

LEARNER SUPPORT FUNDS GUIDELINES 2025/26

What funds are available?

1. **Mary Ward Learner Support Fund** – For travel costs, Childcare costs, Course fees
2. **Advanced Learner Loan Student Fund** – If you have taken a loan for your course
3. **Royal Female School of Art Fund** – Only for Arts courses. Can go towards materials and or course fees

Who provides the different funds and what are the Funds for?

- The Mary Ward Student Support Fund is part of a grant that we receive from the Greater London Authority (GLA). The purpose of the Fund is to support learners who are experiencing financial difficulties that might prevent them from participating in or completing learning. The Fund requires everyone who applies to provide some evidence that they are eligible and sadly the fund is limited so whilst we want to be able to support everyone who needs this, we may not always be able to.
- The Advanced Learner Loan Student Fund is provided by the Department of Education and administered through the student loans company which is where you will have applied for your loan. You have to be in receipt of an advanced learner loan on any course to apply for this.
- The Royal Female School of Art Fund is a grant we applied for and were successful in securing. This is to support people who want to do any form of creative art course but are experiencing financial difficulties and require funds to pay for the course itself or materials necessary to support their learning on the course.

Please note: We can only issue funding for **one course per term**, and with the MW Learner Support Fund, we can only issue up to a maximum of £300 per year per student, once you have used that we cannot offer you further funds until the next academic year.

Who is eligible to apply for all or any of these funds?

To be eligible you normally need to:

- Be 19 or over
- Be ordinarily resident in the UK
- Have refugee status or seeking asylum
- Are in receipt of means tested benefits

Mary Ward Learner Support Fund

Who is the Fund for?

Students who:

- Have learning difficulties or disabilities and require travel or other support
- On means tested benefit (does not include state pension) i.e. JSA, UC, means tested pension and require support with travel costs
- Are earning less than £28,860.00 per annum gross based on London Living Wage (updates each year in October) and require support with course fees (see RFSA fund for support with course fees for creative arts courses) or travel costs

We would not normally fund those who:

- Are eligible to claim a benefit but choose not to
- Are short- or longer-term visitors e.g. au pairs, students on gap years, those visiting family, those here specifically to learn English
- Live within a mile of the Mary Ward Centre and are seeking financial support for travelling to the centre
- Live outside of the Greater London Authority

What help may be available?

You may be able to receive support towards costs of:

- Travel to and from Mary Ward to attend your class. This will be based on the most direct route and cheapest method available. Travel may not be paid if you have a more local provider or if the distance is less than a 30-minute walk.
Please note: Unfortunately, if funds are used for travel other than to and from your class, we won't be able to continue issuing additional support for your travel to and from Mary Ward (Stratford or Blackfriars)
- A contribution can **sometimes** be made towards course fees. This is normally restricted to those on a low income who are not eligible for concessionary fees and is limited to one course or programme of study per term. *This applies to non-creative arts courses, if you need support with payment for creative arts courses please apply for the Royal Female School of Art Fund.

How to apply?

The application form can be found on our website or use the relevant link below which will open the form directly:

[Learner Support Fund Application Form](#) – For all applications **except** for Arts and for those who have taken a learner loan.

All applications require evidence of income and or of benefits. This may include:

- Photocopies of last 6 (weekly or fortnightly) or 3 (monthly) payslips.
- Photocopies of benefit letter (no more than three months old)
- Current bank statement

We are required to ask for this evidence from our funders, but we absolutely appreciate that this may cause distress. Please be assured that your information will be kept confidentially within our organisation and not disclosed to any other organisation. The application form will confirm exactly what evidence you require based on what support you are applying for.

***We will be unable to consider your application if information or relevant evidence is missing or incorrect.**

How is my application considered?

All applications for funding will be considered against the criteria set out in this document. If a request is queried or a threshold is exceeded or not met, a panel of two people will meet to decide if funding can be

awarded. The Panel will meet on a regular basis, or as the need arises. Mary Ward aims to ensure that the funds available are distributed fairly and allocated according to individual need and circumstances.

The student will be informed of the outcome of their application within 21 days via text or e-mail.

What if I don't agree with the decision?

