

34. ADULT EDUCATION BURSARIES

What is the Adult Education Bursary Scheme?

In England there are four colleges that specialise in providing long-term residential courses for adults. The bursary scheme has been set up for adults (aged 19 and upwards) who enrol on a full-time certificate or diploma course of at least a year in length at one of these colleges. Funding is also available for English-resident students who attend Newbattle Abbey College in Scotland during the 2011/12 academic year.

Grants are given to students to cover tuition fees and to provide a suitable amount of money on which to live for the year. A dependants' allowance is also given for those who need extra financial support. Additional grants are available for students with disabilities.

Where are these colleges?

The location and contact details for the four English colleges are as follows:

Fircroft College 1018 Bristol Road Selly Oak Birmingham B29 6LH Tel. 0121 472 0116 e-mail: use online contact form www.fircroft.ac.uk	Hillcroft College (for women) South Bank Surbiton Surrey KT6 6DF Tel. 020 8399 2688 e-mail: enquiry@hillcroft.ac.uk www.hillcroft.ac.uk
Northern College Wentworth Castle Stainborough Barnsley South Yorkshire S75 3ET Tel. 01226 776 000 e-mail: courses@northern.ac.uk www.northern.ac.uk	Ruskin College Walton Street Oxford OX1 2HE Tel. 01865 554 331 e-mail: enquiries@ruskin.ac.uk www.ruskin.ac.uk

Contact details for the residential college in Scotland are:

Newbattle Abbey College
Dalkeith
Midlothian EH22 3LL
Tel. 0131 633 1921
e-mail: office@newbattleabbeycollege.ac.uk
www.newbattleabbeycollege.ac.uk

What can I study at these colleges?

The colleges offer university-type education for adults in a supportive environment within disciplines such as the humanities and social sciences. Examples of subjects that can be studied include local history, politics, sociology, English literature, media studies, art and design and information technology. Courses will also enable you to improve your skills in mathematics.

What types of qualification are funded through this scheme?

The bursaries are available to students attending certificate and diploma courses. They are not available for students who are studying on a course that leads to a professional qualification or for students who are studying on courses at first degree level. Other funding is available for this type of course (see Section 2 of this book for more information about funding for higher education courses and postgraduate study).

What are other students like at these colleges?

These colleges have been established to provide education for students who, for economic or other reasons, did not have the opportunity to continue in education after leaving school. Students are drawn from a wide range of occupations and backgrounds: ages vary enormously and both genders are represented (with the exception of Hillcroft, which is a college for women only).

Students attending these colleges find that they are able to make lasting friendships with like-minded people. The residential environment helps to encourage social networking and provides the opportunity for students to access personal support and learning facilities throughout the working week and at weekends.

What are the eligibility criteria for funding?

To be eligible to apply for funding you need to meet the following criteria:

- You must be at least 19 years old before the start of the academic year in which the course begins. Some colleges may request a higher age limit so you will need to check before you apply.
- You must have been offered a place at one of the colleges listed above and been recommended for a bursary.
- You must be resident in England (Scottish students can apply for a Further Education Bursary instead, so contact your chosen residential college for more information).
- You must have been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom, the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man throughout the period of three years immediately preceding your bursary application. During this period you must not have been resident solely for the purposes of receiving full-time education.
- You must have settled status, which means that you must be settled in the United Kingdom within the meaning of the Immigration Act of 1971 at the date you apply for a bursary.

Certain exemptions apply to the residency rules described above, so if you are in doubt about your eligibility you should seek advice from your chosen college or from the Residential Colleges Committee Awards Officer (details below). If you are an EU national (or the child of an EU national)

you may be able to receive help with your tuition fees, so contact your chosen college for more information.

You will not be eligible for a bursary in the following circumstances:

- You have received an Adult Education Bursary on a previous occasion.
- You already hold a higher education qualification, obtained either within the UK or overseas, from full-time study, part-time study or distance learning. Even if you left your course without obtaining a qualification, it will still be taken into account when your eligibility is assessed. However, if you left your course for a compelling reason, such as a serious illness, this may help your case.

