

Fees Policy 2017-18

Annual Policy

February 2017

Summary of Policy:

This annual policy sets out the basis for tuition, examination and other appropriate fees for all groups of students at the College. The policy also covers financial assistance with fees and tuition fee refunds.

Senior Manager Responsible for Policy:

Deputy Chief Executive

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The College is committed to a transparent fee structure that informs individuals and companies about the costs of study and examinations and also any exemptions to the payment of fees
- 1.2 The College currently provides programmes of learning for students aged 14 upwards on a full time, part time and flexible basis and at levels Entry to Level 6. The College receives grants from a number of funding sources, primarily the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and the Skills Funding Agency (SFA), to cover some of the costs of running these programmes for students over the age of 16. These agencies also set out circumstances in which they will provide funding to cover the entire cost of a programme.
- 1.3 All students on publicly funded programmes who are over the age of 16 and under the age of 19 on 31st August of the relevant academic year receive free tuition. Students on publicly funded programmes who are 19 or older on 31st August of the relevant academic year may be required to pay a tuition fee, together with any relevant examination and/or materials charge. Charges may also be applied for external visits and some examination re-sits. Fees and other charges can be paid by the individual learner, an employer or another sponsor depending on the type of programme.
- 1.4 Students on higher education courses funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) are required to pay an annual tuition fee and these are regulated by OFFA (Office for Fair Access to Higher Education) and are published in accordance with Consumer Law.
- 1.5 For courses where Advanced Learner Loans apply, no public funding is available. Learners have an option of paying course fees via an Advanced Learning loan. The SFA set a maximum rate that may be charged for learners studying with an Advanced Learner Loan. The tuition fee for these courses will be determined on the basis of market demand up to a maximum of the equivalent publicly funded rate.
- 1.6 For courses described as 'full-cost recovery', where no element of public funding is received, the College has flexibility to determine fee levels based on market demand.
- 1.7 Overseas students from outside of the European Union will be charged a fee which reflects the full costs of the tuition being offered.

2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

- 2.1 In setting tuition fees, the Governing Body requires the College's Executive Group to be sensitive to the fee income expectations of funding bodies, to local needs, to the ability of individual students/clients to pay and to the fees being charged by other providers.
- 2.2 The schedule of tuition fees is reviewed annually and changes are approved by the Board of Governors in advance of any prospectuses and course information being published for the forthcoming academic year.

- 2.3 The SFA's funding methodology includes an Assumed Fee Element (AFE) as part of programme funding. The AFE will be set as the default tuition fee for full and part-time courses. Such fees will be remitted in full for all eligible learners as laid down in the SFA or other appropriate funding body's guidelines.
- 2.4 Where the assumed fee has been identified as a barrier to recruitment because of competitor pricing policy, fees may be reduced to a rate which reflects the market position. Likewise, a premium may be charged where market conditions allow. These variations will be validated by the College's Executive Group at the time of curriculum planning.
- 2.5 In addition to a tuition fee, other charges may be applied to some courses, for example, for use of materials or field trips. For 16-18 year old learners, appropriate materials can be borrowed from the College and returned, should individuals not wish to purchase items for personal use only. For adult learners who are fully funded by the SFA (i.e. no tuition fee charged) or for learners accessing an Advanced Learner Loan, a materials charge may be applied in such cases where learners wish to use or retain the materials provided outside of the College environment e.g. food, artwork, flowers.
- 2.6 All learners will be informed, at interview, by a statement in the prospectus, and prior to enrolment in their first year, that the appropriate fee must be paid and that fees are reviewed on an annual basis. The College will levy fees at the start of the course and will expect payment to be made prior to or at the point of enrolment. Payment, evidence of entitlement to fee remission or application for Loan funding must be provided before or at the time of enrolment. If evidence is not available at enrolment, then the student must sign an Acceptance of Fees document and be required to pay a deposit that will be refunded once the evidence is submitted.
- 2.7 Different payment arrangements are in place for foreign students who must pay their course fees in advance in order to allow the College to meet UKVI requirements.
- 2.8 The College reserves the right to take appropriate action against defaulters to encourage them to make appropriate arrangements to pay their fees. These actions may include withdrawal of student facilities (e.g. library cards, IT access) and suspension from class until the point that the learner has made appropriate arrangements to pay their outstanding fees. Learners with outstanding College debts will not be allowed to re-enrol until those debts are cleared in full. Certification and references will be withheld.
- 2.9 The College also reserves the right to pursue defaulters through the College Credit Controller, the appointed College debt collection agencies and ultimately the courts if deemed necessary.
- 2.10 This tuition fee policy may only be waived for individual students with the written authorisation of the Deputy Chief Executive

