



Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board

Course Fee Policy

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Purpose of Policy

This document outlines Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board's (WWETB) policy regarding the setting of appropriate course fees and the collection of same for Further Education and Training Programmes and Night Course Provision. WWETB is committed to a fair and equitable approach to fee administration.

Scope

Areas covered by this policy include

- Setting of fees
- Collection of fees
- Refund of fees
- Alleviating fees for any student in difficulty
- Guidance on the management of debts arising from uncollected fees

Definitions

Word or Phrase	Meaning for the purpose of this policy
Course Fee	<p>The categories of fees covered under this policy are</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses2. Night Classes3. Outdoor Education and Training Centre courses <p>The term course fee does not relate to voluntary contributions collected by second level colleges.</p>

Setting of Fees - General

- 1.1** Fees set must be cognisant of the financial pressures experienced by learners and set at a level which will cover the costs associated with the course on a break-even basis.
- 1.2** Fee proposals should be submitted by the programme leader to the Chief Executive. Fees should be formally approved by the Senior Management Team or a delegated officer in advance of advertisement of the course.
- 1.3** Any fee reductions or exemptions for learners who are unwaged, in receipt of Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) payments or for other reasons should be specifically stated in the fee proposal.
- 1.4** Approved fees should be published and clearly advertised e.g. on prospectus documents, websites, promotional materials etc... Each element of the fee should be separately disclosed and the purpose of the fee collected should be stated.

Setting of Fees – PLC Courses

- 2.1** Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) course fees are to be guided by Circulars 13/2011 & 36/1995.
- 2.2** Fees are paid by EU/EEA nationals in relation to the following as set out in Department of Education circular 36/95.
 1. PLC Programme Participant Contribution (Government Levy)
 2. Student Services / Materials Charges
 3. Examination Fees

There are no tuition fees payable for PLC courses by EU/EEA nationals.

- 2.3** Where Student Services / Materials Charges or Examination Fees are levied by providers in respect of PLC courses, it must be made clear to participants that any exemptions apply only to the PLC Programme Participant Contribution.
- 2.4** Non EU/EEA nationals who do not meet exemption requirements are required to pay an additional tuition fee, determined by the Department of Education and Skills, known as the 'economic fee'. This fee is set at €3,653 per annum.
- 2.5** PLC Programme Participant Contribution (Government Levy)

Budget 2011 provided for the introduction of an annual PLC programme participant contribution of €200. Course providers must collect the participant contribution from all eligible participants.

Eligible participants on PLC courses of more than one year's duration must pay the contribution for each year of that course.

The following categories of participant are exempt from paying the contribution:

- Full medical card holders in their own right and their dependent children;
- Those who are eligible under the student grant scheme;
- Those in receipt of the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) or Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) allowances.

Providers must seek and retain evidence that a participant is exempt from paying the contribution.

2.6 Student Services / Materials Charges

The student services charge relates to the cost of covering services, materials and supports provided to the student or of benefit to the student. Examples of costs covered by this charge include but are not limited to

- Photocopying
- Books
- Course Materials
- Communications, Administrative & Technical Support

The student services charge will vary between courses and colleges and may be sought in one instalment or more than one instalment.

2.7 Examination Fees

Examination fees are set by awarding bodies (e.g. QQI) on an annual basis.

In some instances, the fee includes a requirement to register with the awarding board at the commencement of a course. In such cases, it may not be possible to refund any fees paid, even if the student does not complete the course for certification.

2.7 Department of Education circular 36/95 also allows for the payment, by prospective participants, of a non-refundable deposit to reserve a place on an approved PLC course.

2.8 Additional charges may apply on a course by course basis as follows:

- Specialist class materials charge, including any specific excursion charges relating to that course
- Uniforms, clothing, other equipment and books which become the property of the student.

Setting of Fees – Night Classes

3.1 The delivery of night classes in second level colleges is to be guided by Circular 46/2000.

3.2 The fees should be set at a level to cover all costs other than post of responsibility allowances. These would include costs of tuition, secretarial and caretaking services, lighting, heating, equipment, advertising, etc.

3.3 Fees should be pitched at a level which equals at least 130% of the tuition cost.

Collection of Fees

4.1 In line with WWETB policy to minimise the amount of cash transactions, fees, should be collected using the online payment facilities available. Where online payments are not possible, payments should be accepted via cheque, bank draft or postal order (made payable to WWETB) or debit/credit card. The taking of cash should be restricted and only done in accordance with the WWETB treasury policy.

4.2 All fees must be paid in full by a date to be confirmed on a year by year basis.

- 4.3** In the case of payments of fees by the third party organisations, the organisation must pay the fees for the applicant before s/he can be registered on the course. Any subsequent refund will be repaid to the third party organisation.
- 4.4** It is the responsibility of the applicant/student to
- Pay all fees due within the specified timeframe
 - Ensure they keep all receipts and documentation as evidence of payment
 - Engage with the course provider immediately if they are experience difficulties in relation to paying fees.

