Access to Learning Fund for Part-time Students 2018-2019

Please note: These guidance notes are provisional as we are awaiting the publication of the NASMA Guidance. Once we have received this guidance we will update these notes.

1. What is the Access to Learning Fund?

Access to Learning Funds are intended to provide selective help to students who have serious financial difficulties. Grants from the Access to Learning Fund are needs-related and are non-repayable. Most part-time students are considered for additional help with course-related costs only e.g. books, childcare costs and travel.

2. Can Access to Learning Funds help with tuition fees?

No. Access to Learning Funds cannot be awarded to assist with the payment of academic fees. Instead, if you are a part-time home undergraduate student studying for at least 50% of a full-time equivalent course (60 CATS), who started your course before the 1 September 2012, you can apply for financial support from [www.gov.uk/studentfinance](http://www.gov.uk/studentfinance).

Part-time UK and EU undergraduates who started their course in or after 2012 and who are studying at least 25% of a full-time equivalent course (30 CATS), can apply for a non-means tested Tuition Fee Loan from the Student Loans Company, to cover the full cost of the fee.

If you are a part-time home postgraduate student you may be eligible for a Postgraduate Loan or Professional and Career Development Loan to help pay for your course fees. For further information on Professional and Career Development Loans, visit [www.gov.uk/career-development-loans/overview](http://www.gov.uk/career-development-loans/overview).

3. Am I eligible for a Warwick Scholarship (fee waiver)?

Part-time undergraduates who started their course in or after 2012, who are in receipt of a means-tested benefit/Working Tax Credit/Pension Credit (or whose spouse or partner is in receipt of a qualifying benefit/Working Tax Credit/Pension Credit) and a Tuition Fee Loan, are eligible for a Warwick Fee Waiver if they are studying for their first degree (See appendix for the current year rate). For more details, a list of eligible benefits and an application form please visit [www.warwick.ac.uk/warwickusb](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/warwickusb).

4. Who can apply to the Access to Learning Fund?

Registered part-time students paying UK home fees and who have settled status and have been ordinarily resident in the British Islands for the three years immediately before the start of their studies are eligible to apply. Part-time undergraduates who started their course prior to 1 September 2012 must be enrolled on at least 50% of a full-time equivalent higher education course (60 CATS per academic year) including periods of placements. The course should take no longer than twice the time required to complete an equivalent full-time course.
Students who started their course prior to the 1st September 2012 but who are only able to undertake 25% of a full-time equivalent higher education course due to a disability are eligible to apply to the fund.

Part-time undergraduates who started their course in or after 2012 must be enrolled on at least 25% of a full-time equivalent higher education (30 CATS per academic year) course including periods of placement. The course should take no more than four times the time required to complete a full-time course.

Part-time postgraduates must be following a course of higher education at a level above a first degree, including those who are in extension and writing up their thesis, as long as you remain registered on your course. Postgraduate students whose registration status is ‘limbo’ are not eligible for ALF.

You will need to show genuine financial hardship and that you have explored and exhausted all other ways of supporting yourself. Part-time undergraduates who started their course prior to the 1 September 2012 should have applied to the Student Loans Company for the maximum fee support and course costs grant available to them. Part-time undergraduates who started their course in or after 2012 should have applied to the Student Loans Company for their full entitlement of Tuition Fee Loan. Part–time undergraduates who started their course in 2018 should have applied to the SLC for their full entitlement of tuition fee loan and maintenance loan, towards course and living costs.

Part-time postgraduates should have applied for and taken out the maximum Postgraduate Loan, Professional and Career Development Loan (available until 25th January 2019) or any other loan available to them before applying to the Access to Learning Fund, as they will be expected to have made realistic provision at the start of their course to fund both their tuition fees and living costs. Where students clearly have not done so, a payment from the Fund may not be appropriate.

Priority for funding is given to students with dependants, students with disabilities and postgraduate students who are self-funding.

If you are not in one of the priority groups you can still apply, but you must provide as much evidence as possible to demonstrate why you have a particular need.

Applications cannot be considered from students who have completed, permanently withdrawn from or abandoned their course or whose eligibility for statutory student support has been terminated by their funding body e.g. Student Finance England.

5. What is a Home student?

A home student is defined as a student who meets certain residency conditions (the same conditions apply to eligibility for government financial support). Usually this means you must have an unrestricted right to enter and remain in the UK and you must have been ordinarily resident in the UK for three years prior to the start of your course. None of this time must have been spent in the UK wholly or mainly for the purpose of receiving full-time education. If you need further information on the residency rules, please contact the Student Funding team on 024 7615 0096 or email to studentfunding@warwick.ac.uk.

