



Skills Funding
Agency

Advanced learner loans funding rules

Version 1

For the 2017 to 2018 funding year (1 August 2017 to 31 July 2018).

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Of interest to providers and employers delivering provision funded by learners through advanced learner loans

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Introduction and purpose of the document

1. This document sets out the Advanced Learner Loans (loans) funding rules for the 2017 to 2018 funding year (1 August 2017 to 31 July 2018). The performance management rules for 2017 to 2018 will be available in version two. These rules apply to all providers of education and training who hold a loans facility conditions and bursary fund agreement (agreement) with the Secretary of State for Education acting through the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). This agreement allows providers to receive loans payments from the Student Loans Company (SLC) on behalf of learners and loans bursary payments from the SFA.
2. These rules do not apply to adult education budget (AEB) funding, apprenticeships or to education and training services funded by the European Social Fund – you can access these separate funding rules on GOV.UK.
3. This document forms part of the terms and conditions of funding and you must read it in conjunction with your agreement. You must operate within the terms and conditions of the agreement these rules and the ILR Specification. If you do not, you are in breach of the agreement with us.
4. The SFA reserve the right to make changes to these rules.

How this document can help you

5. This document contains the rules relevant to provision funded through loans and the loans bursary fund.
6. This document is divided into two sections that contain the loans and loans bursary funding rules and evidence requirements. Each section may include:
 - 6.1 the context of the rule in a box
 - 6.2 the rule itself as a numbered paragraph
7. We have included a [glossary](#) to explain technical terms.

Understanding the terminology

8. The term 'we' refers to the SFA.
9. When we refer to 'you' or 'providers', this includes colleges, higher education institutions, training organisations, local authorities and employers who receive funding through a loans facility or loans bursary fund agreement, to deliver education and training. We will use the generic term 'you' or 'provider' unless the requirements only apply to a specific provider type.
10. The term 'agreement' means the loans facility conditions and bursary fund agreement.

11. We use the terms 'individual' and 'learner' to cover all those who fund their education or training with a loan, and where appropriate who receive support through the loans bursary fund.
12. We use the term 'provision' and 'qualifications' to refer to all qualifications designated for loans, which will either be a qualification from the Ofqual regulated qualifications framework (RQF) or an access to higher education diploma recognised and regulated by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

Contacting us

13. You can contact us through our service desk at servicedesk@sfa.bis.gov.uk or telephone 0370 2640001.

Advanced Learner Loans

Advanced learner loans help people aged 19 and over undertake general and technical qualifications at levels 3, 4, 5 and 6. Loans provide a source of fees support for learners, enabling them to reap the personal and financial benefits of their study, which in turn will support the economy.

By taking out a loan a learner is taking direct responsibility and financial liability for their learning. In return you are obliged, as part of your agreement with the learner, to directly deliver high quality learning and support to enable the learner to successfully achieve their desired outcome.

It is important that learners receive all the key information about what the loan is for, and are signposted to sources of further information to help them decide if they wish to apply for a loan. It is also imperative that they have information in the [Learning and Funding Information Letter](#) about the qualification, your fee and maximum loan amount for their qualification.

The availability of loans at level 3 does not replace the legal entitlement to full funding for eligible learners aged 19 to 23 undertaking their first full level 3 qualification. You can find the definition of a full level 3 in the glossary.

Learner eligibility

14. Loans are not means-tested and are available to eligible learners who are:
 - 14.1 aged 19 or older on the first day of starting their designated loans qualification
 - 14.2 studying in England, with a provider in receipt of a loan facility from us (see paragraphs 17 to 19)
 - 14.3 studying one or more designated loans qualifications at levels 3, 4, 5, or 6 (see paragraphs 39 to 42)
15. On receipt of a learner's loan application, the SLC is responsible for assessing

whether a learner is eligible. You can find more [information on learner eligibility](#) on GOV.UK. There is additional eligibility criteria for offenders – see Annex 2, paragraphs 1.1 to 1.5.

16. 19 to 23 year olds undertaking level 3 qualifications:
 - 16.1 You must check a learner’s legal entitlement to full funding and record that you have done this in the learner file (see paragraphs 92 to 98). If they have not exercised their legal entitlement to full funding for a first full level 3, you must make them aware of this entitlement.
 - 16.2 If you have an AEB funding agreement with us and a learner without a first full level 3 is able to exercise their legal entitlement you must not offer them a loans funded place. Should this situation occur, you must withdraw the learner through the SLC’s learner provider portal and reduce their fee liability to zero. The SLC will recover the overpayment from you from future loans payments. If you have insufficient future loan payments, SLC will ask you to repay any overpayment directly.
 - 16.3 If you are unable to offer a fully-funded first full level 3, and a learner wishes to exercise their entitlement, you must signpost the learner to the [National Careers Service](#) to obtain information about alternative providers
 - 16.4 Where a learner has achieved a level 3 qualification, that was at the time they started or still is classed as a full level 3, and wants to enrol on any subsequent level 3 qualification, of any size, they can apply for a loan or pay for their own learning. Please contact qualifications@sfa.bis.gov.uk if you need advice on a previous qualification’s designation

Provider eligibility

17. You can only make offers of loan funded learning to learners and receive loan payments from the SLC on behalf of learners if we have given you a loans facility and agreement, and a learner has applied for a loan which has been approved by the SLC.
18. To retain your eligibility for a loans facility you must successfully complete the [Register of training organisations](#) (RoTO) refresh and update your information when we ask you to. If you fail or do not update when we ask you to, you must apply at the next opening. During this period, you will not be:
 - 18.1 listed on the RoTO
 - 18.2 invited to tender, or
 - 18.3 able to increase the value of your loans facility
19. If your organisation does not apply at the next opening of the RoTO, or you fail the application process, we will review your eligibility for a loans facility.

