ACL Learner Handbook

2025 - 2026



|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Matrix Logo | ACL (Adult Community Learning and Essex County Council Logos | Ofsted 'Good' provider logo |

Contents

[Welcome 3](#_Toc205885789)

[Term Dates 3](#_Toc205885790)

[ACL Learner Charter 4](#_Toc205885791)

[ACL Contact details 5](#_Toc205885792)

[How to give feedback to ACL 5](#_Toc205885793)

[Start and End of Course Surveys 5](#_Toc205885794)

[Attendance 5](#_Toc205885795)

[ACL Focus groups 6](#_Toc205885796)

[New Course Ideas 7](#_Toc205885797)

[Access to facilities 8](#_Toc205885798)

[Learner ID Cards 8](#_Toc205885799)

[Fire Safety 8](#_Toc205885800)

[Bad Weather 9](#_Toc205885801)

[Personal Property 9](#_Toc205885802)

[Refreshments 9](#_Toc205885804)

[Access to Learning Support 9](#_Toc205885805)

[Alternative Information Formats 10](#_Toc205885806)

[Learner Wellbeing 10](#_Toc205885807)

[Safeguarding and Prevent 10](#_Toc205885808)

[British Values 11](#_Toc205885809)

[learning online 12](#_Toc205885810)

[Keeping Safe Online 13](#_Toc205885811)

[Learning PLatforms 13](#_Toc205885812)

[Our Website 14](#_Toc205885813)

[WiFi 14](#_Toc205885814)

[Need support with digital technologies? 14](#_Toc205885815)

[Making Choices about future learning or career development. 14](#_Toc205885816)

[Health and Safety 16](#_Toc205885817)

[General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 16](#_Toc205885818)

[Plagiarism 17](#_Toc205885819)

[Help with course fees 18](#_Toc205885820)

[ACL Essex - Refund/Cancellation Policy 19](#_Toc205885821)

[Course Documentation 20](#_Toc205885822)

[ACL Venues 21](#_Toc205885823)

## Welcome

Lifelong learning matters to us - we want to make a difference to people’s lives. ACL Essex is not just about second chances; it’s about third, fourth, fifth and sixth chances. In fact, it is about helping you achieve the goals you have set your sights on, throughout your life. But it is much more than skills and qualifications, crucial as they are, it is also about making sure you flourish; your health and wellbeing, your sense of community belonging, and your confidence and belief in yourself.

We aim to provide you with as many ways to flourish as possible. We are there in communities across Essex, to make a difference to residents and businesses, so everyone has the chance to make a difference for themselves and to the places that they live in.

Whatever your ambitions for learning might be, we will be there to support you on your journey.

Best wishes.

Lisa Jarentowski

ACL Principal

## Term Dates

Autumn Term 2025

**Starts:** 1 August 2025

**Half term:** 27 October to 31 October 2025

**Ends:** 19 December 2025

Spring Term 2026

**Starts:**  8 January 2026

**Half term:** 16 to 2 February 2026

**Ends:** 27 March 2026

Summer Term 2026

**Starts:** 13 April 2026

**Half term:** 25 May to 29 May 2026

End date may be subject to change.

Please note:

The end date will vary according to the length of the course you enrol on, and some courses may run outside of these dates.

## ACL Learner Charter

At ACL we aim to give Essex residents the opportunity to be the best they can be and achieve their goals. We do this through putting our ACL values into practice.

**Inclusion** – treating others with respect and kindness and embracing the diversity of our communities.

**Respect** – being kind to each other, acting with integrity and being considerate of each other’s feelings.

**Inspiring** – a sense of purpose and responsibility to create positive change.

**Ambitious** – helping colleagues and learners to realise their potential and overcome barriers to reach their goals.

**Sustainable** – making green choices so that we leave a smaller impact on our environment now and don’t compromise the needs of future generations.

**Collaborative** – pulling together as a team so everyone can learn and succeed.

We ask you to also uphold these values and put them into practice.

