

Access to Learning Fund Information

The Access to Learning Fund (ALF) provides discretionary financial assistance to students in financial difficulty. The primary purpose of the Fund is to relieve financial hardship that might impact on a student's participation in higher education. Particularly those students who need financial help to meet extra costs that cannot be met from other sources of support. The information is divided into several sections. Students requiring clarification before submitting their application form please contact the Financial Aid Office (See Useful Contacts).

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PLEASE NOTE

An application will not be considered until it is fully completed and all the necessary documentary evidence has been received.

An application form will be returned to the student if:

- they have not completed all relevant sections
- they have not included all necessary photocopied documentation

IT WILL BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO MAKE AN APPLICATION EARLY IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR

The ALF is provided by the Government along with strict guidance on the allocation of the fund: <http://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/products/extra-help/access-to-learning-fund.aspx>

The University acts as an agent for the Government regarding the distribution of ALF.

The application process does not intend to be intrusive or overburden students with documents to support each application it is a necessary requirement to fulfil Government and University audit requirements.

AWARDS ARE DISCRETIONARY AND NOT GUARANTEED: Please do not assume an application will be successful, nor anticipate any amount that may be received. Amounts awarded are **NOT** guaranteed and are subject to change at any time in the academic year.

Part 1 : GENERAL NOTES

What is the Access to Learning Fund?

The Fund can help to alleviate unexpected financial hardship. Students who may be considering leaving higher education because of financial problems are particularly encouraged to apply. Any help awarded from the Fund is usually non-repayable. Students can apply to the Fund at any point throughout the academic year.

Tuition Fees

The Fund **cannot** be used to meet the cost of tuition fees for any undergraduate or post-graduate student. Full-time or part-time undergraduate students can apply for financial support from Student Finance England (SFE).

The Fund can only help with the payment of tuition fees in the following circumstance:

Part-time continuing UK 'home' & EU students (subject to meeting the residency requirements) studying at least 50% of a full-time equivalent course who are in receipt of at least £1 grant for tuition fees from SFE.

Students fulfilling the above criteria can apply for the difference between their actual tuition fee costs and the maximum SFE tuition fee grant. To apply please complete the University of Kent Part-Time Fee Support Application Form available from the Financial Aid Office (see Useful Contacts).

Part-time Support

Discretionary Childcare grant for part-time students

To be eligible:

Continuing students must be entitled to receive the full fee and course grant available from Student Finance England (SFE). Students who receive partial fee grant support are ineligible.

New students who start their course on or after 01 September 2012 must have a household income of £16,845 or less for a single student with no dependents. Household income levels vary according to students personal circumstances.

To apply please contact the Financial Aid Office (see Useful Contacts).

Part 2: WHO CAN APPLY?

The Access to Learning Fund is for **UK 'home'** students, as assessed by the University of Kent for tuition fees purposes, registered on a course in one of the following categories:

- **Undergraduate students, either full-time or part-time**, including part-time distance learners, following a higher education course, including sandwich courses and any periods of placement
- **Postgraduate students, either full-time or part-time**, following a course of higher education at a level above first degree, including those who are writing up their thesis and not therefore attending the institution

A full time course is 120 credit points in an academic year or equivalent.

Continuing part time students need to be studying the equivalent of 50% of a full time course except:-

- Students with a disability, which prevents them from studying at least 50% of a full-time course, may apply to the Access to Learning Fund if they are studying at least 25% of a full-time course. A statement of support from the Disability & Dyslexia Support Service (DDSS) will be required.

New part time students who start their course on or after 01 September 2012 need to be studying the equivalent of 25% of a full time course.

Intermitting Students

UK 'home' students may be eligible to apply for help from the Fund, if they are unable to attend their course for health / medical reasons, pregnancy or caring responsibilities. Providing they do not permanently withdraw from their studies, and intend to return after their time out.

Franchise Students

Students studying on a franchised course need to contact the relevant person for an application form and further information (see 'Useful Contacts').

Priorities for Assistance

The Fund is available to help any eligible student who has a particular financial need.

However, we cannot meet every application we receive, and we cannot always meet all of the costs that have been applied for.

The Government asks us to give priority to the following groups of students when deciding how to allocate the funding: -

For **full-time undergraduate** students the priority groups are: -

- Students with children (especially lone parents).
- Students from low income families
- Disabled students (especially where the Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) are unable to meet particular costs and the institution has no legal responsibility to do so).
- Care leavers
- Students from Foyers or who are homeless
- Students receiving the final year loan rate who are in financial difficulty (including those who are unable to work because of academic pressure).
- Mature students with existing financial commitments, including priority debts.

For **part-time undergraduate/all postgraduate** students the priority groups are: -

- Students with children
- Students in receipt of full statutory support package (for part-time students who start their course before 1 September 2012).
- Students who are disabled, including disabled students studying between 25% and 49% full-time equivalent (FTE), who are ineligible for Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs) if they start their course before 1 September 2012.

Students who are not in one of the priority groups can still apply, but they must provide as much evidence as possible to show why they have a particular need.

