



Fees Policy 2023-24

Process Area	Finance
Reference Number	FIN/002
Directorate	Finance and Planning

Issue No	Date	Details	Author	Approved
012	Nov 2017	Minor wording changes, new logo, new paragraph at section 4.4.	JO'H	Governing Body
013	Nov 2018	Minor Word changes, minor updates, Incorporation of Fee Refund Policy, sections 6 & 7, reorganisation of paragraphs	TMG	Governing Body
014	May 2019	Clarification of student responsibilities for paying fees, section 3, referencing Debt Management Policy, section 4, cancellation rights, section 7, and refund arrangements section 8	TMG	Governing Body
015	Aug 2019	No change to policy Annual Schedule of Fees and Charges updated	TMG	Governing Body
016	Aug 2020	No change to policy Annual Schedule of Fees and Charges updated	TMG	Governing Body
017	May 2021	Minor wording changes Annual Schedule of Fees and Charges updated	TMG	Governing Body
018	May 2022	Section 3.1 - Clarification of PT HE students payment at enrolment Annual Schedule of Fees and Charges updated	LC	Governing Body

If requested, the College will make the policy available in alternative formats to accommodate visual impairments. The policy can also be downloaded from the College website and made available in alternative languages upon request.

POLICY STATEMENT

The College is not fully funded by the Department for the Economy (DFE) for all its education programmes and training activities. The shortfall in income required to fund its recurrent expenditure and capital investment programme is recovered by levying appropriate fees and charges payable by students, customers and users of its services. Fees and charges are therefore an important source of income to the College, without which it would not be able to deliver the range of programmes, attract and retain high quality staff and invest in new equipment and buildings to facilitate learning.

The aim of this policy is to establish guidelines by which fees and charges may be levied for the provision of appropriate educational facilities and services. The College will therefore be able to recoup a reasonable proportion of expenditure while acting in a fair and equitable manner towards existing and prospective students and other customers.

The College has the power to set its own fees as set out in the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum issued by DFE, dated 1 October 2018 and the Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997.

1. SCOPE

The process of setting fees and charges shall take into account all relevant direct costs and overheads and will take into consideration market forces and competition, the College Development Plan, target market, competitor analysis, skill shortages and other relevant factors such as equality issues and the prevailing economic climate.

Fees and charges will be reviewed annually and the underlying financial objective will be to achieve full economic recovery for services provided to an external organisation or customer.

Where the benefits of charging are outweighed by the costs or where the imposition of such charges would have a detrimental effect on the purposes and aims of the College, such charges may be waived, or reduced but only in carefully considered circumstances. All such exceptions must be approved by the Chief Executive or the Director of Finance and Planning.

This policy is restricted to those facilities and services where the College has discretion in the levying of charges. Therefore the policy does **not** apply to the following:

- any subsidies, bursaries or exemptions as offered by the DFE, any other government agency or private benefactor.
- examination fees as charged by Awarding Bodies.
- financial support packages for students.
- loans as made available from the Student Loans Company or other equivalent authority.
- grants as made available from the Student Loans Company or other equivalent authority.
- those tuition fees established by external bodies, such as a university.
- part-time course fees for accredited and non-accredited programmes are derived from the number of taught hours and may include other costs such as examination/registration /assessment/residential/materials.

2. DEFINITIONS

Directorate	This comprises the Chief Executive and Directors
Accredited Course	Are those courses as defined on the National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ) and the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and the Prescribed List of Accredited Qualifications (PLAQ) as defined by the Department for the Economy (DFE), or other courses approved by DFE including university validated courses.
International Students	International students are those students from countries outside the EEA who do not meet residency requirements as laid down by DFE. The fees for such students are based on 'full cost recovery' irrespective of whether they relate to Higher Education or Further Education programmes.
Tuition Fee	This refers to the amount due from a student (or his or her sponsor) as stipulated in the Annual Fees and Charges Schedule.
Examination Fee	The money collected by the College which is then forwarded to the awarding body.
Validation Fee	A sum of money required by the third party organisation responsible for ratifying the issue of qualifications (usually at third level).
Course Fee	Tuition Fees plus any examination, validation, material fees
Fee waiver	This refers to a reduction of the tuition fee due as stipulated in the Annual Fee and Charges Schedule.
Refund	This refers to the paid fee to be reimbursed to a student (or his or her sponsor).

A Glossary of Terms is included at **Appendix 1**.

3 PAYMENT OF FEES AND CHARGES

3.1 STUDENTS

The payment of fees is the responsibility of each student and they may be paid by cash, cheque, credit/debit card or other method approved by the College. Students will be required to pay all course fees at enrolment unless otherwise determined by the College. They are normally collected during enrolment at the beginning of the academic year, but where appropriate, additional fees may be collected at enrolment throughout the year.

- All Higher Education (HE) students will be required to commit themselves to the payment of the full fee due. All HE students must provide evidence that they have sufficient finance to pay course fees or **have made a genuine commitment to access financial assistance**.
- Fees payable by Student Loans Company are paid directly into the College Bank Account. It is the responsibility of students to ensure that all relevant paperwork has been completed and confirmation received before informing the College that they are supported by the Student Loans Company.
- A full time HE student may not be permitted to enrol unless they pay tuition fees or provide evidence of their application to the Student Loan Company. Full time HE students not applying to the Student Loan Company for a loan must pay full fees at enrolment unless instalment arrangements have been approved by the Finance Department.
- A part time HE student who is eligible for Student Finance NI support must provide evidence of their application to the Student Loan Company or pay a minimum of £100 or 25% of the full fee, whichever is higher, at enrolment, and set up an instalment plan if they are making an application for support to Student Finance NI. If the student is not eligible for support or applying for a loan they must pay the full fee at enrolment.
- Any amounts paid by HE students which are subsequently funded by the Student Loans Company will be refunded to the student.
- If the Student Loans Company withdraws support for the student as a result of the student's withdrawal or other change in circumstances the student will be liable for any recalled amount in addition to any outstanding fees.

