

Academic Year: 2023/24**Target Audience:** All staff**Summary of Contents:**

Fees Policy	
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Enquiries: Any enquiries about the contents of this document should be addressed to: -

Title: Chief Finance Officer

Campus Address: Victoria Avenue
Newtownards
BT23 7ED

Tel: 0345 600 7555

E-mail: tmartin@serc.ac.uk**Final Approval by:**

CMT: 13 June 2023

Governing Body: 26 June 2023

Policy Number: 076-2023**Created:** June 2023**Related Documents:**SERC College Development Plan
SERC Admissions Policy
SERC Student Financial Support SOP
DfE Management Statement/Financial Memorandum
DEL Circulars FE 05/22, FE 10/22
The Education (Student Fees and Support) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**Superseded Documents (if applicable):****Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations Screening Information (Section 75):**

Date Policy Screened – November 2017

SERC Fees Policy 2023/24

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 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 is recovered by levying appropriate fees and charges payable by students, customers and users of its services.
- 1.2 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 resources necessary to facilitate learning.
- 1.3 The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines by which fees and charges may be levied for the provision of appropriate educational 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.

2.0 Scope

- 2.1 The process of setting fees and charges shall take into account all relevant direct costs and overheads and will take into consideration market forces, the College Development Plan, target market, competitor analysis, skill shortages and other relevant factors such as equality issues and the prevailing economic climate.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 This policy is restricted to those 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 Department for the Economy (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 Loan Company, or other equivalent authority
 - Grants as made available from the Student Loan Company or Education Authority or other equivalent authority
 - Those tuition fees established by external bodies, such as a university

Tuition fees apply to the financial year beginning 1 August and ending on 31 July.

3.0 Definitions

In this policy the following definitions apply:

<p>Home Student</p>	<p>A home student is one complying with the residency criteria laid down by the Department for the Economy as per Circular FE 05/22 “<i>Further Education Residency and Funding Requirements</i>” (Available: FE Circular 05/22 - Further Education Residency and Funding Requirements (economy-ni.gov.uk)):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UK Nationals, subject to being ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom throughout the three-year period preceding the first day of the academic year of the course. - Those UK Nationals and their family members who have been living in the EEA, Gibraltar, Switzerland, and EU Overseas Territories – subject to the requirements of Circular FE 05/22. - Persons who are settled in the UK. - Republic of Ireland Nationals (subject to the requirements set out in FE Circular 05/22). - EU Nationals, other EEA, Swiss nationals and their family members covered by the Withdrawal Agreements (Settled or Pre-Settled Status under the EU Settlement Scheme) Nationals (subject to the requirements set out in FE Circular 05/22) - Workers, employed persons, self-employed persons, and their family members (Frontier Workers) - subject to the requirements and definitions set out in FE Circular 05/22 (paragraph 5). - Refugees and those set out in paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 of the FE Circular 05/22
<p>International Student</p>	<p>An ‘international’ student is one who does not satisfy the conditions for consideration as a ‘home’ student laid down by the Department for the Economy as per Circular FE 05/22 “<i>Further Education Residency and Funding Requirements</i>”.</p>
<p>Accredited Course</p>	<p>Courses as defined on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ) 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.</p>

The College reserves the right to amend the definition of “Home” student or “International” student if new guidance is issued from DfE.

4.0 Fee Rates

- 4.1 The fee for each category of course is included in the annual Fees Schedule. The 2023/24 Fee Schedule is attached in Appendix A. The fee is not reduced for late entry onto a course. Fees are chargeable in each year of study.
- 4.2 The College reserves the right to introduce bursaries, offer concessions and vary rates within the Fees Schedule during the financial year. Rates will be varied only in limited circumstances, such as an increase in line with inflation. All students will be informed, in a durable manner, at the earliest opportunity of any rate change.
- 4.3 The College reserves the right to vary the price charged from course to course in the financial year. Approval for variations must be granted, in advance, from the Chief Finance Officer.
- 4.4 The schedule of fees and charges does not apply to any pro-rata rates that will be applied for students repeating individual modules.