* Acting in a way that maintains healthy and safe spaces throughout ACL.
* Wearing your ID badge in centre so we know who you are.
* Following the conditions in your learner agreement
* Helping us to keep you safe by completing a welfare form if needed.
* Access learner support if you need extra help with your studies.
* Plan your next steps, whether in learning or work
* Attend your classes on time, participate in activities and engage with others.
* Celebrate each other’s successes and achievements.
* Adhere to ACL’s policies and procedures.
* Reporting any concerns you may have relating to safeguarding, radicalisation or abuse.
* Use the feedback we give you to help you develop and progress.
* Feedback your comments, compliments, and complaints so we may continuously improve our service.

## ACL Contact details

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| By telephone: | 0345 603 7635 |
| By email: | [lifelong.learning@essex.gov.uk](mailto:lifelong.learning@essex.gov.uk) |
| Visit our website: | [www.aclessex.com](http://www.aclessex.com) |
| By letter: | Adult Community Learning, Spinks Lane, Witham, Essex CM8 1EP |
| Online Feedback Form | [Comments, Compliments and Complaints Form](https://essex-self.achieveservice.com/service/Complaints_and_compliments?accept=yes&consentMessageIds%5b%5d=4) |

## How to give feedback to ACL

In the first instance please speak with your tutor and if you would like to make further contact, please use the Online feedback form above or use the contact details above. You may also feedback to a member of our customer services team who will be able to pass on your feedback.

* We treat all feedback seriously and according to our standard procedures.
* We recognise and respond to compliments, ensuring that staff teams and individuals are recognised when excellent service is delivered.
* The customer can expect to be treated with courtesy, respect and fairness at all times. We expect that customers also treat ACL staff dealing with complaints with the same courtesy, respect and fairness.
* All complaints will be acknowledged within **three working days** from the date of receipt.
* We will respond to a complaint within **10 working days** and within 20 working days for other comments or compliments.

## Start and End of Course Surveys

You can also feedback on your course using the online End of Course Survey. Please speak to your tutor about how to access the form

How do we use this information?

We use this to:

* evidence the benefits of learning with ACL
* identify and plan and future courses in ACL.

We also use the end of course survey to gain your feedback on the quality of your learning experience with ACL so that we can continue to improve our service.

Thank you for taking the time to complete these forms.

## Attendance

ALL ACL LEARNERS are expected to attend ALL of their SESSIONS.

Regular attendance is a key factor in maintaining active engagement with your course, and ensuring you receive the support you need to progress and achieve your goals. We know from our data that high attendance is frequently associated with positive learner outcomes.

Regular attendance is also closely linked to well-being and safety. Consistent attendance allows us to support your wellbeing and if needed, identify any potential safeguarding concerns.

Attendance is important for a variety of reasons:

1. Attending sessions regularly helps you to stay up to date with the course material, engage in discussions, and ask questions. This improves your understanding of the subject matter, which is essential for achieving your goals.

2. Being present in your session (online or face to face) enables you to actively participate in various learning activities such as group discussions, debates, presentations, and hands-on projects. These activities will enhance your understanding of the topic as well as develop critical thinking skills.

3. Attending sessions provides the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on concepts that might be confusing. For practical subjects it allows you to observe a process before trying it for yourself. Your tutor and peers can provide insights that might not be available through self-study alone.

4. Attending your sessions regularly will help you to enhance wider skills such as time management skills and a sense of responsibility. Regular attendance will help prepare you for professional settings where punctuality and commitment are crucial which are all key skills you can evidence on CVs or at interviews.

Just think if you were on an 8-week course and missed one week that would only be 80% attendance – would an employer tolerate you 80% attendance at work?

What if I cannot attend a session?

It's important to note that while regular attendance is beneficial, there might be situations where missing a class is unavoidable due to illness, emergencies, or other legitimate reasons. In such cases, please contact your tutor or ACL centre to let them know you will not be attending. It may then be possible to support you to catch up on a missing work, a proactive approach which can reduce the impact of missing a session on your learning.

To contact a centre email [ACL.Absence@essex.gov.uk](mailto:ACL.Absence@essex.gov.uk)

## ACL Focus groups

If you are a learner enrolled on a course with Adult Learning, or an employer involved with ACL we would love to see you at one of our focus group meetings.

This is an excellent opportunity for you to share your ideas with us about what ACL is doing well, how we can improve and what new things we should be thinking about.

