

Tuition Fee Policy 2021/22

Halesowen College's strategic plan includes the following statement as the College's stated purpose; "to enable students, staff, the economy and the local community to learn, succeed and flourish." The headline values and behaviours are; work together, respect everyone, stay safe and aim high. Tuition fees are an integral part of the funding that Halesowen College receives for the education and training it provides.

Our policy statement is that tuition fee income is derived fairly, communicated clearly and collected promptly so the College is to be able to maintain and develop its educational and training provision in pursuance of the strategic objectives.

The Instrument and Articles state that the Corporation shall set the policy by which the tuition and other fees payable to the College are determined, subject to any terms and conditions attached to grants, loans or other payments paid or made by the Funding Agencies or other accountable bodies such as the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA).

With respect to pricing, including tuition fees, the objectives of the policy are:

- to provide a rationale for the setting of tuition fees that is objective and transparent.
- to ensure that tuition fees are set in accordance with all legislative and regulatory requirements of the funding agencies and any other relevant organisation such as the WMCA and that all legal requirements including consumer credit law and distance selling regulations are observed.
- that tuition fees are set, as far as possible, with full consideration of the College's competitive circumstances and hence achieving the overarching financial objective of maintaining financial strength, viability and standards of performance.
- to ensure that fee concessions are targeted at appropriate groups in the Community and in accordance with the funding rules.
- to achieve value for money for students.
- To incorporate any local flexibilities around fees issued by the WMCA to develop skills in priority sectors.
- to ensure that students are treated fairly as consumers and that key terms, including the refund policy, are prominent and transparent at the point of contract.

The associated procedures provide a rationale of the College's pricing methodology along with information on the applicable regulations, legislation and government/funding agency guidelines which the College takes into account when establishing prices for its courses.

Prices are reviewed at least annually, at which time they may be updated and reissued. Annual increases are limited by the maximum value allowable for charges in the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) matrix. Within this parameter the annual uplift will be in accordance with CPI and modified to reflect market demand.

The policy parameters match these external conditions expected of the College and they are underpinned by detailed guidelines on the application of tuition fees and fee remissions.

Tuition Fee Procedures 2020/21

West Midlands Combined Authority

Adult Education Budget (AEB) is devolved to the combined authority (for all learners living in the Mayoral area). Whilst they have no jurisdiction to change the ESFA funding rules, they may continue to introduce local flexibilities to remove financial barriers to study and increase skills in priority areas. The College will incorporate all such concessions into the policy/tariff. The College will apply the relevant ESFA/WMCA funding rules to students based on their post code.

Funded Courses; classroom based learning

No tuition fee will be charged to eligible students on study programmes aged 16-18 (ie aged 16, 17 or 18 on 31 August 2020). This applies to all eligible students in this cohort studying a learning programme which is wholly funded by the agency. Students who commenced a programme of study aged 16-18 and are continuing and, learners aged 19-25 in receipt of an EHCP, are categorised as 16-18 for funding purposes and are funded by the ESFA.

Adult students eligible for funding from the agency but not entitled to a full remission, as defined in the Funding Rules 2021/22, will pay a fee (unless a College concession is applied). The fee for agency funded courses is derived from the ESFA learning aims matrix and may be adjusted to reflect differing input hours and/or to provide a comparable fee base. BTEC diploma courses and A levels will usually be costed at programme weighting factor 1.0. Adult students may be co-funded and hence are required to pay a 50% contribution (unless a College concession is applied). Students eligible for full funding and remission of fees are fully funded. Students may be unfunded and hence pay for the total cost of their learning either through a cash payment to the College or a student loan. It must be noted that whilst adults aged 19-23 may have academic entitlement to a first full level 2 and/or level 3 course the chosen course may not be funded for adult learners and as such the full fee is payable/a learning loan drawn down (level 3 courses only). The WMCA has extended this provision to those 24+ if they are in receipt of a low wage or are unemployed. Note no College concessions will be applied for level 3 courses.

Students who are eligible for funding from the agency must not enrol on any provision which they have already achieved. As such they may only proceed with a course of the same level and in the same subject sector area on an economic/full cost basis.

Adult students aged 19+ and studying at level 3 or 4 may not be eligible for agency funding and the fee charged will represent the full costs of provision and the recommended input hours as specified by the learning aims database (LARS) and in accordance with the learning aims funding matrix. Students aged 19+ studying at level 3 or 4 may be able to draw down a student loan via Student Finance England.

Students may pay for tuition on an instalment basis and set up a direct debit with the College to clear the debt before the course is due to finish.

Note that if a student withdraws, the full costs of tuition remains payable as outlined in their signed credit agreement (refer to Refund Policy).

