



Ownership	Areté Learning Trust
Date Updated	October 2017

Areté Learning Trust Central Support Funding and Appeals Policy

The Academies Financial Handbook (EFA) makes clear that a Multi-Academy Trust has the freedom to amalgamate a proportion of general annual grant (GAG) funding from all its academies to form one central fund to be used to meet the normal running costs at any of its constituent academies within the trust. Whilst this is often referred to as ‘top-slicing’, ALT calls this our Central Support Fund (CSF).

The DFE currently recommend a top slice of between 4 and 10%. For the academic/financial year 2017/2018 Arété Learning Trust will retain only 3% of constituent academies GAG funding excluding:

- Pupil Premium Funding
- Year 7 Catch Up funding
- Any academy specific sports grants
- Universal Free School Meals Funding
- Other non-GAG Government Funding
- Top-Up Funding for special educational needs (SEN)- or Additional Educational Needs funding (AEN) in mainstream academies
- Other income generated by individual academies

As the ALT is a relatively new trust, the Board seek to ensure that transparency, prudence and fairness underpin its planning in welcoming new partner schools. Arété Learning Trust will give consideration to the funding needs and allocations of each constituent academy. There is an appeals mechanism which is described within this policy document for academies who may feel that they are being treated unfairly by the Arété Learning Trust CSF.

In the year 17-18 ALT will bear the cost of its own due diligence processes, travel, time and training etc. and expect prospective partner schools to use the conversion grant to meet their initial legal costs and other expenses relating to conversion. In effect for 16-17 it is therefore Stokesley School, as the founding member of ALT which will bear any additional costs.

A statement will be issued to constituent academies no later than 31 August for the next academy year detailing the funds to be retained by Arété Learning Trust. The constituent academies will have a period of 10 working days to appeal.

The CSF will be used to fund the following expenditure on behalf of the academies within Arété Learning Trust:

- External Audit Fees, and Internal Audit Fees
- Accountancy Fees (relating to consolidation of accounts – monthly and annual)
- EFA returns
- Bank charges
- Annual actuary re-valuation fees (Initial actuary valuation to be funded from academy Start-Up grant)
- School Improvement Support (from the Trust)
- Arété Learning Trust salaries including: CEO, FD
- Budgeting software
- Admissions service
- Admissions Appeals (SLA charge only)
- Agreed CPD for staff
- Free School Meals Eligibility Service
- Board clerking
- Payroll administration and pension returns
- H.R.
- Support in training and up-skilling of administration and finance staff to meet academy standards

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(Longer term)

- *expensive running costs such as Information Technology, Data Management, where economies of scale can be significant
- *Management of sustainable post 16 provision strategy
- * Rationalisation of further functions (including curriculum planning etc) to drive improvement and economies of scale
- *Trust wide lead practitioners in key areas

Separate accounts relating to the running of the trust will be maintained and made available to all ALT academies.

Academies joining the trust will be expected to fund the following from their conversion grant or from any Revenue or Capital reserves held to allow them to be fully integrated into Arété Learning Trust Financial Management systems:

- Implementation of Financial Management System
- Any legal costs related to the conversion
- including maintenance and upgrades for the above on an on-going basis

Areté Learning Trust reserves the right to amend this policy on an annual basis at the beginning of each financial year. Where appropriate the CSF may be adjusted to reflect the costs relating to that financial year, the increasing services provided directly by Arété Learning Trust or cost savings generated through streamlining of back-office functions. The CSF will be kept under regular review by the Executive Leadership Team, as the Trust's work develops, and recommendations from that body will be considered by the Audit Committee.

GAG Pooling

GAG pooling can help to alleviate financial pressures within individual academies during periods of fluctuating income and expenditure. In the immediate future, however, ALT will not retain any additional amount in addition to the CSF.

Areté Learning Trust reserves the right to review the relative benefits of introducing a pooling policy on an annual basis at the beginning of each financial year. The Executive Leadership Team will be fully consulted before a proposal is put to the Board. If implemented, where appropriate pooling may be adjusted to reflect the costs incurred in the previous financial year.

Appeals

The Academies' Financial Handbook states:

"If a constituent academy's principal feels that the academy has been unfairly treated, they should first appeal to the trust. If the academy's principal grievance is not resolved, they can then appeal to the Secretary of State, via the ESFA, whose decision is final and who can disapply the provisions for pooling" (Section 3.10.6).

The Arété Learning Trust appeals process is:

- The constituent academies have 10 working days from the issuing of an Arété Learning Trust settlement statement from the Arété Learning Trust to the academy to appeal
- Appeals should be made in writing directly to the Chief Executive officer (CEO)
- The CEO will consider the appeal and notify the academy of her/his decision within 10 working days of receipt of the written appeal
- If dissatisfied with that response, a principal can appeal to the Chair of the Board for a review of the CEO's decision

Policy Ends