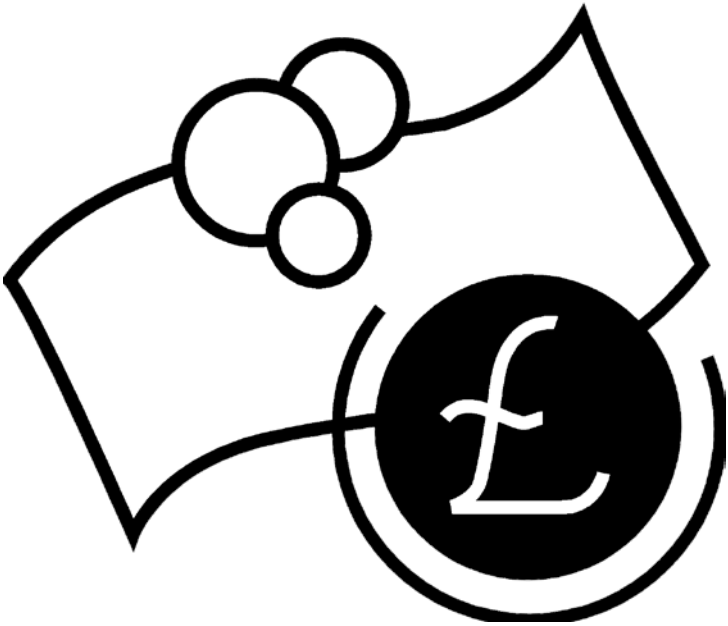
University of Leicester

Student Welfare Service

Guide to the

Access to Learning Fund

Full-Time Home Students



www.le.ac.uk/welfare

What is the Access to Learning Fund?

The Access to Learning Fund (sometimes known as the “Hardship Fund”) is money given by the Government to Higher Education Institutions. It provides discretionary financial help for students to relieve financial hardship that might impact on a student’s participation in higher education.

The information contained in this leaflet is intended as a brief guide to the most common questions associated with the Access to Learning Fund. More information – for example, the full eligibility criteria and a detailed explanation of the assessment process – can be found on the following website:

http://go.le.ac.uk/accesstolearning

Can I apply to the Access to Learning Fund?

The Access to Learning Fund is only available to home (UK) students.

Full – time undergraduate eligibility is largely the same as for student maintenance loans in that if you are eligible for a student maintenance loan then you are also entitled to apply for help from the Access to Learning Fund. ***You are expected to take the maximum maintenance loan available to you, otherwise you will not be considered to be in hardship.***

Home students studying on courses which don’t qualify for a maintenance loan (e.g. part-time ***** or postgraduate students******) may also apply for help. Contact one of the Student Finance Advisers (see end of leaflet for details) or see the website above for full eligibility criteria.

N.B. *International students experiencing financial difficulties should seek advice from the International Student Advisers, also based in the Student Welfare Service.*

*****see separate leaflet *Financial Support for Part-Time and Distance Learning Undergraduate Students.*

****** Postgraduate students are expected to have made realistic provision to meet their tuition fees and other essential costs before commencing their studies. Applications to the Access to Learning Fund will normally only be considered to

assist with exceptional costs or following a significant and unexpected change in circumstances during the course. You are encouraged to speak to a Student Finance Adviser for further information and advice. More detailed information on *Postgraduate funding* can be found on the following websites:

www.le.ac.uk/welfare

http://www.prospects.ac.uk

When and how do I apply?

- Applications can be submitted throughout the academic year.

You can call the Student Welfare Service to request an application form or drop in and pick one up (see back of leaflet for contact details); you can also download a copy from our website: **http://go.le.ac.uk/accesstolearning**

- Any award will be subject to availability of funding - the University receives a limited amount of money and although every effort is made to ensure that it remains available throughout the year, this cannot be guaranteed. You are therefore encouraged to apply early if you anticipate difficulties at any stage in the year.
- Funding is assessed on an annual basis. You will be required to apply again each academic year if your difficulties continue.

How is my application assessed?

Your application will be assessed by the Student Welfare Service and in certain circumstances referred to a Welfare Committee, chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor, for approval. All applications are dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.

Your allowable expenditure will be deducted from your available income to see if you have enough money to meet your needs. If your income is less than your expenditure we will, subject to availability of funds, award you help towards your additional financial needs.