How much funding is available?

All students who receive a bursary will have their tuition fees, examination fees and subscription to the students' union paid for them. This is irrespective of your family income. These fees are paid straight to the college on your behalf.

The personal maintenance grant is means tested, so how much you will receive depends on your family income (see below). It is paid to the college at the start of term and usually distributed to students in the autumn, spring and summer terms. The standard rate of personal maintenance grant for full-time attendance of 30 weeks plus the vacations at Christmas and Easter in 2011/12 is as follows:

- students living in college in the London area: £4,781
- students living in college elsewhere: £3,771
- students living in the family home: £2,852

If normal term-time exceeds 30 weeks an additional weekly rate may be paid:

- students living in college in the London area: £99
- students living in college elsewhere: £76
- students living in the family home: £45

How is my income assessed?

The amount of maintenance grant you will receive depends on your family income. This could include your own income, that of your partner or spouse, or that of your parents.

Decisions on whether your partner or parents are assessed depend on whether you are classed as a dependent or independent student. In general, if you are under the age of 25 and you've not been married, or supported yourself financially for at least three years prior to taking up your course, you will be considered to be dependent on your parents and their income will be assessed. If you are 25 or over, are married or have supported yourself financially for three years prior to taking up your course, you will be considered an independent student and your income (and that of your partner, if relevant) will be taken into account. More information about dependent/independent status is provided in Chapter 8.

What are the income levels for receiving a full grant?

When assessing your income the Awards Officer works out the residual income by taking your gross income before tax and National Insurance and taking off allowances for personal pension scheme payments and child dependants. The following income levels are relevant for the 2011/12 academic year:

- if you are an independent student and you live with a partner you will receive a full grant if your household income is less than £23,660;
- if you are a single, independent student you will receive a full grant if your income is less than £11,020;
- if you are considered a dependent student you will receive a full grant if your parental income is less than £23,660.

Above these amounts you (or your parents or partner) will make a contribution of £45 plus £1 for every £9.27 over these income levels.

Are there any other grants available?

Other funding may be available for students in certain circumstances. These are listed in the table below. The figures relate to 2011/12.

TYPE OF FUND	AMOUNT OF FUNDING
Childcare Grant	£148.75 a week for one child £255 a week for two or more children
Parents' Learning Allowance	Up to £1,508
Child Tax Credit	Variable - see Chapter 44
Adult Dependants' Grant	Up to £2,642
Travelling expenses	Variable (but must be the most economical route, method and class)
Disabled Students' Allowances	Up to £5,161 specialist equipment grant Up to £20,520 non-medical personal helper allowance Up to £1,724 general disabled student allowance See Chapter 14 for more information
Learner Support Fund	Variable - depends on needs and funds
Benefits for students from vulnerable groups	Various - see Chapter 45

How do I apply for funding?

Apply to your preferred college. Once you have been offered a place they will provide you with an application form. Complete the form and return it to the college who will forward it to the Awards Officer.

If your application is approved, the Awards Officer will write to you confirming this and will send you a further form to complete. This is called a 'statement of financial circumstances' and will enable the Awards Officer to assess how much grant you should receive.

Once your grant has been assessed you will be sent a 'Notification of Bursary' that shows you how much you will be paid and when instalments are due. You may need to provide additional information if requested.

If your application is not successful the Awards Officer will contact you to explain why. You have the right to appeal if you think the decision is wrong. Applications should be made as soon as possible to avoid a delay in payments.

Where can I find more information?

If you are interested in studying at one of these colleges and need to find out about the bursary scheme, you are advised to contact your chosen college direct. A booklet called *Adult Education Bursaries: a guide for applicants for courses at the long-term residential colleges* is available from the address below. It is now available in printed or electronic format.

Awards Officer
Adult Education Bursary Office
Suite 30
Westgate Centre
Oxford OX1 1NZ
Tel. 01865 727 035
e-mail: awards@ruskin.ac.uk