5.10 An appeals process is set out in a separate document which allows the learner to appeal against the decision of the initial assessment. Appeals will be assessed by the Student Services Manager and the Director of Students within 48 hours of receipt.

5.11 Learners entitled to the vulnerable learners' 16 – 18 Bursary scheme who are studying less than 30 weeks a year will be awarded on a pro rata basis up to the sum of £1,200. Part-time learners may receive the discretionary Bursary or dLS adult funding on a pro rata basis if their course is 20 GLH or more in total duration.

6. Income Bands

The following income thresholds will be used when making assessments for discretionary Bursary and dLS funding:

Household and Learner Income Bands*	% of Maximum Award
In receipt of state means-tested benefit	100%
Below £20,816	100%
The above income bands can be increased by £1,000 for each additional dependant child	

7. Categories of funding provided

7.1 Course fees for 19+ learners

7.1.1 dLS funding will not be used to fund tuition fees for learners. However, in exceptional cases where a learner supplies a letter of appeal with related income evidence to prove that they would not be able to participate in education or training due to exceptional hardship then this will be considered on a first-come first-served basis, in line with the boundaries of faculty budgets, potential increased employability chances, and barriers to progression.

7.1.2 dLS funding will be used to support exam and registrations fees for any learner who is in financial hardship, and in receipt of means-tested benefits.

7.2 College-related childcare costs

7.2.1 Learners aged 20 and over who apply for childcare costs must take this at the closest childcare provision to the place of learning, in order for ncn to maximise funds accessible to learners. By choosing a setting closest to the place of study travel time and costs will be reduced.

7.2.2 Full-time second-year learners will receive funding as a priority

7.2.3 The College will then consider any remaining applications for funding by application date order and place availability within the chosen setting.

7.2.4 dLS funding will only fund childcare for timetabled hours plus reasonable travel time to and from college.

7.2.5 Children aged three (the term following their 3rd birthday) and four-year-olds are entitled to free childcare of 15 hours per week. Where possible, learners will be expected to use these hours whilst studying at College.

7.2.6 dLS may consider contributions towards the cost of registration fees, deposits. It will contribute towards snacks, drinks and meals, but it will not cover any costs not included within the usual basic rate charged. Any changes to sessions required must be notified in advance in writing to the Student Finance team.

7.2.7 Only those who cannot be accommodated within the setting closest to the learner's place of study due to the reasons specified below may be considered for funding of an external Ofsted-approved childcare provider, where applicable evidence is required. Such cases will be considered and recommended by the Head of Early Years Services at **ncn**:

- The learner studies at the **ncn** Hucknall campus (which does not have an **ncn** nursery setting) and the learner does not travel past another **ncn** nursery.
- An **ncn** setting cannot accommodate the child for at least 50% of their parent's timetabled hours.
- The learner requires breakfast or after-school club provision which is a facility **ncn** does not provide.
- Learner has a disability or severe medical condition which presents difficulties in transporting their child to an **ncn** nursery as well as travelling themselves or the child has unusual severe physical, mental or medical needs that an **ncn** setting cannot support; therefore a suitable setting with specialist support is required.

A learner may appeal against any of the above decisions to the Student Finance Appeals Panel; Head of Student Services and the Director of Students.

7.2.8 **ncn** places a cap on the **maximum** weekly amount of £160 that will be paid per child in line with the Care to Learn scheme.

7.2.9 Subject to availability of dLS Funds, from April onwards a study leave childcare support scheme will be available. This will entitle every childcare-funded learner 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 **ncn** childcare setting and through the Student Finance team. Evidence of exams or a supporting tutor statement will be required.

7.3 College – related transport costs

7.3.1 dLS is unable to offer any top-up awards towards travel for learners claiming transitional payments from EMA or ALG.

7.3.2 Travel costs will only be considered if the learner lives over 1 mile from the College campus at which they study.

7.3.3 Learner's who have a free bus pass will not be eligible for transport costs.

7.3.4 The most cost-effective transport will be provided for. In many cases, this will take the form of a pre-purchased bus pass from Nottingham City Transport.

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

7.3.6 There is no cap on a travel award; however, the total award made to a learner will not normally exceed £1,200 for a vulnerable learner, or £700 for the 16 – 18 or 19+ discretionary-funded learner for the academic year.

7.3.7 **ncn** may consider funding travel costs under exceptional/emergency circumstances. Household income evidence must be provided unless it is an extreme emergency where this is not possible (e.g. homelessness). A referral through a tutor, Student Adviser, Attendance and Success Officer or Student Finance Adviser is also required. These cases will be considered for emergency support by a hardship panel.

7.3.8 Learners who are in receipt of Incapacity Benefit or Disability Living Allowance and who enrol on an agreed LLDD course and have previously been supported with transport through their Local Education Authority, but, who are now too old for that scheme, may receive a contribution towards transport costs. Necessary evidence is required. The learner's transport requirements will be assessed by the curriculum, this will only be provided in the form of taxi travel.

7.3.9 Learners who require any alternative travel support which is not detailed within this policy should apply in writing and submit relevant supporting evidence. Appeals should be sent to the appeals panel and their decision is final.

7.4 College-related essential equipment

7.4.1 Equipment funded by 16 – 18 Bursary or 19+ dLS will be essential for the course of study. These costs are supplied by each curriculum area via the Head of Faculty and will be approved by the Director of Students prior to the start of the academic year in order for fair and consistent awards to be made.

7.4.2 ncn will assess students for essential equipment costs to a maximum value of £500 per academic year, £425 for those learners in receipt of £30 per week from EMA or ALG transitional payments.

7.4.3 Certain full-time courses within the Beauty Therapy and Hairdressing curriculum have arranged for kits to be purchased on behalf of learners in financial hardship. These kits will be awarded to learners in lieu of equipment payments and will remain the property of the College should the learner withdraw. A contract will be agreed and signed between the Learner and the College on issue of the kit after enrolment.

8. Exceptional hardship circumstances

8.1 On occasion where a Learner is in severe exceptional financial hardship, support may be sought via a hardship application or an appeal letter/email. This application must be supported by the campus Student/Careers Adviser, Attendance and Success Officer or by the Student Services Campus Lead.

8.2 Support may be provided in exceptional cases if the learner can evidence genuine emergency financial barriers which may prevent them from attending or completing their chosen programme of study. Support may be provided in the form of goods/services or monetary at the discretion of the hardship panel.