Opportunities include:

* Providing suggestions for what could go into learning programmes.
* Helping staff to analyse and act on information from learner surveys and participation reports.
* Meeting and sharing experiences and ideas with other learners, and with staff.
* Sharing any concerns, you may have and ensuring that Adult Learning responds appropriately to the issues that are raised.
* Helping to ensure accessibility by road testing evaluation forms, systems and changes in policy etc.
* Supporting us to work sustainably and work towards a greener future.

Additional benefits:

Taking part in a focus group is a great way to develop confidence, organisational, and communication skills. It is entirely voluntary, and experience as a focus group member will enhance your CV. Additionally, you will be able to make a positive contribution to the development of ACL’s service.

How do I join?

If you are interested in joining an ACL Focus Group or require further information, please email [teresa.ablewhite@essex.gov.uk](mailto:teresa.ablewhite@essex.gov.uk) or call 03330139227.

## New Course Ideas

Do you have an idea for a new course?   If so, we’d really like to hear from you.  You can speak to any of our frontline staff, or you can write your ideas on our Ideas Wall at some of our centres. Please ask at Customer Services.

## Access to facilities

We make every effort to ensure our buildings are accessible to all and we seek to influence and encourage owners of other buildings that we hire to do likewise. We make all reasonable adjustment to facilitate access for wheelchair users and those with restricted mobility or sensory impairment however if you have any concerns about accessing any of our buildings, please contact us on 0345 603 7635

## Learner ID Cards

**ID cards must be worn at all times by learners.**

ACL Essex strives to provide a safe and secure environment for all who visit its premises. A key aspect of discharging this responsibility is to have an effective way of controlling and monitoring who is on ACL premises with a card identification system.

* All staff are required to wear a staff lanyard with an ECC ID photo card.
* All visitors are required to wear a visitor lanyard with a Visitor’s ID badge which they are given when they sign in at Customer Services.

For courses you are enrolled on that last more than one day, you will be issued with an ID badge and lanyard by Customer Services. Anyone who forgets their ID card when attending an ACL centre will be asked to obtain a Visitors pass from Customer Services. If attending a course that is one day or less, you will be required to wear a visitors’ badge.

## Fire Safety

In the event of the fire bells ringing, all persons within the building must leave immediately and congregate in the designated assembly area.

If you have difficulty with mobility that affects access a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP) will be discussed and offered to you by your tutor.

Fire alarms, extinguishers and fire signs are provided to ensure safety. It is the responsibility of all users to ensure that such equipment remains in good working order. The discovery of defective firefighting or warning equipment must be reported immediately to reception.

It is a legal requirement that designated fire doors are not wedged open and that their self-closing mechanisms are not tampered with in any way.

## Bad Weather

In the event of extreme weather and the need to close the college please check the following:

[ACL Facebook](http://www.aclessex.com/)

Where possible we will also send details of our closed centres to BBC Radio Essex, which could be read out on air.

[www.bbc.co.uk/bbcessex](http://www.bbc.co.uk/bbcessex)

**Snow during the day** – In the event of very heavy snow & ice during the day, ACL may take the decision to close early. There are usually warnings on the news and radio if bad weather is expected.

## Personal Property

Neither ACL Essex nor Essex County Council will accept responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property including cars parked on the premises.

## Car Parking

We have car parking at most of our main centres. Please contact the appropriate reception for details. Sometimes our car parks become very busy, and we ask that learners are patient and tolerant of others at these times. Individuals should not become abusive to staff or other learners.

## Refreshments

Snacks, and hot and cold drinks are available at all our main centres. These may sometimes be limited to service from machines and as such there may at times be very limited availability.

## Access to Learning Support

We are committed to supporting all learners. If you have particular needs, we hope to that you will tell us. We invite you to do this at enrolment or you can talkto us at any stage of your programme. We will agree a support plan with you to ensure that you have a successful learning experience with us.

We provide support for people with disabilities and /or learning difficulties, for example visual impairment and mental health difficulty.

It is important for us to know as much about your individual needs as soon as is possible, this includes any support you may require while undertaking exams, in line with Awarding Organisation requirements, where possible.