5.0 Concessions, Discounts & Bursaries

- 5.1 Tuition fee concessions are made available by the College to individual self-paying students for a range of accredited courses.
- 5.2 The schedule of those who currently qualify for concessionary rates is shown in the Concessions Schedule (Appendix B).
- 5.3 Concessionary rules are applied according to the status of the student at time of enrolment.
- 5.4 The College offers a number of discounts shown in Appendix B.
- 5.5 The College offers two bursaries in relation to its 2023/24 Higher Education offering:

Widening Access & Participation Bursary

Under the College's Access Agreement, the College offers an Access Bursary payment to full time students from low-income backgrounds i.e., those students who are in receipt of the full maintenance grant or full special support grant from the Student Loan Company.

International Student Scholarship 2023/24

International students (per definition of section 3), meeting the scholarship requirements as defined within the International Student Recruitment SOP.

The SERC HE Progression Bursary (2022/23) will continue for those continuing students who were eligible in 2022/23. The SERC HE Progression Bursary will not apply for 2022/23 SERC Further Education Level 3 Students progressing to a Full Time SERC Higher Education course in 2023/24.

6.0 Payment of fees

- 6.1 Details on methods of paying fees are in the Payment of Fees Schedule (Appendix C).
- 6.2 Exceptions to the arrangements for the payment of fees will be considered only in extraordinary circumstances with the advance authorisation of the Financial Controller.

7.0 Refunds

- 7.1 The College will make every effort to run courses and programmes which are advertised. All courses are, however, required to have a viable number of enrolled students in order to contribute to operating costs. In some circumstances classes may be combined to achieve viability.
- 7.2 However, the College regrets that classes may have to be cancelled due to lack of demand. Any changes to classes will be communicated to students in line with the Terms and Conditions.
- 7.3 For any course cancelled by SERC, a full refund of the total fee paid to date will be issued to the student, unless other exceptional circumstances prevail (e.g. transfer of course or outstanding fees for other courses).
- 7.4 As a general rule the College does not offer refunds, although there is some discretion in exceptional circumstances as outlined in the **Fees Refund and Waiver SOP**.

8.0 Customer enquiries

- 8.1 Any enquiries from customers relating to the Fees Policy should be directed to the Senior Customer Services Officers in the first instance via email info@serc.ac.uk.

9.0 Responsible Owner

- 9.1 The Responsible Owner of this Policy is the Chief Finance Officer.

10.0 Communication

- 10.1 This Policy will be communicated to staff via the Learning Engine on the Intranet and made available to any customer upon request.
- 10.2 This document can be made available in alternative formats upon request.

APPENDIX A - FEES SCHEDULE 2023/24

Please note that fees quoted are for entrants in 2023/24 and are payable in each year of study. The rate for Year 1 students who are progressing to Year 2 will not be increased.

ACCREDITED COURSES

FULL TIME COURSES (HOME STUDENTS)

Full Time Courses		Fee
Higher Education	Specified Courses (Degree, Foundation Degree, HND and HNC)	£2,700 <i>(Full Fee incl Tuition Fee & Exam/Reg)</i>
Further Education	Further Education Course (including Applied A Levels)	Nil
	Non-Applied A Levels per subject (if aged 19 or over on 1 July 2023)	£360

PART TIME COURSES (HOME STUDENTS INCLUDING EU)

Part Time Courses		Fee
Higher Education	Specified Courses (Degree, Foundation Degree, HND and HNC)	£760
	Other Courses at Level 5 / Level 4	£490
Further Education	Accredited Further Education Courses	Minimum of £2.15 per hour

INTERNATIONAL FEES

International Students – Higher Education		Fee
Full Time	Full Fee (including tuition, exam and registration)	£6,500
	Administration Fee	£1,000
Part Time	All courses [including administration fee]	£15.00 / hour

International Students – Further Education		Fee
Full Time	Full Fee (including tuition, exam and registration)	£4,400
	Administration Fee	£1,000
Part Time	All courses (excluding ESOL) [including administration fee]	£12.50 / hour
	ESOL [including Administration Fee]	£7.40 / hour

NON-ACCREDITED COURSES

	Fee
Non-Accredited courses*	Minimum of £3.25 per hour

* The Head of School will retain the right to vary the price of a non-accredited course when it is considered to be a cost recovery course.

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

DfE Circular FE 10/22 sets out the arrangements for the eligibility requirements for access to ESOL in Further Education colleges for asylum seekers, refugees, those granted Humanitarian Protection, persons granted indefinite leave to remain under Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghanistan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), Ukrainians under 'Homes for Ukraine', Ukrainian Family Resettlement schemes and Ukrainians granted a six month settlement visa whilst they apply for one of the afore mentioned schemes.