3.0 FEES PAYABLE

- 3.1 For 2016/17, the SFA funding base rate includes 50% assumed income for learner tuition fees. This will be the default position for fees charged referred to in 2.3 above.
- 3.2 Tuition fees will be remitted in full for those adult learners who are eligible to be fully funded by the SFA as published in the annual Funding Guidance documents. Students aged 16-18, whether funded by the EFA (Classroom Based) or the SFA (Apprentices) will receive free tuition.
- 3.3 Examination fees and registration costs which are not covered by tuition fee remission referred to in 3.2 above remain payable by learners over 19. Some examination re-sit fees may be payable by learners aged 16-18. The College reserves the right to charge an administration fee if students fail to attend an agreed examination.
- 3.4 For SFA funded Apprenticeship programmes costs will vary according to the apprenticeship framework or standard being undertaken. Employers who contribute to the Apprenticeship Levy scheme will not be required to pay additional fees. Employers who are not part of the Apprenticeship Levy Scheme will be asked to pay a 10% towards the costs of learning.
- 3.5 Learners on Full Cost Recovery courses (courses for which we receive no funding) will not be allowed to have their fees waived. Full Cost courses will be charged at a commercial rate which covers delivery and overhead costs.
- 3.6 Higher Education programmes do not qualify for fee remission regardless of age or whether the learner is in receipt of a means tested benefit. HE fees will be charged at a differential rate for full time and part time students. For certain full time programmes, the College will apply a fee waiver. Students can opt to receive the value of the fee waiver as a cash allowance if the gross fee is covered by the Student Loan Company. The allowance is payable in two equal instalments during the course of the academic year, subject to satisfactory attendance.
- 3.7 HE Learners are expected to pay on enrolment, unless their employers are paying or they are awaiting a decision from the Student Loan Company (SLC). They are informed to bring a copy of the SLC document when received, and if this shows that the SLC will not pay, the student will be invoiced.
- 3.8 Learners who are on a HE course at the College funded via a partner university (e.g. Sunderland) shall be subject to their fee and fee remission policies
- 3.9 Learners who are eligible for Advanced Learner Loans must sign an Acceptance of Fees statement, acknowledging that they are liable for the tuition fee balance in the event of withdrawal from their course. The balance represents any difference between the course fee and amounts paid to the College via the Student Loans Company.
- 3.10 For learners who withdraw and whose fees have been partially paid by the Student Loans Company, i.e. via Higher Education Loans or Advanced Learner Loans, the College may determine to review the balance of fees invoiced, dependant on validation of the individual learner's circumstances.

- 3.11 Learners on provision funded through the SFA Community Learning budget may be required to pay a tuition fee unless they meet specific criteria. Learners who do not meet the SFA's funding criteria will still be allowed to take part in the learning activity but will be expected to make a modest contribution to the cost of the learning.
- 3.12 Full cost fees are generally set with regard to market forces but taking account of inflation and increased costs. A guideline for full cost fees is:
- £11.10 for delivery hour per learner
 - £9.30 per delivery hour for learners infilling into other courses
- 3.13 14-16 School fees are generally set with regard to market forces but taking account of inflation. A guideline for fees is:
- £10.65 for delivery hour per learner for infill
 - £84.75 per delivery hour for a group of learners

4.0 ASSISTANCE WITH FEES

- 4.1 Students will be advised that tuition fees may be paid in instalments under the terms of the College's instalment plan and as agreed by the Finance Office.
- 4.2 For some eligible learners, tuition fees may be covered by the Discretionary Learner Support Fund. This is subject to individual applications and the amount of support funding available.
- 4.3 Students who are in financial hardship can also apply for financial assistance to cover the costs of travel, lunches and other course expenses via the 16-19 Bursary fund, the Adult Discretionary Learner Support Fund and the Advanced Learner Loans Bursary fund.
- 4.4 The College works in close partnership with North Tyneside Council Adult Learning Alliance and may wish to acknowledge concessions offered by the Local Authority in any jointly marketed provision.
- 4.5 Learners who are funded through the Community Learning budget are not eligible for any other financial assistance. Costs related to the learning such as travel, childcare or equipment costs must be borne by the learners themselves.

5.0 TUITION FEE REFUNDS

- 5.1 In circumstances where the College has significantly changed advertised programmes, tuition fee refunds will be granted where authorised by the Deputy Chief Executive or nominated deputy.. Refunds or reductions in fees will only be given automatically if a course is cancelled or postponed.

5.2 Students, or their sponsors as appropriate, must sign an Acceptance of Fees declaration which specifies the following refund policy in the event of withdrawal from a course:

- Full refunds will be given for withdrawals up to one week before the course start date.
- With respect to a withdrawal within the 7 days prior to and the first 2 weeks after the course start date, 33% of the course fees paid will be retained to cover administrative costs. The balance will be refunded to the student.
- With respect to withdrawals after this 2 week period then no refund will be made.

5.3 In exceptional circumstances written requests for refunds relating to personal factors will be considered by the Deputy Chief Executive and an ex gratia payment or credit note may be issued. An administration fee may be charged.

6.0 CONTROL OF THIS DOCUMENT

6.1 This document was prepared by, and is issued, controlled and modified by the Deputy Chief Executive after due authorisation from the Corporation Board. The latest version of the document will be maintained on the College Intranet.