Types of support we can offer you include:

* Note takers or tape-recorded notes if you have any difficulty in taking notes
* British Sign Language Communication support
* Assistive hearing devices if you have a hearing impairment.
* Reading or other support for certain examinations, where possible
* One-to-one tuition in certain circumstances or Additional teaching,
* Study skills support if you have not undertaken formal learning for a while.
* Specialist assistive or enabling software and resources.

If you would like to speak to a member of the Learning Support team in confidence, please give your contact details to a member of the Customer Services team or call the appropriate telephone number below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Area | Learning Support Coordinator | Telephone |
| Clacton, Colchester | Joanna Hargrave | 03330139205 |
| Uttlesford, Harlow, Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rayleigh | Tracey Lang | 03330138647 |
| Witham, Braintree, Maldon, Chelmsford | Nicola Burwood | 03330134958 |

## Alternative Information Formats

We have particular regard for the needs of customers who may require information in formats other than those immediately available. This may include large print, audiocassette or Braille. We can put information on to disk to be read with assistive software if required. Please ask your tutor or at reception is you require this service.

## Learner Wellbeing

We care about your wellbeing; we have a Learner Welfare [form](https://essex-self.achieveservice.com/service/Adult_Community_Learning___Online_learner_welfare?accept=yes&consentMessageIds%5B%5D=15) that we ask you complete when you have personal information related to your health that could affect you in the centre or might make you more vulnerable. This information is kept securely and only shared with your tutors and the safeguarding team, although in the event of a Safeguarding or Prevent concern information may also be shared with additional third parties.

Some more wellbeing support can be found here [Wellbeing Support - ACL Essex](https://aclessex.com/support/learning-support/)

## Safeguarding and Prevent

ACL takes its responsibility to safeguard all learners and staff seriously.  It is recognised that any adults/young people could potentially be the victim of abuse including radicalisation and the service operates the following [policies](https://aclessex.com/policies/) to address these risks.

* ACL Admissions Policy
* ACL Safeguarding Policy
* Positive Behaviours Policy
* Harassment and Bullying policy
* Fitness to Learn Policy
* Computer Use policy including On-Line Safety

Safeguarding and Prevent is the responsibility of us all.  It is about protecting those who may be susceptible from a wide range of harm and ensuring that they feel safe.

Abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual, neglect, bullying, including cyber bullying, as well as a range of wider issues including Prevent, which is the Government’s strategy to wipe out radicalisation.

Safeguarding is only effective when we all take responsibility for looking out for each other.

If you have concerns, or someone has disclosed abuse to you, speak to your tutor, a member of staff or contact our Safeguarding Officer on 07788 301629 or complete an online [safeguarding concern form](https://essex-self.achieveservice.com/service/Adult_Community_Learning___Learner_safeguarding)

The safeguarding phone line and My Concern system are monitored from Monday to Thursday 9am – 5pm and Fridays 9am - 4pm Outside of these hours, any concerns will be directed to the MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) on **0345 606 1212.** You can call **101** for non-emergencies or in an emergency, please call **999**

## British Values

Part of the Government’s Prevent agenda is British Values. Sometimes these are known as “MILD” values as they are values that it is reasonable to see.

**M**utual Respect and Tolerance

**I**ndividual Liberty

**L**aw **(**Rule of Law)

**D**emocracy

ACL promotes these values to staff and learners, encouraging the development of skills and attributes that enable us all to contribute positively to life in modern Britain. Watch this [short video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UbsRMvDbsE&t=5s) showing where you can find these values within ACL is shared with you at the start of your course.

We are committed to fairness and equality of access, opportunity and outcome for all learners and potential learners.  We oppose discrimination in any form and have a commitment to making our courses inclusive and available to all.

We positively welcome enrolments from everyone, regardless of age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, race, religion/belief and sexual orientation. When appropriate and possible we will make reasonable adjustments to ensure all learners gain the most from their learning experience.

## learning online

Online learning takes place where learning is delivered through downloading information, telephone calls, webinars, hybrid delivery or live streaming. This may be a part of curriculum design or as part of a response to ACL closure arrangements.