20. You must directly deliver your loan provision to loans learners. You must not subcontract loans provision. The definition of sub-contractor is given in the glossary.

Merger of organisations

21. If your organisation plans to merge with another provider holding a loans facility, you must inform SLC as early as possible. SLC will then advise you how this will impact your loan payments.

Delivery location

22. You must not deliver any loans funded provision outside England, including provision delivered on your or on an employer's premises, distance learning or learning where a variety of methods and locations are used, unless we give you permission before an individual's learning starts. Where we give you permission you must keep a copy of our decision in the learner file.

Loan amounts and financial contributions

23. You must advise all learners of your fees and charging policy in advance of their decision to apply for a loan.
24. We do not expect that you need to charge more than the maximum loan amount as shown on the [Hub](#). For information about how the maximum amount of the loan is set, please refer to [Advanced learner loans: maximum loan amounts](#) for designated qualifications 2017 to 2018.
25. A learner can only apply for a loan to cover the tuition fee element of their provision, including all costs and charges for items without which they cannot complete their qualification.
26. You can:
 - 26.1 pass on professional bodies, membership fees, to the learner and charge these as a requirement of enrolling if this is needed to achieve the qualification
 - 26.2 ask a learner to pay directly for extra activities not essential to the learning, such as trips and visits. You must not make it a condition that a learner takes up the optional extra provision to complete or achieve their qualification
27. If a learner needs a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to participate in learning, you must not charge them for this. If the learning is associated with the learner's employment, their employer is responsible for carrying out and paying for this check.
28. A learner will only be eligible to apply for a loan that is either equal to, or less

than:

- 28.1 the maximum loan amount in the learning aims section of the Hub for the qualification(s) they are undertaking
 - 28.2 your fee, as shown in the learning and funding information letter issued by you to potential learners before they apply for a loan, and provided to the SLC as part of the learner's loan application (see paragraph 48 for further details)
29. The minimum loan value a learner can apply for is £300.

Qualifications designated for loans

30. The Secretary of State for Education, acting through the SFA, is responsible for designating the qualifications eligible to be funded through a loan. The criteria is set out in the [advanced learner loans prospectus 2017 to 2018: designating qualifications and](#) includes the following:
- 30.1 A-levels and AS-levels
 - 30.2 Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) access to higher education diplomas
 - 30.3 general and technical qualifications at levels 3, 4, 5 and 6
31. The full list of designated qualifications is in the learning aims section of the [Hub](#) or the [Advanced Learner Loans Qualifications Catalogue](#).
32. You must check on the Hub or in the Advanced Learner Loans Qualifications Catalogue that the qualification is valid for new starts on the date that the learner is due to start.
33. You must have direct centre approval and, where appropriate, direct qualification approval, from the appropriate awarding organisation for the regulated qualifications you are offering. These qualifications must be designated for loans and you must deliver them in line with the qualification specification and guidance set out by the awarding organisation.
34. Loans cannot be used to fund only components of qualifications.
35. You must provide accurate unique learner number (ULN) information to awarding organisations and ensure all information you use to register learners for qualifications is correct. You can find more information about the Learning Records Service on [GOV.UK](#)).
36. Where a learner takes out a loan for an Access to HE Diploma, completes it and progresses to, and completes a Student Finance England fundable HE course, the outstanding balance of the loan for the Access to HE Diploma will be written off.

Number of loans allowed

37. Learners can access up to four loans in a lifetime, which they can take out either one after the other or at the same time.
38. Learners will need to apply for a loan for each designated qualification.
39. Within this allowance of up to four loans a learner is able to apply for:
 - 39.1 no more than one loan to complete an Access to HE Diploma
 - 39.2 up to eight loans to undertake up to a maximum of four full A-levels; this will be treated as one single loan entitlement (see paragraphs 41 and 42)
 - 39.3 no more than four loans to undertake general and technical qualifications at levels 3, 4, 5 and 6
40. A learner can study a full A-level by either enrolling on an A-level or enrolling on an AS-level qualification and then progressing to an A-level qualification.
41. Where a learner intends to study towards, and sit:
 - 41.1 only an A-level exam, they can apply for up to four loans for four individual A-levels. They can make these applications at the same time or one after the other
 - 41.2 an AS-level exam, not followed by an A-level exam, they can apply for up to four loans for four AS-levels
 - 41.3 an AS-level exam, followed by an A-level exam they can apply for up to four loans for four AS-levels and up to four loans for the corresponding A-levels. In this scenario the total fee for the AS-level and A-level must not exceed the maximum loan amount for the A-level. Providers must reduce the fee charged to the learner for the A-level(s) to take account of the prior study of AS-levels
42. If a learner enrolls on a combination of A-level and AS-levels, they will be able to apply for loans to undertake up to four full A-levels, subject to the overall limits for each learning aim type, outlined above.
43. You can access further information, including illustrative examples on recording A and AS-levels in our [ILR provider support manual 2017 to 2018](#).