The Government asks that we give priority to students undertaking their first Higher Education qualification, before considering supporting students undertaking a subsequent course of Equivalent or Lower Qualification (ELQ), who are not eligible for student support.

Students may apply more than once during an academic year for help from the Access to Learning Fund but only if their circumstances have changed. **Students will be asked to provide documentary evidence for the change in circumstances.**

Summer Vacation Funding

Some students experiencing financial difficulties during the summer vacation may be able to apply to the Fund for additional help. Further details on student eligibility will be available during the summer term.

Emergency Short Term Loans from the Access to Learning Fund

Students' who have not received their first instalment from the Student Finance England (SFE) at the start of the academic year, can apply for an Emergency Short Term Loan from the Access to Learning Fund. Students will be expected to repay this loan when they receive their first instalment. They will need to complete and sign a short application form and provide documentary evidence to show that SFE are considering them for financial support. Emergency Short Term Loan applications will be processed and paid in 7 – 10 days, and depending on a student's situation may be processed and paid within 48 hours.

Bridging Payment

The Access to Learning Fund can offer help to continuing students who have been receiving benefits during the long vacation. A payment can be made, before enrolment, to bridge the gap between benefit payments stopping (usually the first week of September) and when students receive the first instalment of their financial support. If you have any questions or would like further information please speak to a Student Adviser (see 'Useful Contacts').

Diagnostic Tests

UK 'home' disabled students seeking help with the cost of a preliminary diagnostic assessment can apply for help towards the cost of this test, prior to applying for a Disabled Students' Allowance. Please contact the Disability & Dyslexia Support Service (DDSS) (See Useful Contacts).

Part 3: INFORMATION ON HOW AN APPLICATION IS ASSESSED

Standard awards can help to meet general costs associated with being a full-time undergraduate student such as living and household costs such as rent, mortgage payments, food, utility bills etc. In addition, assistance with course related costs such as childcare, travel and books is available.

For full-time undergraduate students who are being assessed for a standard award there is an '**Assumed Income**', set at a level of £1,740 per year for 'full' year students and £580 per year for 'final' year students. This assumes income from a number of sources including part-time work or additional parental support.

For full-time postgraduate students a weekly **notional postgraduate income** amount is applied to standard assessments. This is set at £165, except for students with dependants or students who are unable to work due to a disability this amount will be £133.

There will be a set expenditure level, known as **Composite Living Costs (CLC)**, for general living and household costs, such as food and utility bills. The relevant amount will be set depending on the student's circumstances: for example a student with children will have a higher CLC.

Variable expenditure may be capped, for example rent, internet and travel costs. Single students, with the exception of some students with disabilities, or with children, or travelling to or from placements, cannot include private vehicle costs however an equivalent public transport cost can be substituted.

Only when a student has agreed a realistic repayment arrangement for a credit card **debt**, **AND** has stopped using that source of credit, can the repayment amount(s) be included as expenditure in the assessment for a standard award. Evidence will be required.

Non-standard awards can be used to help students to meet exceptional costs such as repairs to essential household equipment and emergency situations. In addition, costs for students with a disability, not met by the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), can be considered too.

Part 4: TIMETABLE FOR MAKING A DECISION

Provided that an application form has been accurately completed, and the appropriate documentary evidence supplied, an assessment and decision will be made within 4 working weeks of submission. Successful students can expect to receive a payment within this time period. If for any reason we need to defer the initial payment beyond this 4 week period we shall let the student know.

Part 5: HOW TO APPEAL

Students who are unsuccessful in their application may appeal against the decision. However, appeals against amounts awarded will not be considered. Appeals should only be made if there is no change of circumstances to the original application. If you have experienced a change of circumstances since your original application, please contact a student adviser to discuss submitting a new application based on this change. All information held with your ALF application will be reviewed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor where an independent decision to the original assessment will be made. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor's re-assessment of the application will then be communicated to the student by letter. Any appeal must be made in writing within 4 weeks from the date of the original decision, marked **CONFIDENTIAL** and sent to: -

Professor Alex Hughes
Pro-Vice-Chancellor External (ALF Appeals)
The Registry, University of Kent
Canterbury, CT2 7NZ

Part 6: HOW TO MAKE AN APPLICATION

First steps to an Access to Learning Fund Application

- To apply, first **book an appointment with a student adviser** for an interview (see Useful Contacts). Obtain and complete an **application form**. **NB appointments can soon become fully booked** and the **final appointment dates** for each term are listed in the table below.
- **After the appointment**, the student adviser must submit the completed application form, with all supporting documents, to the Financial Aid Office before 10am on the dates listed in the table below.

Term	Final Appointment Date	Submission Deadline Date
Autumn	07 December 2012	11 December 2012
Spring	29 March 2013	02 April 2013
Summer	07 June 2013	11 June 2013

- Students who meet the relevant criteria will be able to apply up until July 24th 2013.

