

Learner Fund Graduate Bursary – 2025

In 2025, the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) will open the Learner Fund Graduate Bursary to Early Learning and Care (ELC) educators who graduated in 2024 or 2025 from a Qualification Advisory Board approved course in Early Childhood Education and Care at level 7 or level 8 only.

Local City/County Childcare Committees (CCC) will process Learner Fund Graduate Bursary applications, before appraisal from DCDE.

Particular attention is drawn to the Rules below, which align the Learner Fund eligibility and selection criteria in line with those of the Nurturing Skills Learner Fund and ensures equity in assessment of application in both schemes.

Application Rules

1. The scheme applies to those Early Years Educators who have completed a Qualifications Advisory Board (QAB) approved ELC course at Level 7 or 8 qualification **only**.
2. Applicants must have graduated in 2024 or 2025 **only**.
3. Applicants must, at time of application, be working in a Tusla registered Early Learning & Care Service. Staff working in standalone School Age Childcare services are not eligible to apply.
4. The bursary amount will be €1,000.
5. The qualification must be completed in full. The bursary will not be paid in respect of partially completed awards.
6. The qualification for which the bursary is paid must be that which qualifies the person to work in the Early Learning and Care sector and is at level 7 or level 8 and is on the QAB List of approved courses. The list of QAB approved courses can be viewed at the attached link [list-of-approved-programmes-for-adherence-to-the-professional-award-criteria-and-guide.pdf](#)
7. Applicants may only apply once and cannot be granted the Learner Fund Bursary for a second time if they have already received it before.
8. The applicant cannot have received any public funding in support of their completing the award relating to this application.
9. Applicants may apply with a full transcript of the completed degree in lieu of a graduating certificate. A full transcript can be obtained from the educational institution where you studied and must show clearly that the student has been awarded the full degree.
10. Applicants must provide a Copy of Fees Statement from their Higher Education Institution for the final year of study.
11. Applicants should apply with the name used in the certificate or transcript.
12. Photographic identification must be provided along with any supporting documents.
13. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.
14. DCDE Decision is final and cannot be appealed.

15. If demand for Learner Fund Graduate Bursary funding exceeds the available funding for 2025, then the selection of Applicants will be based on the following criteria in the following prioritisation order (with I being the highest level of priority and IV being the lowest level of priority):

- I. the number of graduates in the applicant's service, with priority for applicants from services with no graduates
- II. Equal Start Priority Index, with priority for applicants from services supporting the most disadvantaged children (i.e. index 1 = first 9% of most disadvantaged services, 2 = second 9% of most disadvantages service and then all remaining services),
- III. the applicant is in a core funded partner service.
- IV. if, after the above prioritisation has been applied and has not been decisive, random selection will be applied.

In the event of oversubscription DCDE will apply the above selection criteria.

Timeline for applications:

Applications will open on Monday 15th September and close at 5pm on Friday 17th October 2025.

2025 Application form - Learner Fund Graduate Bursary

Information provided by the applicant will be used only for the purpose it was intended and will be retained by the CCC for financial audit purposes only.

Name of Current Early Learning and Care service		Service reference number:	
Core funding Staff ID (Must only be completed by an applicant who works in a Core Funding Partner Service. This specific ID can be obtained from the manager of the Core Funding Partner Service)			

Name:	
Phone:	
Email:	
Address:	

Course Name	Course Provider	Level	Graduating Year

Beneficiary Pay Details: If approved, the bursary will be transferred to your bank account. In order to facilitate this, please provide the following details.			
Account name:			
Bank Address:			
BIC:		IBAN:	

Please ensure you have attached a copy all documentation as listed in Appendix 1.

Declaration: I,

_____, declare
that:

1. I am currently working in a Tusla registered Early Learning & Care service
2. I have not previously received a Learner Fund Graduate Bursary from this, or any other CCC.
3. I have not previously received public funding in support of my completion of this award.
4. This is my sole application for the Learner Fund Graduate Bursary, and I have not applied for a Learner Fund Graduate Bursary in any other CCC.
5. I have read and agree with the rules of the learner fund graduate bursary.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 1

Application Checklist.

Before applying, please ensure **ALL** of the following documents are enclosed. Any incomplete applications will be returned for attention which may lead to an applicant missing the application deadline which will not be extended.

1. Application Form	
2. Graduation Certificate OR full transcript of the completed degree. (A full transcript can be obtained from your educational institution and must show clearly that the learner has been awarded the full degree. Screenshots or downloads from student accounts / portals will not be accepted.)	
3. Copy of Photo ID(copy of current id/ passport/ driving licence/ PSC card are acceptable)	
4. Copy of Fees Statement for Final Year of Study. (This can be found on your Student Portal under Fees or by contacting your Educational Institute)	
5. Signed Declaration	