Recognition of prior learning

44. A learner could have prior learning that has been previously accredited by an awarding organisation or could be formally recognised and count towards a qualification. If this is the case, you must:
 - 44.1 reduce the fee charged to the learner for the qualification by the

- percentage of learning and assessment that the learner does not need
- 44.2 follow the policies and procedures set by the awarding organisation for the delivery and assessment of the qualification
 - 44.3 not require a learner to take out a loan if their prior learning meets the full requirements of the awarding organisation to achieve the qualification or where a learner only resits a qualification assessment or examination, and no extra learning takes place
45. Where a learner undertakes a subsidiary diploma and progresses to an extended diploma at the same level, the progression can be considered as a single loan and the loan amount amended through the change of circumstance (change of learning aim) process (please see paragraphs 62 to 64).
- 45.1. The change must be reported while the learner is still in learning on the subsidiary diploma.
 - 45.2. You must issue another learning and funding information letter (please see paragraph 64 for more information).
 - 45.3. The learner must make a new loan request to cover the fee for the extended diploma.
46. Where a learner has already undertaken a subsidiary diploma funded with a loan and wishes to undertake an extended diploma at the same level and in the same subject at a later date, they can apply for another loan within their overall entitlement to four loans. In this scenario providers must reduce the fee charged to the learner for the extended diploma to take account of the prior study of the subsidiary diploma.

Learner journey requirements

There are five key stages in the learner journey:

- issuing the '**learning and funding information letter**' which is the start of the formal interaction between you and the learner
- **learner application** which is when the learner applies for the loan
- '**initial liability point**' which is two weeks after the start date when you have confirmed a learner's attendance using the learning provider portal - the first loans payment is then made to you and a learner becomes liable for their loan at that point
- '**in learning**' when a learner has passed the initial liability point and you continue to confirm their attendance using the SLC portal and receive loans payments on behalf of learners
- **completion and achievement** when the learner has completed their learning in line with their learning agreement with you

Learning and funding information letter

47. You must assess a learner's needs and aptitude for a designated loans qualification before offering a place.
48. You must issue a [learning and funding information letter](#) to all potential learners to whom you have offered a learning place and who may seek a loan for their fees. The letter must provide the learner with the information they need:
 - 48.1 to decide whether to apply for a loan
 - 48.2 to complete their loan application, if they wish to do so
49. You must use the standard template for the letter and include:
 - 49.1 standard text as set out in the template letter
 - 49.2 the UK provider reference number (UKPRN)
 - 49.3 learning aim reference number
 - 49.4 title of the designated loans qualification
 - 49.4 the learner start date and planned end date
 - 49.5 the fee charged to the learner and
 - 49.6 the maximum loan amount available for the qualification as published on the learning aims section of the Hub
50. You must not complete a loan application form on behalf of a learner, or influence a learner's decision to apply for a loan.
51. You must retain a copy of the completed learning and funding information letter for each learner in the learner file (see paragraph 97), and, if applicable, a copy of an updated learning and funding information letter when there is a change to a learner's qualification or fees.
52. There is a separate learning and funding information letter and loan application process for offenders - see Annex 2, paragraphs 2 to 4.

Learner application

The SLC will assess a learner's loan application against the eligibility criteria and if approved, and the learner attends the learning, they will make scheduled loan payments to you on behalf of learners.

The SLC will give you access to their [learning provider portal](#) (an interactive web-based service that will act as the main channel of communication between you and the SLC). You will be able to see the status of a learner's loan application using the portal.

53. You must provide the SLC with the information they need to administer loans in line with [SLC's service standards](#).

Initial liability point

54. When a learner's loan application has been approved and they have started their learning (see paragraph 55) you must confirm the learner's attendance to the SLC through the learning provider portal.
55. The start date is when activity directly related to the qualification has begun. This would not include enrolment, induction, prior assessment, diagnostic testing or similar activity.
56. You can only confirm a learner has started their learning after two weeks of attendance. Learners become liable for their loan two weeks after their start date; this is referred to as the 'initial liability point' and will either be:
 - 56.1 two weeks from the qualification start date, as shown on the loan application form or
 - 56.2 two weeks after the learner started their learning if they started at a later date than the one given on the loan application form (in this case you must inform the SLC about the change to the start date through the learning provider portal before you confirm the learner's attendance - please refer to the [SLC's learning provider portal user guide](#))
57. You must accurately record the learner's unique learner number (ULN) in the learning provider portal before you can confirm their attendance.
58. If a learner leaves their qualification before the initial liability point, or if a learner has never attended, you must confirm this to the SLC using the learning provider portal.
59. If you cancel a learner's loan, you must only reinstate it with the learner's written permission.

In learning

60. When a learner has passed the initial liability point, you must confirm their attendance to the SLC, using the learning provider portal, on a quarterly basis on 1 November, 1 February, 1 May and 1 August.

If a learner's circumstances change

61. If a learner's details or circumstances change, you must tell the SLC as soon as you are aware as this will reduce the risk of a learner becoming legally responsible for a loan for a qualification they are no longer studying. Learners also have a responsibility to keep the SLC informed of changes to their circumstances.
62. The following reasons may result in a learner's details or circumstances

changing from the information they supplied in their initial application.