For employer sponsored learning, the contribution from the employer will be collected in accordance with ESFA guidelines.

All students/employers should be informed of the College's fee policy and for all 19+ students a fee declaration must be signed. In accordance with statutory requirements the price must be known at the point a contract is made. The advice and guidance must include details of all/any fees payable, the payment schedule and terms and conditions.

Based on the current directives of the funding agencies the College will make tuition fee remissions for funded courses to eligible students in accordance with the Funding Rules 2021/22 and any other contractual requirements. The Principal has delegated responsibility for authorising the Tuition Fee and Fee Remission Guidelines to comply with these requirements.

The College will adhere to the Funding Agency rules for funding and associated evidence requirements regarding student loans, entitlement and eligibility. Any fee adjustments will be coterminous with College strategic priorities and met within existing budgets. Similarly, discounts offered and authorised by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services will be met within approved budgets.

Course fees will be derived based on number of hours/inputs and with reference to a proportion of the ESFA learning aims matrix.

This matrix reflects the qualification and not per annum. For a co-funded learner, the fee would be 50% of the unweighted tariff plus registration/exam fees subject to adjustment.

Access to HE is a course funded by the ESFA and charged at the maximum unweighted fee in the ESFA matrix. 19+ learning loans will be available for eligible students. The College will promote to applicants for Access to HE that their advanced learning loan for the Access course will be written off should they complete a degree programme.

The National Skills Fund Level 3 Adult Offer and Covid-19 Response

The ESFA and WMCA have set and are likely to set new funding rules in response to Covid-19 recovery and these may be applied at short notice and on a temporary basis. The College will review all such rules and pro-actively act to implement them alongside other rules where applicable. It is possible that this will lead to greater deviations between the WMCA and ESFA AEB funding rules. Clear communication of which courses, who will be funded and in what circumstances will be essential. In addition, evidence requirement may also vary in order to meet the eligibility criteria.

The ESFA National Skills Fund Level 3 Adult Offer largely replicates what the WMCA was already doing as they extended the First Full L3 Offer to those over 24 in certain circumstances. However, the course list is different from the First Full Level 3 entitlement list. The ESFA have stated that "Funding for the level 3 adult offer will be routed via Mayoral Combined Authorities and the Greater London Authority for residents in those areas of England".

Higher Education

The course is based on a per annum basis no the qualification so as to be consistent with student loan rules and the HE sector as a whole. HNC/D Qualification have a simple fee to provide consistency across the different subject areas and to be competitive with local providers.

Qualification	Full time		Part time	
	Fee	Years	Fee	Years
HNC	£4,880	1	£2,440 per year	2
HND*	£4,880	1	£2,440 per year	2

**Requires completion of the HNC first*

The College adheres to the Office for Students guidance for HE fees.

For Higher Education courses the College may deliver programmes in partnership with local universities. In such cases the tuition fee is determined by the host university to whom the student pays the fees direct. Again, students can approach Student Loans Company for a loan to fund their learning.

Apprenticeships

No course fee is chargeable to the learner irrespective of age. The College will negotiate a fee with all employers and issue a contract. This fee should be based on the published bands with recognition for prior learning as required.

For SMEs (non-levy paying employers) the College will charge a fee of 5% of the negotiated fee for apprenticeship training as per the funding rules. This may be waived for companies who meet the small company definition and the apprentice is aged 16-18 or 19-24 with an EHCP or is meets the looked after child criteria. Evidence shall be collected and retained as per the funding rules.

Levy paying employers will have payments deducted from their levy by the ESFA and passed to the College. Where an employer is required to make a contribution directly to the college these payments will be recorded in the ILR (Individual Learner Record) in order to trigger the appropriate government funding. Should the employer exhaust the levy pot then any additional training will be charged at the non-levy rate of the banding and the residual claimed from the agency.

Agency incentives for example for 16-18 apprenticeships will not be netted off the negotiated fee but paid across to the employer at the appropriate juncture.

It is now possible to transfer unspent levy to a SME and in such circumstances the full cost of training is covered by the transferred levy pot. Again, the WMCA has local flexibilities to remove bureaucratic barriers to transfer and the transfer can be actioned through this route for qualifying standards.

A learner cannot be engaged in two modes of funded learning simultaneously. As such should an apprentice wish to engage with an evening class this can only be on an economic/full cost basis. This applies to HE also.

Courses Not Funded by ESFA

The fee for non-agency funded courses will be derived based on the framework in the guidance for economic courses document.

Review

Reviewed/Approved	By	Date
Updated by	Jacquie Carman	08/03/2021
Consider at	CLT	15/03/2021
Approved at	F&GP	17/03/2021
	Corporation	31/03/2021