ONLINE LEARNING GUIDELINES

* Be on time. Sessions will start and finish according to the timetable. If you join late, please don’t interrupt the session. Remain silent. Your tutor will support you.
* Be prepared. Come to the lesson with a positive attitude and with any course materials or resources that you have been asked to have ready.
* Where possible, choose a quiet location – away from pets, children, etc. Turn off the TV and any music.
* Be ready to take part. Not everybody is confident in speaking up within a group, especially when you don’t already know other learners. However, to make the most of your learning experience we ask that you share ideas, ask questions, and contribute to the discussions.

WHEN Working ONLINE YOU SHOULD ALWAYS:

* Be respectful of others and their opinions.
* Be careful with personal information (both yours and others’).
* Dress appropriately
* Beware of using reply all – not everyone needs to see your message.
* Remember to stay on topic.
* Remember to listen and not talk over each other – this comes with practice! Mute yourself when not talking.
* Please do not write or say anything that you wouldn't say to someone in person, and always think about how you would feel if you were on the receiving end.
* Please remember we still need to keep each other safe. If you are concerned about your own or another person's safety, please tell your tutor or report it using the Safeguarding number.

Further information can be found on our website, and in the ACL Online Safety Policy, or you can speak to a member of staff.

You are also recommended to read the advice and information for families and individuals on the [National Cyber Security Centre website](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk). This includes top tips for staying safe online and how to protect your data and devices.

Working Safely with Display Screen Equipment (DSE)

While taking part in on-line learning, we ask that you take responsibility for looking after your health. This includes ensuring you have adequate arrangements in place to maintain good posture and reduce Display Screen Equipment (DSE) related risks.

## Keeping Safe Online

* Always use a unique, strong password
* Don't share your password with anyone – this will protect you from online scams etc.
* Change your password if you think someone else might know it and report it.
* Do not share personal details in a chat or anywhere on the course page.
* Be prepared to be visible and put your camera on. If there is a reason your camera can’t be on for that session, please let your tutor know.
* Think about what is behind you in view. Please ensure you have no personal photos on show. Teams allows you to blur your background or choose an alternative background if needed.
* Don’t send pictures of yourself to anyone especially indecent pictures.
* Don’t open emails or attachments from people you don’t know.
* Never arrange to meet somebody in person that you have met online.
* If anything, you read or see online worries you, tell someone about it.
* ACL requires learners to communicate only via their course platform. We do not promote alternative group messaging apps like WhatsApp.

## Learning Platforms

ACL Essex has its own [Virtual Learning Environment](https://ilearn.essexacl.ac.uk/) where learners can access information and resources related to their subject at any time.

You will be provided with an account when you enrol with ACL Essex for the VLE and Office 365.

Your account details will be:

Username: your [firstname.surname@essexacl.ac.uk](mailto:firstname.surname@essexacl.ac.uk) (e.g. [mary.smith@essexacl.ac.uk](mailto:mary.smith@essexacl.ac.uk)) all lower case Your tutor will provide you with your password.

Click ‘sign in’ to log on. This will take you to a Microsoft Sign in screen where you will change your password. These are your log in details for the VLE, a classroom computer and also Office 365 this gives you access to online versions of Microsoft’s suite including Word, PowerPoint and Teams.

Please note, your access to ACL Essex’s 365 account will be suspended two months after your class ends.

Your tutor may use Teams or the VLE as your learning platform and will advise you on how to access.

Any other online learning platforms and log ins specific to your course will be shared by your course tutor.

If you need further help, please contact [acltechsupport@essex.gov.uk](mailto:acltechsupport@essex.gov.uk)

## Our Website

There is 24-hour access to our website [**www.aclessex.com**](http://www.aclessex.com) where you can find local contact details for your area. Information also available via [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/ACLEssex) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/ACLEssex).

## WiFi

We encourage you to bring your own device (smartphone, tablet, laptop) to your class to support your learning. You can access our free Wi-Fi by asking Customer Services or your tutor for the password.

## Need support with digital technologies?

To help you develop your skills and confidence using digital technology we have computers in public areas at most of our centres. We also offer specially designed courses aiming to support you through the initial stages of using digital technologies. Please speak to your tutor or ask at reception for further details.

## Making Choices about future learning or career development.

ACL Essex is Matrix Accredited and works within this quality framework to support learners in making informed decisions about future learning and careers options. The matrix Standard is the national quality standard for any organisation that delivers information, advice and guidance on learning and work.