- 62.1 A change in personal details.
 - 62.2 A change in provider.
 - 62.3 A change of learning aim.
 - 62.4 A change of loan amount or the fee you charge. (Please refer to paragraph 64.)
 - 62.5 Cancellation of an application.
 - 62.6 Withdrawal from the qualification.
 - 62.7 Taking a break from learning or suspending or resuming learning.
63. Only a learner can make a request to the SLC to change their personal details or to request an increase in their loan amount.
64. If the qualification or fees change, you must provide the learner with another learning and funding information letter in advance of the change being implemented.
65. If a learner changes provider during their learning, you must inform SLC through the learning provider portal and the learner must be marked as a withdrawal from your organisation. Where late notification of withdrawal results in an overpayment, SLC will recover this overpayment from your future loan payments. If you have insufficient future loan payments, SLC will ask you to repay any overpayment directly.
66. You can find detailed information and guidance on managing changes of circumstance on the SLC's [learning provider services website](#).
67. Further information about managing changes of circumstances for offenders is given in Annex 2.

Retrospective applications and changes

68. A learner can apply for a loan retrospectively (after the initial liability point but must be while they are still undertaking the qualification). If the loan is approved by the SLC and the learner has already paid fees to you, then you must refund the full amount to the learner to avoid double funding. You, or the learner will be able to raise a change of circumstance retrospectively. This must be raised while the learner is undertaking their qualification.

Completion and achievement

69. When a learner has completed and achieved their designated loans qualification you must follow your awarding organisation's procedures for claiming the relevant certificate and ensure this is given or forwarded to the learner. You must evidence in the learner file that you have done this.

Advanced learner loans bursary fund

We provide a loans bursary fund to help vulnerable and disadvantaged loans learners to overcome barriers which may prevent them from taking part in or continuing in learning.

The loans bursary fund provides for the following.

Learner support funding for financial hardship, childcare and residential support.

Learning support activity for 'in-learning' support, such as support for teaching assistants or reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. Details of support for those learners in custody or released on temporary license can be found in Annex 2.

Area costs, if applicable, which reflect the higher cost of delivering provision in some parts of the country.

70. In using your loans bursary funding you must:
 - 70.1 prioritise vulnerable groups and disadvantaged learners
 - 70.2 ensure you keep sufficient funding to provide the learning support we refer to in paragraphs 78 to 80
 - 70.3 consider the most appropriate learner support fund to draw from where a learner is receiving AEB funding from us as well as through a loan
 - 70.4 use your loans bursary fund only for learners who have a loan approved by the SLC, and who have a need which has been assessed by you
 - 70.5 take into account the availability of other financial support for learners
 - 70.6 make it clear to learners if they are in support of any state benefits it is their responsibility to inform the Department for Work and Pensions about any learner support they receive from you, as the learner support payment may affect their eligibility for some state benefits
71. If you are funded through a grant for your AEB provision, you can claim up to 5% of your loans bursary expenditure for learner support on administration costs. Your administration costs must not be more than 5% of the value of your loans bursary allocation.
72. You must not:
 - 72.1 use your loans bursary funding to cover costs and charges for items without which a learner could not complete their course, these must be charged in the course fee

- 72.2 transfer funding between your loans bursary and your adult education budget
- 72.3 use loans bursary funding for learner support for learners in custody or released on temporary licence

Learner support: hardship

- 73. You can support learners based on their financial needs and local circumstances. Types of support include:
 - 73.1 course-related costs, including course trips, books and equipment (where these costs are not included in the tuition fee), support with domestic emergencies and emergency accommodation
 - 73.2 transport costs
 - 73.3 examination fees
 - 73.4 accreditation fees, professional membership fees and any fees or charges due to external bodies
 - 73.5 your registration fees
 - 73.6 support provided by others, or by providing items or services or cash direct to the learner, this can be in the form of a grant or repayable loan provided by you

Learner support: childcare for learners aged 20+

- 74. You can only use loans bursary funding to pay for childcare with a childminder, provider or childminder agency who is registered with Ofsted.
- 75. You must not use loans bursary funding to:
 - 75.1 fund informal childcare, such as that provided by a relative
 - 75.2 set up childcare places or to make a financial contribution to the costs of a crèche
 - 75.3 fund childcare for learners aged under 20 years of age on the first day of learning; instead you must direct them to the [Education Funding Agency's](#) 'care to learn' programme
 - 75.4 top up childcare payments for learners aged under 20 years receiving funding from 'care to learn'

Learner support: residential support

- 76. You can use the loans bursary to provide residential funding to support learners who receive specialist provision which involves a residential element

or to support learners who cannot access provision locally. The fund can help learners in private accommodation or in accommodation you own or manage.

77. You must:

77.1 set out the criteria and procedures for considering and agreeing applications for residential support from your loans bursary funds

77.2 give priority to learners who need accommodation and only pay for travel costs in exceptional circumstances

Learning support

78. Learning support must not be used to deal with everyday difficulties that are not directly associated with a learner's learning on their programme.

79. You must:

79.1 carry out a thorough assessment to identify the support the learner needs

79.2 agree and record the outcome of your assessment in the learner file

79.3 record all outcomes on the learner file and keep all evidence of the assessment of the needs, planned and actual delivery

80. You may claim learning support if learning continues past the planned end date and the learner still needs support.

Exceptional learning support claims above £19,000

Learners who need significant levels of support to start or continue learning which they are funding with a loan can get access to Exceptional Learning Support (ELS) if their learning support costs more than £19,000.