Interview Preparation

- **Before attending your interview** please visit the following web address <http://www.kent.ac.uk/finance-student/learningfunds/index.html> where information regarding applications to the Access to Learning Fund is available.
- If you are a **franchised student or studying off campus** you should contact a student adviser to see if you need to attend an interview (see Useful Contacts).
- If you are **studying abroad** you should post / email your completed application form together with the supporting documentation to: The Students' Union Advice Centre (see Useful Contacts).

Student Adviser Interview

- **At your interview** You must supply continuous bank statements for the 3-month period on **ALL your bank and building society accounts** up to the date of your interview. Where a gap occurs between the statement and the interview date a mini-statement/balance for that day must be supplied. It is essential that your bank statements show your **income assessed** SFE payments being received into your bank account. Details and evidence of any outstanding debts must be supplied and you may be offered budgeting and debt advice to help with any outstanding debts where applicable.
- You must complete in full the Income and Expenditure sections on the application form to allow the student adviser to complete your Financial Shortfall Calculation. This calculation will be used when determining if an award should be made, and how much it should be.
- It is important that you supply all supporting documentation with your application form when you attend your interview. **If your application does not have supporting documents it will be considered incomplete and will not be processed.**

Award Assessment and Payment

- Once your completed application form and **all** relevant evidence has been submitted to the student adviser at your interview, the application will be passed to the Financial Aid Office. An assessment and decision will normally be made within **4 working weeks** of the Financial Aid Office receiving the completed application. You can usually expect to receive a payment within this time period. If for any reason we need to defer your initial payment beyond this 4 week period we will let you know.
- The initial award payment will always be made by cheque. Students who wish to have their cheque mailed out or paid to a creditor should indicate so on their application form.
- Applicants are advised that payments from the Access to Learning Fund may have implications for their entitlement to means-tested state benefits. Students who receive help from the Fund can be supplied with a letter to present to their local JobCentre Plus / Housing Benefit office to help their claim for benefits if necessary.

Part 7: USEFUL CONTACTS

Student Advisers	Partner College & College Master for Medway	College Masters for Canterbury
<p>Canterbury Campus</p> <p>Judi Law, Ruth Newman, Careen Gadd, Teresa Ashley, Lesley Clifton, John Turner & Tim Vivian Kent Union Advice Centre Mandela Building University of Kent Canterbury Kent CT2 7NW Telephone: 01227 827724 Email: advice@kent.ac.uk</p>	<p>MidKent College</p> <p>Student Financial Support Information Zone Medway Rd Gillingham Kent ME7 1FN Telephone 01634 383165 Email: learnerservices@midkent.ac.uk</p>	<p>Darwin & Woolf College</p> <p>TBA Master's Office Darwin College University of Kent Canterbury Kent CT2 7NY Telephone: 01227 823049 Email: J.A.Farnham@kent.ac.uk (Master's Assistant)</p>
<p>Medway Campus</p> <p>Jill Plows & Paul West University at Medway Students' Association (UMSA) Pilkington Building, North Road Chatham Maritime Kent ME4 4JB Telephone 01634 888989 Email: advice@umsa.org.uk</p>	<p>K College</p> <p>Telephone 0845 207 8220 Email: info@kcollege.ac.uk</p>	<p>Eliot College</p> <p>Mr. Stephen Burke Master's Office Eliot College University of Kent Canterbury Kent CT2 7NS Telephone: 01227 823141 Email: M.L.Johnson@kent.ac.uk (Master's Assistant)</p>
<p>Disability & Dyslexia Support Service</p> <p>Canterbury Campus Keynes College Telephone: 01227 823158 Email: accessibility@kent.ac.uk</p> <p>Medway Campus The Gillingham Building Telephone: 01634 888969 Email: medwaystudentservices@kent.ac.uk</p>	<p>Canterbury College</p> <p>Emily Preston / Bridget Margrie Student Information Centre Telephone: 01227 811197 / 811111 ext 2104 or 01227 811188 Email: e.preston@canterburycollege.ac.uk b.margrie@canterburycollege.ac.uk</p>	<p>Keynes College</p> <p>TBA Master's Office Keynes College University of Kent Canterbury Kent CT2 7NP Telephone: 01227 827010 Email: KMASS@kent.ac.uk (Master's Assistant)</p>
<p>Financial Aid Office</p> <p>Barry Buckton, Joanna Hart & Lisa Babbs G43 The Registry University of Kent Canterbury Kent CT2 7NZ Telephone: 01227 823488 / 4876 / 3851 Email: FinancialAid@kent.ac.uk</p>	<p>College Master for Medway</p> <p>Jane Glew Room Medway M1-26 Medway Building University of Kent Chatham Maritime Kent ME4 4AG Telephone: 01634 888807 Email: J.P.Glew@kent.ac.uk</p>	<p>Rutherford College</p> <p>Dr. Peter Klappa Master's Office Rutherford College University of Kent Canterbury Kent CT2 7NX Telephone: 01227 823175 Email: S.M.Casement@kent.ac.uk (Master's Assistant)</p>

Application Forms and Guidance Notes may be obtained from all of the above contacts. Alternatively you can download an application form from the website www.kent.ac.uk/finance-student/