6. I am an EU student. Can I apply to the Access to Learning Fund?

No, EU students cannot normally apply to the Access to Learning Fund but part-time undergraduates who started their course in or after 2012 may be eligible for a Tuition Fee Loan from the Student Loans Company and should apply to www.gov.uk/studentfinance. Part-time EU postgraduate students are not eligible for this support.
7. What help can I expect to receive as a home student?

Grants from the fund are needs-related and assessed on an individual basis. As a result, we are unable to give a clear indication of the likely value of any possible award until an application has been submitted and the assessment process completed. Most part-time students are considered for additional help with course-related costs only e.g. books, childcare costs and travel. A figure for general course-related costs is pre-set at the start of the academic year and applied to the assessments (See appendix for current year rate).

Part-time undergraduates who started their course prior to 1 September 2012, who are studying a minimum of two 30 CAT modules in the academic year, may be eligible for a grant towards the costs of approved or registered childcare used while students are studying. Students must receive the full fee and course grant support available from the Student Loans Company and should provide their student finance letter as evidence.

Students who started their part-time studies in or after 2012 and who are studying for a minimum of one 30 CAT module may also be eligible to apply for the grant. These students should provide confirmation that they have applied for a tuition fee loan. Students should also provide evidence of their annual income along with their current year tax credits notification. Students with a partner should also provide evidence of their partner’s income.

All students should complete, and get your childcare provider to sign, a Childcare Information Form. The Childcare Information Form should be completed in addition to the University Hardship Funds Application Form and provided with a copy of your course timetable. Your timetable can be accessed through your online student record.

In order to be eligible for the part-time students’ childcare grant you must be the main carer and your child must be under the age of 15 years (or under 17 if the child is registered as having special educational needs within the meaning of the Education Act 1996) immediately before the start of the academic year. Students should not be in receipt of support for childcare costs from any other source, such as another government scheme, an institutional or employer’s scheme or the childcare element of Working Tax Credits or Universal Credit.

Childcare grants are not available for postgraduate students.

8. How do I apply to the Access to Learning Fund?

An application form for University Hardship Funds can be downloaded from www.warwick.ac.uk/hardshipfunds. Alternatively, you can request an application form from the Student Funding Office, Senate House. Once you have completed the form, you will need to return it to the Student Funding team along with the supporting documentation detailed within the form. Any receipts or invoices associated with the application, for example childcare costs, must be dated and on printed headed paper please. Details and evidence of travel costs, taken at the cheapest available rate, should also be included with the application.

9. I have completed the application form and enclosed the documents that have been requested. What happens next?

Once we have received your form, the Student Funding team will contact you to arrange a short confidential interview with a specialist Student Funding Adviser which will take approximately 30 minutes.
The interview will be informal and will give you the opportunity to discuss your individual needs and circumstances in detail.

Please be assured that the Funding Adviser will consider your best interests at all stages of the assessment process. However, you should be aware that the Funding Adviser works within agreed guidelines for the assessment of awards and distribution of funds. It may be necessary during the interview to refer to your bank statements, credit history and spending patterns. The discussion may also explore opportunities for part-time working and other funding available to you. Any questions are not intended to be intrusive, but to allow the Funding Adviser to form a complete and comprehensive assessment of your financial situation and, if possible, to recommend a successful outcome to your application. Please ensure you bring your university ID card to your appointment.

10. What happens after the interview?

After your interview a short confidential report summarising your discussions will be prepared and your application will be assessed against agreed guidelines for the allocation of funds. All recommendations for awards are considered by a minimum of two members of the Student Funding team.

11. How will my application be assessed?

As a part-time student your application will be assessed by the Threshold method recommended by the National Association of Student Money Advisers (NASMA). This considers course related costs such as books, childcare costs or travel for the periods students are studying. For students who started their course prior to the 1 September 2012, the income level will be assessed against their Student Loans Company Course Cost and Fee Grant eligibility. Students who started their course in or after 2012 will need to provide evidence of their annual household income including their current year tax credits notification if they have dependants.

For the majority of single students local travel is included at the bus pass rate. For students living further away from the university, for example, in the parental or family home, travel is capped at the cheapest available fare and is only considered for days that students need to be in attendance for contact time. In some cases, for example for students with dependants or a disability, car costs may be considered at a standard mileage rate to include tax, insurance and maintenance (See appendix for current year mileage rate). Evidence of travel costs and a copy of your course time-table should be provided with your application. Course costs for books are considered pro-rata of the rate for full-time students (See appendix for current year course costs).

It is expected that part-time students will have made provision for their living costs prior to the start of their course from paid work, loans and/or benefits. Lone parents in receipt of means-tested benefits, students with disabilities or students with priority debts may exceptionally be considered for help towards living expenses.