Learners aged 19 to 24 requiring significant levels of support would normally be expected to have an education, health and care Plan (EHC plan) provided by their local authority and therefore would access funding from their local authority.

81. You can find details of how to claim ELS in the exceptional learning support costs [form](#).

82. To claim ELS for a learner aged 19 to 24 who does not have an EHC plan, you must confirm why the learner does not have an EHC plan.

Area costs

83. If a learner funded through a loan attracts area cost uplift funding, this will be

calculated automatically based on information recorded by you in the ILR about where the learning takes place (as reported in the 'Delivery location postcode' field).

84. The total area cost uplift is equally spread across the planned length of the learning aim recorded on the ILR.
85. We detail area cost uplifts by region in Annex 1.

Loans bursary funding rates

Contract funded providers

86. If you are funded for your AEB provision through a contract or only hold a loans facility conditions and loans bursary fund agreement with the SFA you can claim loans bursary funding at three different monthly rates:
 - 86.1 rate 1 (£50) – low-cost learner support, not including childcare and residential
 - 86.2 rate 2 (£150) – learning support recognising the learner could have learner support needs as well
 - 86.3 rate 3 (£250) – residential or childcare support recognising the learner could have other learning support or learner support needs as well
87. You can only claim one rate for each learner each month, but you can claim a different rate each month to reflect the needs of the learner being supported.

Grant funded providers

88. If you are grant funded for your AEB provision and hold a loans facility conditions and bursary fund agreement, you must only claim rate 2 (£150) for learners needing learning support. You must claim the actual cash value for learner support (hardship, childcare and residential).
89. If you plan to deliver the designated loan qualification in less than one month and the learner is receiving learning support, you must claim the full value of the learning support through the earnings adjustment statement (EAS).
90. We expect the total you claim using the fixed rates, to cover the costs of supporting that learner. If the cost of providing support to a learner goes above the total earned from the fixed monthly rate, you can claim the excess through the EAS. You must have evidence to support the excess claim.

Provision of evidence: advanced learner loans and loans bursary fund

91. You must hold evidence to assure us that you have delivered education and training which learners have chosen to fund through loans, in line with our loan facility conditions and bursary fund agreement and these funding rules. Most

evidence will occur naturally from your normal business process.

Learner file

92. You must have a learner file for each learner who chooses to fund their education and training with a loan.
93. The learner file must contain evidence to support the loans payments you receive on behalf of a learner from the SLC, or loans bursary funds you have received from us, and must be available to us if we need it.
94. You and the learner must confirm the information in the learner file is correct and, therefore, the information you have reported to the SLC through the learning provider portal and to us in the ILR is correct.
95. If the time spent in learning is short, the level of evidence in the learner file would reflect this.
96. Where you hold information centrally, you only need to refer to the source.
97. You must keep a copy of the learning and funding information letter issued by you to the learner, and a copy of any updated learning and funding information letters, if applicable, in the learner file.
98. The learner file must confirm the following.
 - 98.1 All information reported to us in the ILR and the EAS, and to the SLC through the learning provider portal, and if it applies, the supporting evidence of the data you report.
 - 98.2. A description of how you will deliver the learning and skills and how the learner will achieve.
 - 98.3 The fee you are charging, including details of any learner or employer contribution, and information on prior learning that affects the learning or the fee.
 - 98.4 Support needs identified including how you will meet these needs and the evidence of that.
 - 98.5 All records and evidence of achievement of the designated loans qualification. This must be available within three months of you reporting it in the ILR.
99. You must hold evidence:
 - 99.1 that the learner exists
 - 99.2 that the learning activity which the learner is funding with a loan is taking place or has taken place
 - 99.3 that the achievement of the designated loans qualification is certified

(that is, a certificate has been issued by an awarding organisation or held in the personal learning record (PLR), and

- 99.4 of why other funding has been claimed, such as learning support and learner support through the loans bursary fund

Confirmation and signatures

100. The learner must confirm the information is correct when it is collected. You must have evidence of this, which can include electronic formats.
101. We accept electronic evidence, including digital signatures, but you must have wider systems and processes in place to assure us that learners exist and are undertaking the designated qualification their loans are funding.
102. You must keep effective and reliable evidence. You are responsible for making the evidence you hold easily available to us when we need it.

Self-declarations by learners

103. All learner self-declarations must confirm the learner's details and describe what the learner is confirming.
104. If a learner self-declares prior attainment, you must check this in the PLR and challenge any contradictory information with the learner. The PLR will not necessarily override the learner's self-declaration.

Recording data on the ILR

105. You must accurately complete all ILR fields for loans-funded learners and make ILR returns as required in [the ILR specification](#). Where your data does not support the funding you have received from the SLC or claimed from the loans bursary, we will take action to get this corrected and could recover funds or require you to make repayments to the SLC.
106. You must make sure that data recorded on the ILR matches the information that you have reported to the SLC on the learning provider portal.