The College will facilitate the administration of part-time higher education student grants through the Education Authority and student loans through the Student Loans Company insofar as the College will distribute the application forms.

It is the individual student's responsibility to complete and submit all appropriate forms and paperwork in support of any application for financial assistance.

3.2 SPONSORS

Where a student is sponsored by an organisation, a letter of confirmation, or the appropriate employer liability form, is required to enable enrolment and registration to take place.

Organisations and employers who sponsor students are liable for the full cost of the course fee. There shall be no concessions. Late payers may be charged interest and non-payers will have legal proceedings taken against them to recover outstanding fees together with any administrative costs incurred.

If the student leaves the sponsor's employment after the start date of the course the fee liability remains with the sponsor.

If the student leaves the sponsor's employment before the course starts the sponsor should notify the College in writing, before the course starts, to withdraw their support, in these cases the course fee liability will transfer, as appropriate, to the student. If the College is not notified in writing in advance of the start date the fee liability will remain with the sponsor.

Where a student is sponsored by an organisation and is also eligible for funding through the Education Authority then payment from Student Finance NI and the Student Loans Company will be acceptable.

4 COLLECTION OF STUDENT DEBT

Action will be taken by the College to recover any outstanding fees in accordance with the College Debt Management Policy.

5 COURSE TRANSFER

A student may transfer from one programme to another provided that permission is obtained from the lecturer in charge of the programme he/she wishes to join.

Lecturers granting such approval must bear in mind the educational needs of the applicant, the timing of the proposed transfer and whether or not such a transfer will meet the student's needs.

Examination/Registration fees may be transferred prior to registration with the external body. It should be noted that applicants may be requested to pay an additional tuition fee or alternatively they may be entitled to a partial refund where the fee differs.

6 FEE WAIVER

The College policy is that fees are not waived except in the circumstances outlined below.

Applications for fee waiver or refunds of fees paid shall be made in writing by an individual or organisation or by College staff on behalf of the applicant.

All applications shall be passed to the appropriate manager for processing.

Requests for the refund of tuition fees may be recommended for payment by the Campus Coordinator and authorised by the Chief Executive or his/her delegated authority, when:

- 6.1** A course/class is cancelled by the College; where cancellation of a course takes place, students will be offered either a place on a suitable alternative course or a full refund;
- 6.2** A student does not attend the course of study. Any student who fails to notify the College at least 5 working days before the course commences, shall be liable for a £30 administration fee.
- 6.3** Where an applicant has enrolled on a full cost recovery programme a minimum period of one months' notice is required for cancelling the enrolment. (Failure to provide such notice will mean that no refund will be offered);

- 6.4** If the time and day or evening meeting of the class has been changed and the student is unable to continue attending because of these changes; and
- 6.5** Other fee waiver or refund applications shall be considered only in exceptional circumstances by the Chief Executive, (or in his absence by the Director of Finance and Planning). Any case for exceptional circumstances to be considered must be supported by a statement from the appropriate Head of Faculty/Assistant Director.
- 6.6** If an applicant has made more than one attendance no reduction in fee or refund may be given, except in circumstances as in (6.4) or (6.5) above. However, where a refund has been refused it may be possible to transfer the tuition fee paid to another programme.

Registration, examination and validation fees will only be reduced or refunded if the amount is requested before the fee has been forwarded to the external body.

7 STUDENTS' RIGHT TO CANCEL

A student enrolled on a substantial course, i.e. a credit bearing course of 120 hours or more will have a right to cancel their course with no fee chargeable within 14 calendar days of the start of the course.

8 REFUNDS

Refunds of amounts paid can only be processed when;

- any student
 - a fee waiver results in a credit balance on the students' account;
 - Hardship fund support is confirmed;
 - any sponsor pays the course fee.
- FTHE student
 - provides evidence that a Student Loans Company loan has been approved, or the first loan instalment is paid to the College by the Student Loans Company;
- PTHE student
 - provides evidence that a means tested grant has been approved or the Student Loans Company pays the College the appropriate means tested grant;
 - provides evidence that a Student Loans Company loan has been approved or the first loan instalment is paid to the College by the Student Loans Company;
 - any student in receipt of both a loan and a means tested grant will be refunded any amounts they have paid when the student provides evidence that the loan and means tested grant amounts cover the cost of the fees;
- PTFE student
 - provides evidence that an FE Award has been approved.

Any student who receives a refund and who subsequently withdraws from the College before the full fee is paid to the College, or the Student Loans Company recalls any amounts paid will be referred to the College Debt Collection agent within 28 days of withdrawal if the account is not settled in full within that time.

Where a refund has been authorised, the refund will normally be made by cheque or direct to the card used for payment. In all instances the College will refund to the student any amounts they have paid that result in an overpayment to their account.

9 DISTRIBUTION

Sharepoint Policy Centre
Website

10 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Management Statement / Financial Memorandum
- Annual Schedule of Fees and Charges
- Financial advice documents available on each campus
- Hardship Fund Policy

11 FLOWCHART

None

12 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

This policy has been subject to equality screening.

APPENDIX 1**Glossary of Terms**

Abbreviation:	Description:
DFE	Department for the Economy
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
NDAQ	National Database of Accredited Qualifications
PLAQ	Prescribed List of Accredited Qualifications
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework