Adult Learning Grant
mini guidance
2007/08
Who should read this guidance?
This mini guidance is intended to be used by stakeholders involved in delivering the Adult Learning Grant (ALG), including learning providers (admissions staff, student services, tutors etc.), the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), nextstep and Connexions. It sets out the main aspects of ALG policy and procedures. Further, more detailed information is available in the full ALG guidance and stakeholders are asked to refer to this, where possible, before raising queries with the LSC or the Helpline Assessment and Payment Body (HAPB).

1. What is an Adult Learning Grant?
An Adult Learning Grant (ALG) is intended to help adults studying full time with the costs of learning. The grant pays up to £30 per week (subject to financial assessment) for full-time learners aged 19 and over who are studying for their first full Level 2 or full Level 3 qualification.
2. Eligibility

2.1 Eligible learners

2.1.1 Age
Learners must be at least 19 years old and studying for their first full Level 2 or full Level 3 qualification.

2.1.2 Residency criteria
Learners must have citizenship of the UK or an EU/EEA country, and must have been living in England for the three years preceding the start of their course.

2.1.3 Prior qualification assessment
The ALG will be limited to adults studying for their first full Level 2 or full Level 3 qualification.

2.1.4 Benefits
Learners who receive low-pay benefits, such as Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit and tax credits can receive an ALG, as can those in receipt of Child Benefit. Learners in receipt of out-of-work benefits such as Jobseeker’s Allowance or inactive benefits such as Incapacity Benefit cannot claim an ALG at the same time as receiving those benefits.

2.1.5 Receiving other government grants/training allowances
Learners must not be receiving support from other government grants/training allowances such as Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), New Deal or Apprenticeships.

2.2 Financial assessment
The financial assessment assesses the income of the learner and the income of any cohabiting partner. The learner must supply details of financial circumstances from the 2006/07 tax year.

The assessment will not take into account any money the learner receives from Learner Support Funds (LSFs), including residential pilots, adult education bursaries and charitable grants.

Table 1: Learners without a cohabiting partner in paid employment (includes learners with a partner but the partner is not in paid employment)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner income per year</th>
<th>Weekly ALG payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to £11,810</td>
<td>£30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£11,811–£15,405</td>
<td>£20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£15,406–£19,513</td>
<td>£10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over £19,513</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Learners with a cohabiting partner in paid employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learner income per year</th>
<th>Weekly ALG payment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up to £20,817</td>
<td>£30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£20,818–£25,521</td>
<td>£20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£25,522–£30,810</td>
<td>£10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over £30,810</td>
<td>£0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the cohabiting couple are both learners, the financial assessment for each learner will be based on the income thresholds for learners without a cohabiting partner in paid employment.

2.3 Financial assessments – change of circumstances

2.3.1 Learner’s income has decreased
If during the application process or after the course has started, a learner advises that their income has dropped by 15 per cent or more since 2006/07, actual earnings can be used for the purpose of financial assessment, subject to provision of suitable evidence.

2.3.2 Learner’s income has increased
Increases in income during the academic year are disregarded.

2.4 Retrospective claims
Eligible learners who do not claim an ALG at the outset of their learning can make a retrospective claim. The claim will be backdated to the start of the term in which they apply for an ALG. If the learner was in receipt of state benefits while studying, the ALG will not be backdated to the start of term, it will be paid from the Monday following when the benefits were stopped.

2.5 Links with other funding
In order to qualify for an ALG, learners must not be receiving support from other government grants/training allowances, such as EMA or Apprenticeships; or be in receipt of out-of-work benefits such as Jobseeker’s Allowance, Income Support or Incapacity Benefit. Learners can receive LSFs (i.e. Access Fund, Childcare Support Fund (Care to Learn, Career Development Loans) and Residential Bursary/Support Fund). A learner in receipt of Carer’s Allowance and/or Disability Living Allowance can apply.
2.6 Eligible learning
The ALG is open both to learners starting a new course and existing learners who meet all the eligibility criteria.

2.6.1 First full Level 2 and first full Level 3
Only full-time learning for a first full Level 2 or full Level 3 will qualify for the grant:
- **Full Level 2**: five GCSEs at A*–C or an NVQ at Level 2.
- **Full Level 3**: two A-levels or an NVQ at Level 3.

2.6.2 Full-time learning
Full-time learning is equivalent to 450 guided learning hours per academic year (150 plus guided learning hours a term, equivalent to around 12/13 hours per week).

2.6.3 Ineligible learning
The following are not eligible for an ALG:
- learners undertaking Apprenticeships;
- learners studying for Level 1, Level 4 and Level 5 qualifications;
- learners undertaking part-time learning;
- learners on work-based learning provision; and
- learners who are studying through Train to Gain.