Annex 1: Area cost uplifts by region

London A 1.20	London B 1.12
Camden	Barking and Dagenham
City of London	Bexley
Greenwich	Havering
Islington	Redbridge
Kensington and Chelsea	Barnet
Lambeth	Enfield
Southwark	Waltham Forest
Westminster	Bromley
Wandsworth	Croydon
Hackney	Kingston upon Thames
Tower Hamlets	Merton
Lewisham	Richmond upon Thames
Newham	Sutton
Haringey	Brent
Hammersmith and Fulham	Ealing
	Harrow
	Hounslow
	Hillingdon

Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Non-fringe 1.03

Central Bedfordshire	North Hertfordshire	Stevenage
Bedford	Luton	Luton

Berkshire, Surrey and West Sussex Fringe 1.12

Bracknell Forest	Runnymede	Reigate and Banstead
Crawley	Slough	Tandridge
Elmbridge	Spelthorne	Waverley
Epsom and Ewell	Surrey Heath	Windsor and Maidenhead
Guildford	Woking	Mole Valley

Berkshire Non-fringe 1.12

Reading	Wokingham	West Berkshire
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Buckinghamshire Non-fringe 1.07

Aylesbury Vale	Milton Keynes	Wycombe
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Hampshire and Isle of Wight 1.02		
Basingstoke and Deane	Hart	Rushmoor
East Hampshire	Havant	Southampton
Eastleigh	Isle of Wight	Test Valley
Fareham	New Forest	Winchester
Gosport	Portsmouth	

Cambridgeshire – 1.02		
Cambridge	Huntingdonshire	South Cambridgeshire
East Cambridgeshire	Peterborough	Fenland

Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire Fringe 1.10		
Broxbourne	South Buckinghamshire	Watford
Chiltern	St Albans	Welwyn Hatfield
Dacorum	Three Rivers	East Hertfordshire
Hertsmere		

Kent and Essex Fringe 1.06		
Basildon	Harlow	Thurrock
Brentwood	Sevenoaks	Dartford
Epping Forest		

Oxfordshire 1.07		
Cherwell	Vale of White Horse	West Oxfordshire
Oxford	South Oxfordshire	

West Sussex Non-fringe 1.01		
Adur	Arun	Worthing
Chichester	Horsham	Mid-Sussex

Annex 2 – Advanced Learner Loans for Offenders

Learner eligibility

1. In addition to the learner eligibility criteria set out in paragraphs 14.1 to 14.3 offenders must also:
 - 1.1 have the right to stay in the UK after completing their sentence
 - 1.2 not be subject to a deportation order
 - 1.3 have been sentenced and not be on remand
 - 1.4 have their prison governor's approval to study the designated loans qualification the loan will fund
 - 1.5 be within 6 years of their release date

Learning and funding information letter and loan application process

2. There is a separate [learning and funding information letter for offenders](#).
3. Offenders must make loan applications on the [standard paper-based loan application form](#) which you can download from GOV.UK. The application must be accompanied by an SLC prisoner application proforma (available from the head of learning, skills and employment within the prison) or a letter from the prison governor (or their representative).
4. The proforma or governor's letter must confirm information such as the offender's release date and permission for the offender to study. If the offender does not have the required evidence of their identity (such as a passport or birth certificate), the proforma or the governor's letter must also confirm the offender's identity.

If a learner's circumstances change: offenders

5. Undertaking learning in custody is likely to lead to more frequent changes in circumstances. You must inform SLC when an offender's circumstances change (for example, if they are released from prison, transfer to another prison or change or withdraw from the qualification their loan is funding).

If an existing learner is sent to prison

6. If an individual undertaking a designated loans qualification is sent to prison, they may be able to continue their studies while they are in custody. The individual will have to meet the eligibility criteria for offenders as set out in paragraph 1.1 to 1.5, including the prison governor's confirmation that the qualification is appropriate.

Changes in circumstances that affect eligibility for a loan

7. When the prison governor decides an offender's eligibility for a loan has changed (for example, if a further conviction makes the qualification inappropriate), or the offender's release date is extended beyond the maximum time period:
 - 7.1 the offender must be withdrawn from their qualification
 - 7.2 the prison governor must inform you and
 - 7.3 you must tell the SLC through the learning provider portal
8. The offender will still be liable for repaying loan payments made before the withdrawal.

Transfers between prisons

Guidance to prison governors advises them to avoid transferring offenders in loan-funded learning where possible. The section below describes what happens when this is not possible.

9. There are times when an offender will be transferred between prisons in England. If the same provider operates in both prisons, the transfer will be treated as a 'Change to personal details' change of circumstance. The offender must inform the SLC about the change.
10. If the prisons have different provider:
 - 10.1 the transfer will be treated as a withdrawal from the qualification, using the process for those with compelling personal reasons
 - 10.2 you must inform the SLC about the withdrawal, through the learning provider portal
 - 10.3 the offender must make a new loan application if the provider in the prison the offender is transferred to can offer a comparable qualification
11. The prison governor at the receiving prison must give permission for the offender to study the qualification (see paragraph 3).
12. The provider in the prison the offender is transferred to must take account of the offender's prior attainment when setting the fee for the rest of the qualification.
13. The two providers must work together to provide continuity of delivery of the offender's qualification.
14. If there is no comparable qualification offered by the provider in the receiving prison, the offender must withdraw from the qualification their loan is funding and remains liable for loan payments made in respect of attendance on the qualification at the original prison. The offender may subsequently (for example

on release) be able to apply for a further loan (under compelling personal circumstances) to complete the original qualification.