You may already have ideas about your future career that you would like to develop, or you may wish to explore what type of role you might be suited to. Our professional Careers and Skills Progression Advisors (CASPA) will give you the support, information and advice needed to make the best choices. You can book a careers meeting with us, by contacting [ACL.careersandskillsadvice@essex.gov.uk](mailto:ACL.careersandskillsadvice@essex.gov.uk)

We provide advice and courses on a range of topics:

* ways to search for and apply for jobs, e.g., interview skills, CV workshop, completing applications forms, basic IT skills.
* help link your personal interests and skills to your job or career.
* Identify courses suitable for you.
* give advice on ways to progress in a career.
* We can help you to achieve your goals by creating an action plan about what you need to do next.
* We can offer appointments either at an ACL centre convenient to you or online (this includes evenings by arrangement).
* identify the skills you may need and refer you to other support (if necessary)

We can arrange guidance for further support options.

Our partner organisation, The National Careers Service (NCS) supports access to personalised skills and careers information that helps individuals to make effective choices about their future pathways.  This service is free and friendly, tailoring impartial information, skills and careers advice to meet individual needs.

You can contact them using the following details.

For **Colchester, Clacton, Colchester, Witham** and **Braintree** call 01206 583333 or email [ncs@colchester.ac.uk](mailto:ncs@colchester.ac.uk)

For all other areas in Essex call 0800 917 94 19 or email [NationalCareersServiceNCC@futuresforyou.com](mailto:NationalCareersServiceNCC@futuresforyou.com)

## Health and Safety

ACL operates within the Essex County Council Health and Safety Policy, the ACL Learner Charter, and Essex County Council Corporate Health and Safety guidelines. Copies of the ACL Code of Practice are available at each centre as well as online via the ACL virtual learning environment. The Service will ensure that there is an awareness of safety issues among all staff and, so far as it is reasonably practicable, that the health and safety of non-employees who may be affected by its work activities are not endangered. Our learners have a role in this, and we would ask you to please be alert to potential risks and report anything you think could be a danger straight away to the reception staff or your tutor.

As part of your learning experience we will include guidance as to:

|  |
| --- |
| * the importance of health and safety |
| * how hazards are identified, and risks assessed |
| * how to play an active part in developing a set of safe behaviours, |
| * how to acquire practical, transferable skills from your learning experience |

Health and Safety will be covered as part of your induction to the course and by the end of your first class you should be clear about:

|  |
| --- |
| * emergency arrangements |
| * any significant risks that may affect you |
| * control measures for the risks |
| * supervision arrangements and the contact person for any health and safety concerns |
| * any restrictions or prohibitions that apply in the learning situation and premises |
| * any personal protective equipment or clothing that you must wear |
| * accident reporting |
| * any health and safety rules (“dos” and “don’ts”). |

## General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

Privacy Notice

Adult Community Learning (ACL) on behalf of Essex County Council (ECC) is collecting your personal information to register you on a course and to be able to inform you of any changes to the course.

This information will be shared with the Department for Education as per the statement below, as well as the Learner Record Service in order to obtain a Unique Learner Number; Ofsted may request learner information during an inspection. This information may also be shared with a student financial support company for the purpose of processing payments. We will also share your contact information with an ACL contracted company who may contact you for education and employment related outcomes. In the event of a Safeguarding or Prevent concern information may also be shared with additional third parties.

For more information, please visit [Privacy Pages](https://www.essex.gov.uk/privacy-notices/education/Pages/Education.aspx)

This privacy notice is issued by the Secretary of State for the Department of Education (DfE). [DfE Privacy Notice](https://guidance.submit-learner-data.service.gov.uk/25-26/ilr/ilrprivacynotice) and [LRS Privacy Notice.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lrs-privacy-notices/lrs-privacy-notice)

Your personal information is used by the DfE to exercise its functions and to meet its statutory responsibilities, including under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and to create and maintain a unique learner number (ULN) and a personal learning record (PLR). Your information will be securely destroyed after it is no longer required for these purposes.

Your information may be shared with third parties for education, training, employment, and well-being related purposes, including for research. This will only take place where the law allows it, and the sharing is in compliance with data protection legislation.

