Fees Policy 2026/27

Policy Number:
084-2025

Academic Year:
2026/27

Target Audience:
All Staff

Summary of Contents
Fees Policy

Fees Schedule:	Appendix A
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Enquiries
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Related Documents:
SERC College Development Plan
SERC Admissions Policy
SERC Student Financial Support SOP
DfE Partnership Agreement
DfE Circulars FE 04/24, FE 05/22, FE 10/22
The Education (Student Fees and Support) (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

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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 academic year beginning 1 August and ending on 31 July.

3.0 Definitions

In this policy the following definitions apply:

Home Student	A home student is one complying with the residency criteria laid down by the Department for the Economy as per Circular FE 04/24 "*Further Education Residency Funding Requirements*" (Available: FE Circular 04/24 - Further Education Residency Funding requirements | Department for the Economy) : - 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 04/24. - Persons who are settled in the UK and meet the requirements of FE 04/24. - Republic of Ireland (ROI) nationals resident in the UK, Islands, or Ireland for three years preceding the first day of the first academic year of the course, and undertaking a designated course in Northern Ireland are eligible for home fee status on the same basis as UK nationals. Additionally, ROI nationals are eligible for maintenance support in Northern Ireland if they have lived in the UK and Islands for three years preceding the first day of the first academic year of the course. - 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 04/24) - Frontier Workers - subject to the requirements and definitions set out in FE Circular 04/24 (paragraph 5). - Refugees who have been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands since recognition of the refugee status, including the spouse/civil partner of a refugee who has been so from the date on which the refugee made an application for asylum and has been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands since being given leave to enter or remain in the UK. The child of either of the above (i.e. refugee or spouse/civil partner of a refugee) who has been so since the date of application for asylum, who was under 18 when the application for asylum was made and has been

	ordinarily resident in the UK/Channel Islands/Isle of Man since being given leave to enter or remain in the UK. - Individuals set out in paragraphs 7 and 8 of the FE Circular 04/24
International Student	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 04/24 "*Further Education Residency and Funding Requirements*".
Accredited Course	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.

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 2026/27 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 Deputy Chief Executive.

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 one bursary in relation to its 2026/27 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.

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 Head of Finance.

7.0 Refunds

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.

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.

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).

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 It is the responsibility of the Deputy Chief Executive to ensure that this policy is implemented, adhered to and reviewed.

10.0 Communication Plan

10.1 This Policy will be communicated to staff via the Learning Engine on the Intranet and made available to any customer upon request.

11.0 Review

11.1 This Policy will be reviewed annually, or when the need for change has been identified.

APPENDIX A – FEES SCHEDULE 2026/27

Please note that fees quoted are for entrants in 2026/27 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)	£3,150 *(Full Fee including Tuition Fee & Exam/Registration)*
Higher Education	Foundation Degree in Early Childhood Studies	£TBC *(Full fee including Tuition Fee & Exam/Registration)*
Further Education	Further Education Course (including Applied A Levels)	Nil
Further Education	Non-Applied A Levels per subject (if aged 19 or over on 1 July 2026)	£450

PART TIME COURSES (HOME STUDENTS)

Part Time Courses		Tuition Fee
Higher Education	All courses	£3.65 per hour
Further Education	Accredited Further Education Courses	Minimum of £2.85 per hour

INTERNATIONAL FEES

International Students – Higher Education		Fee
Full Time	Full Fee (including tuition, exam and registration)	£6,750
Full Time	Administration Fee	£1,500
Part Time	All courses (excluding ESOL) [including administration fee]	£17.50/hour

International Students – Further Education		Fee
Full Time	Full Fee (including tuition, exam and registration)	£4,650
Full Time	Administration Fee	£1,500
Part Time	All courses (excluding ESOL) [including administration fee]	£12.50/hour
Part Time	ESOL (including Administration Fee)	£7.40/hour

NON-ACCREDITED COURSES

	Fee
Non-Accredited courses*	Minimum of £4.00 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)

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
Enhanced AccessNI Check (Criminal Record Check) [1]*	At Cost
HE Students Resubmission of Assignment Work	£55
BTEC Higher National Annual Student Fee	At Cost
Failed Direct Debit Payments (per failed DD)	£25
OTHER INFORMATION	
Students studying Access courses may be required to complete GCSE English, GCSE Mathematics and GCSE Biology. Where this is required the following shall apply: Full Time Access Students: Exam Fees chargeable Part Time Access Students: Tuition and Exam Fees chargeable Other Full Time Students who enrol on Part Time GCSE Mathematics and GCSE English: Exam Fees chargeable	

*Additional costs that a student may incur on a programme of study are publicly available on the College website (www.serc.ac.uk) within each course descriptor and labelled as "Additional Costs".

[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 three 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, ii. the payment of part time tuition fees by The Prince's Trust, iii. the payment of courses arranged by Social Work Teams on behalf of students.

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 2026 and in receipt of (or dependent on spouse / partner / parent / guardian in receipt of) OR Aged 19 or over on 1st July 2026 and in receipt of (or dependent on spouse / partner in receipt of)	The following evidence should confirm current entitlements *(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):*	50%
1. Guaranteed Pension Credit	Social Security Agency letter	
2. Rate Relief or Rate Rebate	Award Letter from NIHE/Land and Property Services	
3. Working Tax Credit (with an annual taxable income below the qualifying threshold as stated by HMRC)	HM Revenue & Customs Award Notice: Form TC602	
4. Income Related Employment and Support Allowance	Current Social Security Agency letter	
5. Income Support	Current Social Security Agency letter	
6. Universal Credit where total income is confirmed as below the NHS Exemption Certificate qualifying threshold)	Relevant UC Documentation	
7. Income based Jobseekers Allowance	Current Social Security Agency letter	

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 not available to students studying through a UKVI Study Visa or students studying on a Skilled Worker Visa.

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 (excluding UKVI Study Visa students	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 3 January 2027	25% of the full annual tuition fee
From 4 January 2027 until 4 April 2027	50% of the full annual tuition fee
From 5 April 2027	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 (where courses last the full academic year), six equal instalment payments will then be collected as follows:

Instalment Date*
2 November 2026
1 December 2026
1 February 2027
1 March 2027
5 April 2027
4 May 2027

**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 September short-course enrolments, the deposit applies to further education and part-time HE courses, two equal instalment payments will then be collected as follows:

Instalment Date*
2 November 2026
1 December 2026

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 2027
5 April 2027
4 May 2027

In addition there may be individual direct plans for courses to ensure course fees are paid in full prior to end of course.

Please note:

- **Default in any payment will result in a £25 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 . 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 <u>who have received their award letter from Student Finance NI</u> 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 <u>who have not received their award letter from Student Finance NI</u> 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).

<u>Full Time Students</u>

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 (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 submit a 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 the student 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 Head of Finance.

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.

At time of enrolment:

c. 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.

d. Students who have not received their award letter from Student Finance NI must submit a 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 the student 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.

Appendix D: Document Change History

Version	Date	Change Detail
1.0	October 2025	New Policy
1.1	June 2026	Page 8 "Other Information" added: "Other Full Time Students who enroll on Part Time GCSE Mathematics and GCSE English Also added "Exam Fees chargeable" Page 12 – "Instalment Date" – 12 April updated to 5th April
1.2	24 June 2026	Page 12 "Withdrawal" dates updated to: From 4 January 2027 until 4 April 2027 From 5 April 2027 Page 13 – April instalment date updated from 12 April to 5 April 2027