15. If an offender with a loan transfers from an English prison to a prison in Wales, they must leave their loan-funded qualification, using the process for those with compelling personal reasons.
16. Before the transfer, the prison governor must inform you, and you must inform the SLC through the learning provider portal. If there is a comparable qualification available in the prison in Wales, the offender may be able to complete the remainder of the qualification (education remains publicly funded in Wales).
17. The offender will still be liable for repaying loan payments made to the provider in England up to the point they leave their qualification.
18. If an offender who has already started a designated loans qualification at a prison in Wales transfers to an English prison, they may need to apply for a loan if they want to continue the qualification. The provider should take account of the prior learning when setting the fees for delivery of the remainder of the qualification.

The period leading up to an offender being released, and the release itself

19. An offender may be released on temporary licence to commence a designated loans qualification with a provider with a loans facility from us. The intention is likely to be that this learning will continue post-release.
 - 19.1 The offender must still meet the additional eligibility criteria set out in paragraph 1.1 to 1.5.
 - 19.2 The loan application must be made in the same way as those from offenders in custody and accompanied by an SLC prisoner application proforma, or a letter from the prison governor (or their representative) to confirm the information, such as the offender's release date and their permission for the offender to study – see paragraph 4.
20. Where an offender who started a loan-funded qualification in custody is released on temporary licence they may be able to continue their studies with a provider with a loans facility from us. If this involves a change of provider:
 - 20.1 the offender must withdraw from their loan-funded qualification in custody, using the process for those with compelling personal reasons and apply for another loan for their study with the new provider
 - 20.2 the prison governor must inform the provider about the withdrawal
 - 20.3 the provider must then inform the SLC through the learning provider portal

- 20.4 and the new provider must take account of the learning the offender completed in custody when setting the fee for the delivery of the remainder of the qualification
- 21. An offender who started a loan-funded qualification towards the end of their sentence, may be able to continue their studies with an eligible provider who has a loans facility from us on release. If this involves changing provider:
 - 21.1 the offender must withdraw from the qualification, using the process for those with compelling personal reasons, and apply for another loan with their new provider
 - 21.2 the prison governor must tell the provider about the withdrawal and the provider must tell the SLC about the withdrawal using the learning provider portal and
 - 21.3 the new provider must take account of the learning the offender completed in custody when setting the fee for the delivery of the remainder of the qualification

Advanced learner loans bursary fund: learning support

- 22. The loans bursary fund provides learning support activity for “in-learning” support such as support for teaching assistants or reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. This includes learning support for learners in custody or released on temporary licence.

Glossary

20+ Childcare	Within the Loans Bursary Fund, a category of support to assist learners aged over the age of 20 who are at risk of not starting learning or leaving learning due to issues in obtaining childcare.
Area Cost Uplift	Area cost uplift is paid to eligible providers from the Loans Bursary Fund and reflects the higher cost of delivering provision in some parts of the country
Break in Learning	When a learner is not continuing with their learning but has told you beforehand that they intend to resume their learning aim in the future.
Care to Learn	A Department for Education scheme to assist young parents under the age of 20 with their childcare costs that may form a barrier to them continuing in education.
Components of regulated qualifications	A subset of a qualification which could be a unit.
Direct costs of learning	Any costs for items without which it would be impossible for the learner to complete their qualification. This can include the costs of registration, examination or any other activities or materials without which the learner cannot achieve their programme of study.
Distance Learning	Learning delivered away from the learner's main place of employment or place of learning.
Earnings adjustment statement (EAS)	The form providers need to fill in to claim Loans Bursary funding that cannot be claimed through the Individualised Learner Record.
Education health care (EHC) plan	An ECH plan replaces statements of special educational needs and learning difficulty assessments for children and young people with special educational needs. The local authority has the legal duty to 'secure' the educational provision specified in the EHC plan, that is to ensure the provision is delivered.
Exceptional Learning Support	Learning support when the needs of the learner are over £19,000 in a single year.

Full level 3	<p>The following qualifications are designated full at Level 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a General Certificate of Education at the advanced level in two subjects, or • a General Certificate of Education at the advanced subsidiary (AS) level in four subjects, or • a Quality Assurance Agency Access to Higher Education (HE) Diploma at Level 3, or • a Tech level; or Applied general qualification at Level 3 which meets the requirements for 2018 and 2019 16 to 19 performance tables
Grant-funded providers	<p>Providers with a financial memorandum or conditions of funding (grant).</p>
Guided Learning	<p>As defined by Ofqual: The activity of the learner in being taught or instructed by - otherwise participating in education or training under the immediate guidance or supervision or - a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.</p> <p>For these purposes the activity of 'participating in education and training' shall be treated as including the activity of being assessed if the assessment takes place under the immediate guidance or supervision of a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training. You can find more information in the Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition June 2016.</p>
Hardship	<p>Within the Loans Bursary Fund Learner Support, a category of support to assist vulnerable and disadvantaged learners to remove barriers to education and training.</p>
The Hub	<p>The Hub provides online services including the return of your individualised learner record (ILR) and completed Earnings Adjustment Statement (EAS). You can also search all learning aims, components of qualifications, apprenticeship frameworks and standards along with their validity and funding details.</p>
Individualised learner record (ILR)	<p>The primary data collection we request from learning providers for further education and work-based learning in England. The data is used widely, most notably by the government, to monitor policy implementation and the</p>
	<p>performance of the sector. It is also used by organisations that allocate funding for further education.</p>