The Circular is available: [FE Circular 10/22 - Access to ESOL classes in FE colleges \(economy-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk)

Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Those Granted Humanitarian Protection

Asylum seekers, Refugees and those granted Humanitarian Protection, are eligible to access ESOL provision, and other further education courses, as soon as they have made an application for refugee status or are granted refugee status.

Asylum seekers, Refugees and those granted Humanitarian Protection are eligible for free access to ESOL provision. However, if they wish to access other FE provision, colleges' normal fees policies will apply.

FE colleges can provide free non-regulated Pre-Entry ESOL courses to Asylum Seekers, Refugees and those granted Humanitarian Protection, who have come to Northern Ireland and who have no English language skills, when the initial assessment indicates that they are not ready to access Entry Level provision.

The spouse/civil partner of an Asylum Seeker, Refugee, or those granted Humanitarian Protection who has been so since the date of application for refugee status, and the child/children of the asylum seeker or of the spouse/partner of an asylum seeker, who was under 18 when the application for refugee status was made, will also be eligible as outlined above in respect of asylum seekers.

Ukrainians under the Ukrainian Resettlement Scheme

Ukrainians who have been resettled in Northern Ireland under the Ukrainian Family Settlement Scheme, the Ukrainian Sponsorship Scheme and the Ukrainian Extension Scheme are eligible for immediate access to ESOL and other FE courses.

Ukrainians accepted under the three Ukrainian schemes are eligible for free access to ESOL provision. However, if they wish to access other FE provision, colleges' normal fee policies will apply.

Ukrainians who have settled in Northern Ireland under the three Ukrainian schemes and who have no English skills can access free non-regulated Pre-ESOL through the FE colleges when the initial assessment indicates that they are not ready to access Entry Level provision.

Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy and the Afghanistan Citizen Resettlement Scheme

Afghans who have resettled in Northern Ireland under the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) and the Afghanistan Citizen Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) can access free ESOL.

Afghans who have settled in Northern Ireland under the government's ARAP and ACRS who have no English skills can access free non-regulated Pre-Entry ESOL when the initial assessment indicates that they are not ready to access Entry Level provision.

Afghans who wish to access other FE provision, colleges' normal fee policies will apply.

The spouse/civil partner and children of an Afghan under ARAP or ACRS will also be eligible for provision upon arrival.

MISCELLANEOUS FEES (not exhaustive list)

Examination / Registration Fees (including examination resist)	At Cost
Course Materials / Equipment / Trips & Residentials	At Cost
Replacement Student ID Card	£10
Enhanced AccessNI Check (Criminal Record Check) ¹	At Cost
HE Students Resubmission of Assignment Work	£45
Confirmation of Results	£10
BTEC Higher National Annual Student Fee	At Cost
Failed Direct Debit Payments	£10

OTHER INFORMATION

Students studying Access courses may be required to complete GCSE English and Mathematics. Where this is required the following shall apply:

Full Time Access Students: Exam Fees chargeable

Part Time Access Students: Tuition and Exam Fees chargeable

¹ The College will consider offering assistance to students in the exceptional circumstance of requiring multiple AccessNI checks within the one academic year for the purposes of their course.

BUSINESS ENGAGEMENT

Business engagement courses shall normally meet the following criteria:

- they shall not conflict with any statutory or general responsibility of SERC to provide further education within the statutory provisions under the direction of DfE;
- they shall not result in any reduction in existing College provision;
- the target student group shall be restricted and defined by the commissioning body within the arrangements agreed with the client; and
- the course shall be commissioned by an employer or group of employers or other agency.

Charges for business engagement will be based on a number of factors including:

- Delivery costs;
- Support staff costs (e.g. technician, finance, invigilator);
- Premises costs and location;
- Materials and administration and examinations cost;
- Specialist services;
- Market factor;
- Overhead absorption;
- Level of course;
- Assessor fees; and
- Travel costs.

A discount may be offered for commercial reasons such as for entry into a new market.

A premium may be charged in circumstances where the provision is of a very specialist nature, requires additional set-up costs or includes the use of specialist resources.

All pricing must be benchmarked with a competitor analysis.

APPENDIX B

TUITION FEE CONCESSIONS

Concessions are only applicable to **tuition fees of part time accredited courses**. Concessions are not applicable to examination or other costs included in the overall course fee. Non-Accredited courses are not entitled to concessions. International students will not qualify for concession.

