Are you 19 or over and thinking of starting a College course? If you answered yes, did you know you can get a loan to help fund your studies?

The Government has introduced Advanced Learning Loans for anyone aged 19+ and starting a course at Level 3 and 4 (exceptions apply) between 1 August 2015 and 31 July 2016. The loans are designed to support learners with their course fees in a similar way to how students studying university level courses receive a higher education loan.

To apply for a Loan, you need to be:

Aged 19 or over on the first day of your course (there is no upper age limit)

Living at an address in the UK on the first day of your course and been resident in the EU for three years previous to 1 August 2015

Studying at an approved college or training organisation in England

Enrolling on an eligible course at Level 3 or 4.

Which courses are eligible for a Loan to be taken out against them?

A Levels, Access to HE Diplomas\*, Level 3 and Level 4 QCF Certificates and Diplomas and Advanced and Higher Apprenticeships. These courses will be represented with a next • to the fee, on both the Bridgwater College website and in the Adult Learning Guide.

\* If you take out an Advanced Learning Loan to cover the fees of your Access course and then go on to complete a university course, the Loan you took out for your Access course will be written off (subject to terms and conditions).

I already have a qualification at Level 3 or above, can I still have access to a Loan?

Any qualification you have previously achieved will not prevent you from accessing a Loan.

My credit rating isn't very good; will this prevent me from getting a Loan?

Being eligible for a Loan is not assessed on your income and credit checks will not be carried out.

How much can I take out?

The minimum Loan amount you can apply for is £300 and the maximum amount will depend on the qualification you undertake. If you want to take out a Loan for part of your course and pay for part of it yourself, this is also an option.

Will I have to pay anything extra towards my course?

The Loan amount will cover all course and compulsory additional fees but will not include any optional extras such as trips or visits.

When do I start paying it back?

You will not start to pay your Loan back until you earn in excess of £25,000. You are able to make voluntary payments to pay your Loan off quicker if you wish.

How much will I pay back each month?

You'll repay 9% of your income over £25,000 a year. Even if your income doesn't exceed £21,000 a year but is over £404 a week or £1,750 a month at any point in the year (e.g. even if you work overtime) then a Loan deduction will be made.

How do I pay it back?

If you are an employee paying UK tax, your employer will take repayments from your pay, the same way they deduct your tax and National Insurance contributions; these will be reflected on your payslip as Student Loans Company (SLC).

Do I get paid the money?

The Loan amount you take out from the Student Loans Company will get paid directly to the College you are studying at on a monthly basis; no monies will be paid to you directly.

Will my Loan ever be cancelled?

The only circumstances where you Loan will be written off are if you die, become disabled and permanently off work, or if you have any Loan amount outstanding 30 years after you are due to start making repayments.

How do I apply?

You will be able to apply for a Loan from 1 April 2015 for courses that start between 1 August 2015 and 31 July 2016. It is recommended that you complete an online application to enable your application to be dealt with more quickly; visit the Direct.gov website.

How much will the Loan be for?

Contact the College to find out how much you will need to borrow for each eligible course.