12. How and when will I find out if my application has been successful?

If your application form is completed accurately and the appropriate documentary evidence supplied, an assessment and decision should be made within 10 working days of your interview. You will be notified of the outcome via university email. Any award will be paid within a further 10 working days (providing you have submitted your bank details on receipt of your email, if applicable). Please note, payments may be made in instalments.
However, in some cases we may need to defer your initial payment beyond 10 days to deal with a particular circumstance, for example, additional evidence or bank statements may be required. If this applies to your application, we will let you know the reason for the delay.

13. Will I get my original documents back?

Any original documentation you supplied as part of your application will be returned to your current local address on your University record or you can pick it up from the Student Funding team in Senate House. However, should you prefer to submit legible photocopies of your documents this is acceptable and these documents will not be returned to you unless you request this specifically. Please note that spreadsheets of bank transactions will not be accepted.

14. Can I reapply to the Access to Learning Fund?

You can reapply to the Access to Learning Fund during the same academic year providing you are still fully registered on your course. If your course related costs e.g. childcare have changed since your original application please complete a new application form and provide documentary evidence for the change in circumstances. Please also provide bank statements for the last 3 months.

Threshold assessments are calculated and completed for the academic year. However, if you are reapplying to the Fund for reasons other than a change of circumstances, for example in the case of an emergency situation, please submit a Student Hardship Funds Re-application form and provide your bank statements for the last 3 months for all accounts and any other relevant documentary evidence.

You will be asked to attend another brief appointment with a Student Funding Adviser and you will be notified of the outcome of your re-application as above.

15. Will an award from the Fund affect my entitlement to benefits?

Payments from the Access to Learning Fund may have implications for your entitlement to benefits. If you receive help from the Fund you can request a document to present to the Jobcentre Plus/Housing Benefit office to help explain the circumstances of your award.

16. Can I apply for the cost of a diagnostic test?

If you are an undergraduate student who is eligible for a Part-Time Fee Waiver

Please complete the [online form] within three months of the date of your test. Ensure that you upload a scanned copy of your invoice or receipt which clearly shows the date of your diagnostic test appointment. If you are not sure if you are eligible for a Part-time Fee Waiver, please contact us on 024 7615 0096 or email studentfunding@warwick.ac.uk.

If you are a postgraduate student who is in receipt of means-tested benefits

Please complete the [online form] within three months of the date of your test. Ensure that you upload a scanned copy of your invoice or receipt which clearly shows the date of your diagnostic test appointment. In addition, please email evidence of your means-tested benefit(s) to studentfunding@warwick.ac.uk. If you have any queries, please use the same email address or call 024 7615 0096.
All other home (UK) part-time students

All other part-time students will need to apply for a full means-tested Access to Learning Fund assessment. Please complete the Access to Learning Fund Application Form and return it to the Student Funding office along with the supporting evidence required (please also include a copy of your receipt or invoice from your assessor which clearly shows the date of your diagnostic test appointment). We will contact you to arrange an appointment to see a Student Funding Adviser as soon as possible.

Please note that we cannot provide financial assistance to students who have completed, permanently withdrawn from, or abandoned their course.

17. Can I apply for help with the cost of my £200 equipment contribution for my Disabled Students’ Allowance?

When you complete the Hardship Funds application form, please include the £200 DSA contribution information on your application form and provide evidence so that we can include this as part of your essential expenditure.

18. Can I apply for an Emergency Loan?

Yes, if you are requesting an emergency loan or other short-term help, applications should be processed and paid within 2 working days and depending on your situation may be processed and paid within 24 hours. In order to obtain a short-term loan, you will need to show your student ID card and bring evidence of your current bank balance. You may also be asked to complete a Declaration of Eligibility and provide evidence of your residency status. Please note that you will be limited to a maximum of 3 emergency loans in any 12 month period.

19. Evaluation

As part of our ongoing commitment to improving our service to students, you may be requested to complete an online evaluation of your application and assessment experience.

20. Appeals Procedure

Download the Hardship Funds Appeals Procedure

21. Who should I contact if I have any questions?

If you have any questions related to the Access to Learning Fund, the application process or student funding in general, please do not hesitate to contact the Student Funding team on studentfunding@warwick.ac.uk, or by telephone on 024 7615 0096.

APPENDIX (Rates and Caps for 2018-19 Academic Year)

- Warwick Scholarship/Fee Waiver: £770 per 30 CAT module for 2017-18 and 2018-19 entrants
- Warwick Scholarship/Fee Waiver: £750 per 30 CAT module for 12/13 – 16/17 entrants
- Course Costs: £187.50 per annum (50% FTE course of study/or pro-rata)
- Mileage Rate: 28p per mile