Information advice and guidance (IAG)	Services available to learners to enable them to consider further learning opportunities, progression and career choices.
Initial Liability Point	When a learner undertakes a qualification funded with an Advanced Learner Loan, the point at which a provider can confirm that the learner has started learning, and the point at which the learner becomes liable for their loan.
Learner file	<p>A collection of documents and information brought together to form a single point of reference relating to the learning that is taking.</p> <p>This provides the evidence to prove that the learner, for whom loans payments have been made by the SLC, exists and is undertaking the learning aim that the loan is funding.</p>
Learning aim reference number	The unique eight-digit code used to identify a specific learning aim.
Learning Provider Portal	A service managed by the Student Loans Company (SLC) for providers to obtain and input information for loans-funded learners.
Loans Bursary Fund	A fund to provide learner and learning support-type assistance to learners who are funding their learning through an Advanced Learner Loan. It also provides area-cost uplifts to eligible providers.
Loans Facility	The SFA issues loans facilities agreements to eligible providers. This facility agreement enables providers to offer loan-funded provision to individuals, and to receive payments from the Student Loans Company (SLC) on behalf of individuals.
Personal Learning Record (PLR)	A database which allows individual learners access to their past and current achievement records. These can be shared with schools, colleges, further education training providers, universities or employers.
Learning planned end date	The date entered onto the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) when the learner is expected to complete their learning.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	<p>An assessment method that considers whether a learner can demonstrate that they can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet the outcomes for a qualification or a component of a qualification through knowledge, understanding or • skills they already have and so do not need to undertake a course of learning for that component or qualification.
Register of training organisations	<p>A register that provides assurance on organisations that deliver non-apprenticeship education and training services funded by the SFA, or through Advanced Learner Loans, or subcontractors with more than £100,000 in our non-apprenticeship supply chain. Organisations apply to enter the register by completing our market-entry pre-qualification process which includes due diligence questions and testing of capacity and capability.</p>
Residential support	<p>Within the Loans Bursary Fund, a category of Learner Support to help learners receiving specialist provision which involves a residential element, or to support learners who cannot receive provision locally.</p>
Self- certification	<p>A process where the learner is able to confirm something through their own signature.</p>
Start of learning	<p>The date on which learning begins. We do not consider enrolment, induction, diagnostic assessment or prior assessment to be part of learning.</p>
Subcontractor	<p>A separate legal entity that has an agreement with you to deliver any element of the education and training we fund, or which is funded through Advanced Learning Loans. A separate legal entity includes companies in your group, other associated companies and sole traders. It also includes individuals who are self-employed or supplied by an employment agency, unless those individuals are working under your direction and control, in the same way as your own employees.</p>
UK Provider Reference Number	<p>A number given to all providers by the UK Register of Learning Providers to enable them to be easily identified.</p>
Unique Learner Number	<p>A 10-digit number used to match a learner's achievement to their personal learning record (PLR).</p>

Summary of Changes

Summary of main changes since Advanced Learner Loans Funding and Performance Management Rules 2016 to 2017, Version 4

For the Advanced Learner Loans Funding Rules 2017 to 2018 we have:

- changed the structure of the rules to reflect the learner journey
- given greater prominence to your role in supporting learners who are funding their qualifications with a loan
- reviewed and rationalised the rules, removed duplication and simplified them where possible
- moved the specific rules relating to loans for offenders into a separate Annex (Annex 2)

We have highlighted the main changes from the funding year 2016 to 2017 in the table below.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list of all the changes. You must refer to the main documents for the definitive rules which apply to all providers of education and training holding a loans facility conditions and loans bursary fund agreement with the Secretary of State for Education acting through the SFA.

If you have a specific query on the funding rules, please email the servicedesk@sfa.bis.gov.uk, or speak to your provider management manager/adviser.

Section	Paragraph number	Change
Advanced Learner Loans – context	Box above paragraph	We have expanded the amount of information in the explanatory box to highlight learners' responsibilities when taking out a loan, and providers' responsibilities towards loans learners.
Provider eligibility	Paragraph 20	We have confirmed that you must not subcontract loans provision.
Mergers of organisations	Paragraph 21	We have added that if your organisation intends to merge with another provider holding a loans facility you must advise the SLC as soon as possible and they will advise you on how this will impact your loan payments.
Qualifications designated for loans	Paragraph 33	We have added that you must have direct approval from awarding organisations for the designated qualifications you are

		offering, and that you must deliver the qualifications in line with the qualification specification and guidance set out by the awarding organisation.
Learner journey	Box above paragraph 47	We have outlined the key stages in the learner journey.
Learning and funding information letter	Paragraph 47	We have added that you must assess a learner's needs and aptitude for a designated loans qualification before offering a place.
If a learner's circumstances change	Paragraph 65	We have clarified that if late notification of a learner withdrawal to SLC results in an overpayment to you, SLC will recover this from your future loans payments. If you have insufficient loans payments, SLC will ask you to repay any overpayment directly.
Learner file	Paragraph 97	We have added that you must keep a copy of the learning and funding information letter in the learner file.
Advanced Learner Loans for Offenders	Annex 2	We have moved the specific rules relating to loans for offenders into a separate Annex.



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