

## Learner Fund Graduate Bursary – 2024

### Applicant Guide

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) will re-open the Learner Fund Bursary to Early Learning and Care practitioners who are new graduates of a recognised Early Childhood Education and Care degree programme. The local City/County Childcare Committees (CCC) will process and appraise Learner Fund Graduate Bursary applications.

#### **The following rules apply to the Graduate Bursary:**

1. The qualification for which the bursary is paid must be either:
  - a. On the DCEDIY Early Years Recognised Qualifications list and indicated as meeting the qualification requirements for lead educator graduate premium.

**Or**

  - b. The applicant must hold a letter of eligibility to practice from DCEDIY which states that the qualification meets the standard for the graduate premium.
2. The award must be placed at level 7/8/9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) and achieved in the academic years 2015 - 2024.
3. The bursary amount will be €1,000.
4. The qualification must be a full, major award; the bursary cannot be paid in respect of partially completed awards.
5. Letters from third level education providers which state that a partially completed award is equivalent to a full award should not be accepted.
6. The qualification for which the bursary is paid must be that which qualifies the person to work in the Early Years sector (and is at least level 7 on the NFQ).
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 i.e. the bursary will be paid for one of the following - a level 7 OR a level 8 OR a level 9 qualification.
8. The applicant cannot have received any public funding in support of their completing the award relating to this application.
9. The bursary is available to experienced practitioners only; applicants must have been working in a Tusla registered Early Learning & Care Service (or as a Childminder registered with Tusla) prior to beginning their course.
10. Applicants must be currently working in a Tusla registered Early Learning & Care Service. Childminders registered with Tusla can apply for the Graduate Bursary.
11. Staff working in standalone School Age Childcare services are not eligible to apply.
12. Application must be made by the holder of the award and not by any third party on their behalf.
13. Applicants will be required to declare that this is the sole application they have made for the graduate bursary.

#### **Please Note:**

**With regard to (5) above:** Only students who have registered for, successfully completed and **have been awarded** a Level 7 or 8 Major Award are eligible. Students who are enrolled in courses, who are continuing their studies and **who have not been awarded** a level 7 or 8 Major Award are **not** eligible for the Graduate Bursary.

**With regard to (8) above:** DCEDIY is aware that an increasing number of qualified practitioners choose to pursue post-graduate education to further advance their practice, but the DCEDIY is not in a position to provide funding in respect of this. If an applicant does not have an eligible undergraduate degree, and has a post-graduate award which is not on the published list, they should apply for qualifications recognition as a priority.

**Sharing of data with relevant parties:** The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth is committed to protecting the rights and privacy of individuals in accordance with both European Union and Irish data protection legislation. See DCEDIY Privacy Notice: <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/68bb14-department-of-children-and-youth-affairs-data-protection/>

**The CCC decision is final:** There is no appeals process for the Graduate Bursary application or payment. The decision of the CCC is final for the purposes of the bursary application and process, and no delays to the timely conclusion of the process should occur. If an applicant is not approved and wants clarification on this, they can contact DCEDIY directly.

**Application requirements:**

- I. Application form to be completed in full and submitted by the deadline specified.
- II. Applicants must be currently working in a Tusla registered Early Learning & Care service or a childminder registered with Tusla
- III. Applicants should apply with the name used in the certificate or transcript. Supporting qualifications documentation (including photographic identification) must be provided with the application form.
- IV. In lieu of graduating certificates, transcripts from the third level education institution can be accepted.
- V. The transcripts from the third level education institution must be in document/hard copy form and endorsed by the institution; screenshots of online student records cannot be accepted.
- VI. The transcript from the third level education institution can only be accepted if it clearly shows that the full award has been achieved.

**Timeframe for applications:**

12 <sup>th</sup> August	Call for applications open by CCCs
27 <sup>th</sup> September	All forms must be fully completed and returned (incl. photographic evidence) by email to your local CCC no later than 5PM on Friday 27 <sup>th</sup> September 2024.
Week of 11 <sup>th</sup> November	CCCs pay approved applicants