2.7 Applying for an ALG
Learners should read the application form guidance notes to assist them in completing the application form.

On completion, the application form and supporting evidence (photocopies or original documents are acceptable) should be sent to the HAPB. If an individual requires assistance in completing the application form, the learning provider or an information, advice and guidance adviser should help to complete the form and identify the evidence required, including providing help with photocopies if appropriate.

The HAPB will check the application and advise the learner if they have been successful or not. The HAPB will advise the learning provider if a problem occurs during processing the application.

2.8 Learning Agreement
A letter confirming an individual’s eligibility will be sent together with a blank Learning Agreement. The Learning Agreement has three parts. The learner should take these to the learning provider who should complete the learning agreement and return one copy to the learner, retain one copy and return one copy to the HAPB.

The payment process will start on receipt of the completed Learning Agreement and attendance data.

3. Payment process
Payment of the ALG will normally be made on the same day each week into the learner’s bank account. Payments are usually made one week in arrears.

The ALG is payable weekly during term time only, which is usually around 38 weeks in a year.

3.1 Monitoring
3.1.1 Weeks of attendance
Payment of the ALG is based upon full attendance with provision for payment where authorised absences occur. All weeks where unauthorised absence has occurred must be recorded on the weekly attendance report to the HAPB. Any unauthorised absence by the learner will cause the ALG payment to be cancelled for that particular week.

3.1.2 Authorised absence
In appropriate circumstances, a learning provider may authorise an absence – and therefore not report it – to allow a learner’s ALG payment to continue. Some examples of authorised absences follow.
3.1.3 Illness
Evidence should be collected and may include self-certification. We recommend that medical certificates from GPs are only obtained where the learner has been absent for eight or more consecutive days.

3.1.4 Attendance at medical appointments
We expect learners to make routine appointments outside their agreed course attendance times wherever possible.

3.1.5 Other types of authorised absence
- Attendance at the funeral of a close family relative or friend.
- The confirmed breakdown of a learner’s travel/transport arrangements.
- Attendance at court or a probation meeting.
- Work experience placement if it is a pre-arranged, integral part of a course.
- Up to three days of authorised absence per year may be allowed to coincide with recognised religious festivals.
- Parental leave due to sudden domestic emergency.

Learners who take their holidays during term time are not eligible to receive the ALG during those dates.

3.1.6 Unauthorised absence
All weeks where unauthorised absence has occurred must be recorded on the weekly return.

3.1.7 Attendance monitoring
Each weekly return should:
- provide details of all ALG recipients who have had an unauthorised absence during the preceding week;
- identify separately ALG recipients who are known to be absent due to long-term illness;
- identify recipients who have left the learning provider; and
- identify learners where the learning provider is asking for a retrospective payment to be made.

3.1.8 Where to send weekly absence returns
Weekly absence returns should be returned to the HAPB.

3.1.9 Recording of attendance/absence data
Records must be retained in line with the usual audit procedures for the learning provider.

3.1.10 Further guidance or help with attendance/absence procedures
Further guidance for learning providers about attendance and/or absence monitoring procedures is available from the HAPB.

4. Audit and compliance
The ALG will be subject to both internal and external audit procedures.
5. Appeals and complaints procedures

The following appeals and complaints procedures will be in place for the ALG:

- All eligibility appeals will be dealt with by the HAPB.
- All attendance appeals will be dealt with by the learning provider.
- All complaints addressed to the learning provider or the HAPB will initially be considered and responded to in writing within their existing procedures. If a learner, or somebody acting on their behalf, is dissatisfied with the initial response to their complaint, it may be then considered and responded to by the LSC, whose decision will be final.

6. Enquiries – learners

The HAPB is the point of contact for enquiries from learners about the progress of application forms and payments.

Helpline for learners: 0845 456 0027 or 0845 456 0028.
Website: www.direct.gov.uk/ALG

If the learner query is about attendance, first contact should be with the learning provider.

7. Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALG</td>
<td>Adult Learning Grant</td>
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<tr>
<td>BACS</td>
<td>Bankers Automated Clearing Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Carer’s Allowance</td>
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<tr>
<td>DLA</td>
<td>Disability Living Allowance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFES</td>
<td>Department for Education and Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>DWP</td>
<td>Department for Work and Pensions</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEA</td>
<td>European Economic Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMA</td>
<td>Education Maintenance Allowance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE</td>
<td>Further education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAPB</td>
<td>Helpline Assessment and Payment Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>IAG</td>
<td>Information, advice and guidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA</td>
<td>Learning Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>LSC</td>
<td>Learning and Skills Council</td>
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<td>LSF</td>
<td>Learner Support Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>NVQ</td>
<td>National Vocational Qualification</td>
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<tr>
<td>WBL</td>
<td>Work-based learning</td>
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