Concessions are made available by the College to individual self-paying students. Organisations and employers who sponsor students are not entitled to concessions. There are two exceptions to this: i. the payment of part time tuition fees by Student Finance NI which by regulation is only liable to pay the reduced tuition fee if applicable, and ii. the payment of part time tuition fees by The Prince's Trust.

CATEGORIES OF TUITION FEE CONCESSIONS FOR ACCREDITED COURSES	EVIDENCE REQUIRED AT ENROLMENT	CONCESSION APPLICABLE (i.e. tuition fee reduction)
Aged 60 or over at the date of enrolment	Date of birth on enrolment form	25%
Aged 16 but under 19 on 1 July 2023 and in receipt of (or dependent on spouse / partner / parent / guardian in receipt of) OR Aged 19 or over on 1st July 2023 and in receipt of (or dependent on spouse / partner in receipt of) 1. Guaranteed Pension Credit 2. Rate Relief or Rate Rebate 3. Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit (with an annual taxable income below the qualifying threshold as stated by HMRC) 4. Income Related Employment and Support Allowance 5. Income Support 6. Universal Credit where total income is confirmed as below the NHS Exemption Certificate qualifying threshold) 7. Income based Jobseekers Allowance	The following evidence should confirm current entitlements (<i>Evidence must be provided for inspection and a copy retained, and be applicable, at the time of enrolment otherwise full course fees will be charged</i>): Social Security Agency letter Award Letter from NIHE/Land and Property Services HM Revenue & Customs Award Notice: Form TC602 Current Social Security Agency letter Current Social Security Agency letter Relevant UC Documentation Current Social Security Agency letter	50%

Note: Where a student qualifies for more than one concession, it is only the highest value concession that will be applied.

DISCOUNTS

The College offers two discounts.

Discounts are only applicable to **tuition fees of accredited courses**. Discounts are not applicable to examination or other costs included in the overall course fee.

Discounts are made available by the College to individual self-paying students. Organisations and employers who sponsor students are not entitled to discounts.

Discounts are available to both full time and part-time courses.

Discount Type	Description	Discount
Staff Discount*	Accredited courses at all levels	25%
Up Front Payment Discount	Self-Paying Students with course fee greater than £300	5%

*Staff discount cannot be used in conjunction with concessions.

APPENDIX C

PAYMENT OF FEES

1. Payment Information

Payment of fees must be arranged prior to course commencement. Fees are payable in each year of a two or three year programme.

Fees are payable at enrolment except for circumstances as outlined in section 2 to section 4 below.

SERC accepts cash, cheque (made payable to South Eastern Regional College or SERC), credit/debit card or other method approved by the College.

Receipts must be retained and may be required as evidence.

The payment of fees is the responsibility of each student. Students must be aware of their liability for fees as classes commence. Non-payment of fees will result in sanctions being imposed as detailed within the Credit Control and Debt Management SOP. Fee liability commences on the first day of the academic year or course start date in all circumstances (excluding any statutory rights). Students must sign the College's Terms & Conditions that confirm acceptance of liability.

Higher Education Students who withdraw from or go on a leave of absence will be charged a tuition fee as detailed below:

Withdrawal Dates	Fee Liability
From first day of term until 8 January 2024	25% of the full annual tuition fee
From 9 January 2024 until 8 April 2024	50% of the full annual tuition fee
From 9 April 2024	100% of the full annual tuition fee

2. Payment by Instalments

Where the total fee payable (after concessions or discounts) is over £300, payment may be collected using a payment plan arrangement.

For Further Education and Part-Time Higher Education courses the deposit payable at the time of enrolment is **25% of the total course fee** (see below for Full Time HE enrolments/A Level Enrolments for those aged 19 or over).

For September enrolments, six equal instalment payments will then be collected as follows:

Instalment Date*
1 November 2023
1 December 2023
1 February 2024
1 March 2024
8 April 2024
1 May 2024

**Any changes to instalment dates will be notified to students.*

For Full Time HE enrolments/A Level Enrolments (aged 19 or over) there is no deposit payable at time of enrolment. Six equal instalment payments will be collected as above.