## Plagiarism

If you are studying an accredited programme, there may be varied forms of assessment. Usually, assessment will involve the production of written work (coursework). Your tutor will provide guidance about the format, style and content of the written assessment, including advice on how to use written sources (i.e., information from books, periodicals, articles, the internet etc.). It is very important not to copy sections of any written source that you use and pass it off as your own work. This is called “plagiarism”.

Plagiarism involves taking someone else’s words, thoughts or ideas and trying to pass them off as your own. It is a form of cheating which is taken very seriously. Using AI-generated content in assessments can be considered plagiarism. It's essential to reference AI tools just as you would any other source to maintain academic integrity.

Don’t think you won’t be caught; there are many ways to detect plagiarism.

* Markers can spot changes in the style of writing and use of language.
* Markers are highly experienced subject specialists who are very familiar with work on the topic concerned – they may have read the source you are using, (or even marked the essay you have copied from).
* Internet search engines and specialised computer software can be used to match phrases or pieces of text with original sources and to detect changes in the grammar and style of writing or punctuation.

If your work is submitted and it is discovered that you have broken the regulations, one of the following penalties will be applied:

* The piece of work will be awarded zero marks.
* You will be disqualified from that unit for the examination series in question.
* You will be disqualified from the whole subject for that examination series.
* You will be disqualified from all subjects and barred from entering again for a period of time.
* If you have copied from another learner, they may also have the above penalties applied.

Your awarding body will decide which penalty is appropriate.

REMEMBER IT’S YOUR QUALIFICATION SO IT NEEDS TO BE YOUR OWN WORK

## Help with course fees

There are several options available to help reduce financial barriers to learning. Our teams are always on hand to answer any questions you may have. Alternatively visit our website[Support - ACL Essex](https://aclessex.com/support/)

ACL receives funding from the Department for Education to deliver courses to Essex residents. This funding could cover some or all the costs of your course depending on your circumstances or prior achievements. A few examples are below but please come and talk to us so we can see what you may be entitled to.

* Maths and English courses including GCSEs could be free if you don’t already have a C/4 grade or equivalent
* Essential Digital Skills programmes could be free for those with basic IT skills assessed below level 1
* If you are unemployed or earning a gross annual income of £25,000 or less you could be eligible to complete a level 2 accredited course without charge
* The Level 3 Entitlement means that adults without a full level 3 qualification eg A Levels or an Advanced Diploma, or are earning a gross annual income of £25,750 or less, could undertake an accredited course that’s fully funded from the National Skills Fund.
* Advanced Learner Loans are available for courses at levels 3 to 6 and are only paid back once you start earning £27,295 a year (before tax and other deductions)
* Support with travel costs, childcare and course materials including books, laptop loan and WiFi could be available whilst you study if you have either a gross household income of less than £35,750 per annum (not including house shares, or where rent is paid separately) or a personal gross income of less than £25,750 per annum

**The Discretionary Learning Support Fund** can assist learners who are studying accredited courses with ACL. It can be used to help with the cost of course fees (up to 75%), childcare, study resources including compulsory books, and travel costs.

**The Bursary Fund** can assist learners who are studying non-accredited courses with ACL. It can be used to help with the cost of course fees (provided you have paid the full fee), childcare, study resources, and travel costs.

Advanced Learning Loan Bursary

This fund is for learners who are on a Level 3 course or above and have taken out an Advanced learning loan. It can be used to help with the cost of childcare, study resources including compulsory books, and travel costs.

For more details on applying visit [Learning Support - ACL Essex](https://aclessex.com/support/learning-support/) or call 03330 321 132.

## ACL Essex - Refund/Cancellation Policy

It is not the policy of ACL Essex to refund fees automatically when a change in circumstances prevents or discourages a learner from continuing with a particular class. Refund of course fees will only be made in exceptional circumstances, such as ill health. Any request for a refund is required in writing and should be directed to the Senior Leadership Team for approval. If a written request is not received, no consideration will be made for issuing a refund. If a refund is agreed, it will be pro-rata based and subject to deduction of a £30 administration fee. Any ancillary costs such as exam fees will not be refunded.