N.B. *If you have a partner who is living with you, their net income and essential expenditure will also be taken into account.*

What can I get help with?

This will depend on the course you are studying (e.g. whether full- or part-time, under- or postgraduate) and your individual needs as determined from your application form.

Successful applicants may receive help towards the following:

- Travel
- Childcare
- Accommodation
- General living costs
- Books/stationery etc.
- Fieldwork (see separate leaflet *Fieldwork Bursaries*)

If you have exceptional costs to meet – e.g. birth of a baby, emergency repairs, costs relating to family illness or as a result of being the victim of crime - you may also be considered for a **non-standard** award. You should apply in the normal way but make sure you give as much information/evidence as possible to help assess your application.

If you prefer, you can arrange an appointment with a Student Finance Adviser to discuss your situation.

N.B. *The fund cannot be used to pay for full-time tuition fees. If you are in hardship as a result of having to pay your own fees please make an appointment to see a Student Finance Adviser to seek further advice*

How will I be notified?

You will normally receive a notification letter confirming the outcome of your application within approximately two weeks of submitting your completed application and all relevant documentary evidence. Payments can only be made by cheque.

What if my application is unsuccessful?

You can make an appointment to see a Student Finance Adviser in the Student Welfare Service to discuss your application and consider other possible funding routes to meet your needs.

If you think the decision was unfair there is an appeals procedure you can follow. This is detailed in your notification letter.

What other help is available?

Student Finance Advisers

The Student Finance Advisers can advise on a range of financial matters, including how to maximise your income and the availability of external funding (such as statutory student funding and state benefits), and can offer help with budgeting.

Part-time Work

WorkBank is a student employment service which can help you to find work to fit in with your studies – see their website: **www.theworkbank.co.uk**

The University Careers Service also gives information and advice on looking for work – see their website **www.le.ac.uk/careers**

The University will be establishing a **Unitemps** franchise on campus with effect from September 2012. Our branch of **Unitemps** will be located in the Percy Gee Building and will be offering employment opportunities to all current and former students. Please check the Careers website at regular intervals for updates on this new service.

Bank Overdraft Facilities

Most full-time students are entitled to interest-free overdraft facilities – usually starting at around £1,000 in the first year. Pick up a leaflet from your bank or ask to speak to their Student Adviser. Alternatively, compare available accounts by using the internet or visiting local branches.

Charities/Trust Funds

There are a number of grant-making organisations that may consider help for students, particularly in certain priority groups (e.g. lone parents, students with disabilities). The *Educational Grants Directory 2011/12* is held in the University library but for extra resources you may need to visit a main library such as Bishop Street Reference Library in Leicester city centre. The Student Finance Advisers can also help you to identify appropriate organisations.

Useful Websites

General Finance Information and Advice:

Direct Gov: **www.direct.gov.uk**

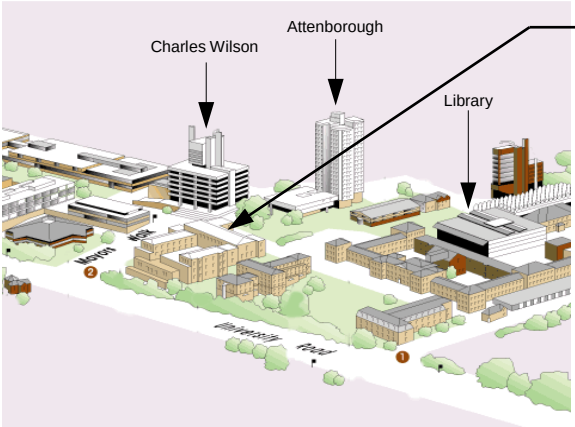
Money Saving Expert: **www.moneysavingexpert.com**

Educational Grants Advisory Service: **www.family-action.org.uk**

Database of UK Charities: **www.turn2us.org.uk**

www.guidestar.org.uk

Where to find the Student Welfare Service



Student Welfare Service

The Student Welfare Service is located on the first floor of the Percy Gee Building, on the main University Campus.

How to contact the Student Welfare Service

Student Welfare Service
1st Floor Percy Gee Building
University Road
University of Leicester
Leicester
LE1 7RH

T: 0116 223 1185
F: 0116 223 1196
E: welfare@le.ac.uk

www.le.ac.uk/welfare

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