For January/February enrolments, the deposit applies to further education and part-time HE courses, three equal instalment payments will then be collected as follows:

Instalment Date
1 March 2024
8 April 2024
1 May 2024

Please note:

- › **Default in any payment will result in a £10 administration fee.**
- › **Default in any payment will result in enrolment on the course/programme of study becoming invalid.**
- › **Non-HE students who withdraw from their course are still liable for payment of their fee in full and therefore all direct debit payments will be collected.**
- › **Customers can avail of an up-front full payment discount of 5% instead of instalments.**

3. Sponsors

Where a student is sponsored by an organisation, a completed sponsor liability form should be presented to Customer Services at the point of enrolment. The sponsor liability form is available from the SERC website.

Organisations and employers who sponsor students are liable for the full cost of the course fee. There shall be no concessions. The College will directly invoice the sponsor.

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 this case the course fee liability will transfer to the student. If the College is not notified, in writing, in advance of the start date the fee liability remains with the sponsor.

4. Student Finance NI

4.1 Further Education (Part-Time)

Student Finance NI provide Further Education Grants to support students undertaking a part-time further education course.

The College facilitates the administration of the FE Grants by promoting this fund and making the application forms available in reception areas. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that all relevant paperwork has been completed and submitted by the relevant deadlines.

Student Finance NI make their tuition fee award payments directly to the College.

At time of enrolment:

- a. **Students who have received their award letter from Student Finance NI must present this to Customer Services. The amount of the award will be deducted from the total fee and if a balance remains this must be paid by the student at the point of enrolment (unless the criteria for payment by instalment is satisfied).**
- b. **Students who have not received their award letter from Student Finance NI must follow the guidance in section 1 and, if applicable, section 2 of this appendix relating to fee payments.**

When funding has been approved by Student Finance NI the student must present their award letter to Customer Services.

If the award covers the total fee, the College will refund the amount already paid by the student. The College will cancel the direct debit agreement and issue the refund.

If the award does not cover the total fee, the student remains liable for any balance remaining. If paying by instalments, the College will continue to proceed with the direct debit on the due dates.

In all instances, the College will refund to the student any overpayments that have been made to their account.

In the event of Student Finance NI not releasing the full amount of their award (for example by reason of student withdrawal), the student will be required to pay the remaining balance of the total fee.

4.2 Higher Education

Student Finance NI, through the Educational Authority, administer financial support to full and part time Higher Education students in Northern Ireland in conjunction with the Student Loans Company (SLC).

Full Time Students

Full time students can apply for a tuition fee loan by submitting an application to SFNI/SLC.

The Student Loans Company will make their tuition fee award payments directly to the College after confirmation of enrolment and attendance.

At time of enrolment:

- a. Students who have received their award letter from Student Finance NI must present this to Customer Services. The amount of the award will be deducted from the total fee (including any concession) and the student will be invoiced for the remaining fee with payment options as per section 1 and, if applicable, section 2.
- b. Students who have not received their award letter from Student Finance NI must sign a liability form and direct debit mandate.

Confirmation of funding must be submitted to Customer Services as soon as it is received.

The amount of the award will be deducted from the total fee and you will be invoiced for the remaining fee with payment options as per section 1 and, if applicable, section 2.

In all circumstances, the student is responsible for the payment of the total fee whether they complete the course or not. In the event of Student Loans Company not releasing the full amount of the award (or recalling amounts previously paid), the student will be required to pay the remaining balance of the total fee.

In the exceptional circumstances of a student requiring to suspend their studies for a semester, course fees for the relevant semester may only be suspended by following the HE Leave of Absence Process, detailed in the HE Student handbook, and approval received from the Financial Controller.

Part Time Students

Part time students can apply for assistance in the form of a means tested tuition fee grant, a course grant, and/or a non-means tested tuition fee loan dependent upon household income and course intensity. Tuition fee grants and loans are paid directly to the College.

For details see Higher Education Financial Support SOP.

A student informing Customer Services of their intention to apply for a part-time fee grant or loan can avail of the following arrangement at enrolment:

- › Deposit of 25% of total fees payable by student; and
- › Direct debit mandate to be signed by student; and

(This arrangement is also available for students who, on request of the College, are transferred from a full time to a part time higher education course).

The award letter must be submitted to Customer Services as soon as it is received by the student. If the Award letter is not submitted to Customer Services prior to the first direct debit instalment the College will proceed with the direct debit as per section 2. If the application for funding is unsuccessful or does not meet the full course fee the student is liable for the outstanding fees. In all instances, the College will refund to the student any overpayments that have been made to their account.