Course Refunds

If ACL cancels a course before it is due to start, in the first instance you will be offered an alternative programme. Where no suitable alternative is available you can choose to have a credit for the full amount added to your ACL account or receive a full refund.

In the unlikely event that ACL has to cancel a course after it has started and no suitable alternative is available, you can choose to have a pro-rata credit added to your ACL account or receive a pro-rata refund.

If a course needs to be deferred or changed and you can no longer attend, in the first instance you will be offered an alternative programme. Where the course has not yet started and no suitable alternative is available, you can choose to have a credit for the full amount added to your ACL account or receive a full refund. Where the course is in progress and no suitable alternative is available, you can choose to have a pro-rata credit added to your ACL account or receive a pro-rata refund.

If a credit refund is given, and you wish to book onto the same, or similar course that starts in the next academic year, ACL may honour the course fee applied to the cancelled, changed or deferred course. Credit refunds must be spent within 24 months of their issue date.

When a learner has paid their course fees and is not able to continue with their learning due to one or more reasons described in the Fitness to Learn policy a full refund will be given.

If a learner is excluded from their course for one of the reasons described in the Positive Behaviours Policy, no refund will be given, and they will not be eligible to apply for another course at ACL.

Learners who withdraw from their accredited (qualification) course without completing, and who have received funding to cover all, or part of their accredited course fees will be liable to pay a fee of 10% of the whole qualification cost.

**Course Documentation**

These are the forms we ask you to complete and the purpose of each one:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Learning Agreement | The majority of our courses are subsidised by the Department for Education. In order to receive this funding, we must provide specific and accurate information about you and your course. We do this by sending you a learning agreement.  If you have provided your mobile number or email address, you will receive a link to access your learning agreement.  Please ensure you check and confirm the details are correct. [Full funding information](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Faclessex.com%2Ffunding-support%2F&data=05%7C01%7C%7Cc1d46e71f8ef4c8eed5008da876eae00%7Ca8b4324f155c4215a0f17ed8cc9a992f%7C0%7C0%7C637971206675450215%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=76ExTSR9awJs5QadRL%2Fcm3nnCaNNA4JhB9QrXJt%2FIPQ%3D&reserved=0).  This document triggers the funding for courses.  By law we have to have your agreement confirming all the required information. |
| Individual Learning Plan. | To help you plan your learning and recognise our progress and achievement. |
| Learner End of Course Surveys. | To see if you are happy, and how we can improve our Service. We are also required to do this by the inspection service and our funders. |
| Learner Support Fund/bursary fund application. | If you are applying for financial help or additional learning support: We are required to do this for funding and DfE audit purposes. |
| Learning Support Plan. | This identifies the support we have agreed with you and is required for funding and DfE audit purposes. |
| Learner Welfare form and Safeguarding Risk Assessment | At the start of your programme with us we offer all learners the opportunity to complete a Learner Welfare form; your tutor will provide this. If you do feel that you are vulnerable and would like us to know more about you in order to support you, then your tutor will help you to complete the rest of the form. This will then be stored confidentially, and the information only used if needed. |

## **ACL Venues**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **ACL Basildon**  Lifelong Learning Centre Churchill Avenue Broadmayne Basildon SS14 3SG  **Parking:** Adjacent to centre but parking cannot be guaranteed. | **ACL Clacton**  St Osyth Road Clacton-on-Sea CO15 3BN  **Parking:** Public parking is available adjacent to the centre |
| **ACL Maldon**  White Horse Lane Maldon CM9 5FW  **Parking:** Parking is in the adjacent pay and display car park. Disabled parking can be booked with reception. | **ACL Witham**  Spinks Lane Witham CM8 1EP  **Parking:** Limited parking is available at this centre but cannot be guaranteed. |
| **ACL Chelmsford**  Beeches Close Chelmsford CM1 2SB  **Parking:** Limited car parking is available on site, but a parking space can't be guaranteed. | **ACL Colchester**  Wilson Marriage Barrack Street Colchester CO1 2LR  **Parking:** Limited on-site parking but a car parking space can’t be guaranteed. |
| **ACL Harlow**  The High  Harlow  CM20 1HA  **Parking:**  **Parking is available in a nearby pay and display car park.** |  |