You should appeal in writing, within 10 days of being notified of the outcome, stating clearly the reasons for appeal and giving any additional details you think should be taken into consideration to Sue Craggs – Head of Adult and Community Learning (sue.craggs@marywardcentre.ac.uk)

How will I receive the funds?

- Payments will be made after you have started attending the class. This will be by via bank transfer (You must have a bank account for this). (If you do not have a bank account, we will issue you with an oyster card if requesting travel funding).
- Payments for books and materials will be made by bank transfer, and we require receipts for your purchases (please do not purchase anything until funding has been approved).
- Childcare support will be paid upon receipt of an invoice from the approved OFSTED care provider
- All bank payments will be made twice per term. We will check your attendance halfway through your course prior to issuing the final payment.

Will I have to pay the money back or can my payments be stopped?

- If your attendance is below 80% and you have not informed us that you are having difficulties attending your course, we may ask for the money to be reimbursed to the Centre and future payments will not be made.
- We will consider all personal circumstances when assessing rates of attendance.
- If you receive funding and withdraw or are excluded from your course, you may be asked to repay the funds
- Where students are found to have intentionally given misleading or inaccurate information the Centre will ask for any funding awarded to be repaid.
- Materials and equipment – we only consider equipment and materials which are **essential** to completion of your course or in learning a skill. (Students studying in creative arts - most materials are provided)

Advanced Learner Loan Student Fund

Who is the fund for?

Students who

Are in receipt of an Advanced Learner Loan on any of our courses and need financial support towards costs that will allow a student to participate in their studies fully.

What help may be available?

You may be able to receive support towards costs of:

- accommodation if you need to live away from home for your course
- travel related to your course
- course materials and equipment
- childcare
- classroom assistance for a disability or learning difficulty - once you're assessed by Mary Ward

How will I receive the funds?

- Payments will be made after you have started attending the class. This will be by via bank transfer (You must have a bank account for this).
- Payments for books and materials will be made by bank transfer, and we require receipts for your purchases (please do not purchase anything until funding has been approved).
- Childcare support will be paid upon receipt of an invoice from the approved OFSTED care provider

- All bank payments will be made twice per term. We will check your attendance halfway through your course prior to issuing the final payment.

Will I have to pay the money back or can my payments be stopped?

No, you will not have to pay this sum of money back.

However, our funders stipulate that

- If your attendance is below 80% and you have not informed us that you are having difficulties attending your course, we may ask for the money to be reimbursed to the Centre and future payments will not be made.
- We will consider all personal circumstances when assessing rates of attendance.
- If you receive funding and withdraw or are excluded from your course, you may be asked to repay the funds
- Where students are found to have intentionally given misleading or inaccurate information the Centre will ask for any funding awarded to be repaid.

How to apply?

The application form can be found on our website or use the relevant link below which will open the form directly. If you are unable to use the digital form, you can come into any one of our buildings and apply with support from the front desk team.

[Advanced Learner Loan Student Fund](#)

***We will be unable to consider your application if information or relevant evidence is missing or incorrect.**

Royal Female School of Art Fund (RFSA)

We are delighted to have secured this support for anyone wanting to take part in any creative art course who needs support with paying a concessionary course fee and / or materials to complete the course.

Who is the Fund for?

Students who:

- Want to join a creative arts course but need financial support to pay all or part of the concession fee and / or materials
- Are in receipt of financial assistance or support e.g. Means tested benefit, pension credit
- Are earning a wage lower than £27,000

What help may be available?

You may be able to receive support towards costs of:

- A contribution to cover all or a portion of your concession course fee
- All or some of the materials needed for your course so that you can participate fully

How to apply?

The application form can be found on our website or use the relevant link below which will open the form directly. If you are unable to use the digital form, you can come into any one of our buildings and apply with support from the front desk team

[RFSA Application Form](#)

***We will be unable to consider your application if information or relevant evidence is missing or incorrect.**

If you have any further queries or require assistance to fill in the form, please ask to speak to one of the Access to Services Team on 020 7269 6000 or contact us via our “Contact Us” enquiry form on our website www.MaryWardCentre.ac.uk. Or come in person for face-to-face assistance.