Refund of Fees

- 5.1** Applications for refund of fees in each case must be approved by the designated course leader (e.g. Principal, Centre Manager, Co-ordinator etc...).
- 5.2** The processing of refunds must be co-ordinated with the WWETB Finance Department and in accordance with the WWETB treasury policy.
- 5.3** In most circumstances, refunds will not be made to a student who has commenced on a course.
- 5.4** The review of refund applications should reference the date of last attendance in addition to the date the refund was requested.
- 5.5** An applicant wishing to request any refund must complete a student refund request form, must sign it and return it to their programme coordinator with proof of fee payment.
- 5.6** A clear record of each refund decision must be held including
- The reason for the refund application
 - The amount of the refund
 - Sign-off authorising the refund decision
- 5.7** An applicant wishing to request any refund must complete a student refund request form, must sign it and return it to their programme coordinator with proof of fee payment.
- 5.8** Example of a full refund that may be approved:
A student informs the course provider before the commencement of classes that s/he is not going to take up the place assigned to them.
- 5.9** Examples of a partial refund that may be approved:
- a) A student accepts an offer of a place on a PLC course and having commenced, informs the college before 1st October that s/he is not proceeding with their participation on the course.
 - b) A student pays the PLC Programme Participant Contribution (Government Levy) but provides evidence of an exemption prior to 1st October. In this case the PLC Programme Participant Contribution may be refunded.

5.10 Guidance in relation to specific fees:

a) If examination fees have been paid by the student but those fees have not yet been remitted to the external examination body, those fees may be refunded less any applicable cancellation fee charged by the external examination body.

b) If uniforms, kits, books etc... have been given to the student, the fee in respect of these costs should not be refunded.

c) With respect of PLC courses, the PLC Programme Participant Contribution (Government Levy) cannot be refunded if a student leaves a course after 30th September.

Alleviating Fees for any Student in Difficulty

6.1 WWETB recognises that some students attending courses may face financial difficulties that could impact on their participation and ability to complete the course they have enrolled on. While the level of fees associated with a course are calculated to be at a level which minimises any possible barrier to participation, and are set to reflect the costs associated with that course, it is recognised that even these minimal charges may create difficulties for some students.

6.2 In order to minimise the impact that such fees may have the following mechanisms may apply

1. Structured Payments
2. Fee Waiver

6.3 Structured Payments

For many students experiencing financial difficulties, the application of a structured part-payment plan may provide students the flexibility required to ensure that they can participate or continue to participate on the course.

Applying a structured payment plan is decided by the approver who is the course co-ordinator, principal or centre manager. It should meet the following criteria:

1. The approver must satisfy themselves that the case presented by the student is genuine and that there is a realistic expectation and commitment that the payment will be met.
2. There should be a written agreement in place setting out the amount to be paid, the instalments required and the expected timeframe. This should be signed by both the approver and the student.
3. The payment should be collected over the minimum possible period and not extend beyond the initial weeks or months of the course.
4. A log of all payments made must be kept by the approver.
5. Students who fail to adhere to the terms of the agreement will be prevented from receiving any certification outcomes until all obligations are met.
6. Any materials, equipment etc... that is provided to a student entering into a part payment agreement remains the property of WWETB until the agreement is met in full.
7. In the event that the student fails to complete the course, the approver makes every effort to recoup the monies owed/outstanding in accordance with the WWETB treasury policy.

6.4 Fee Waiver

Students in certain defined categories are entitled to waivers for the PLC Government Levy and QQI certification costs. Only in exceptional circumstances should an agreement be made to waive any part of the fee associated with a course.

No fees associated with equipment, kits, uniforms etc... which become the personal property of the learner on completion of the course (or on receipt of payment) may be waived.

Applying a fee waiver is decided by the approver who is the course co-ordinator, principal or centre manager. It should meet the following criteria:

1. The approver must satisfy themselves that the case presented by the student is genuine and that there is a realistic expectation that the student may fail to complete the course if a waiver is not provided.
2. There should be a written agreement in place setting out the reasons for approving the fee waiver, and the amount and description of the fees being waived. This should be signed by both the approver and the student.
3. A log/register of all waiver agreements must be kept by the approver.

Guidance on the Management of Debts Arising from Uncollected Fees

- 7.1 Any unpaid course fees are considered to be a debt of the student payable to WWETB.
- 7.2 Where a student has not paid his/her fees in full and has not contacted the course provider regarding any difficulties they are experiencing with the payment of fees the following remedies are available
 - Removal of college identity card until fees are paid in full or an agreed arrangement is put in place to provide for payment
 - Refusal to sign attendance forms (BTEA, Third party or student card request forms etc...)
- 7.3 The course provider is required to keep an up to date record of fees paid and monies owed and to review this on a regular basis.
- 7.4 Each course provider is advised to review the fee record monthly and seek payment of outstanding fees. At commencement of the course, the course provider should communicate with all students who have fees outstanding and who have not engaged to agree alleviation measures if they are experiencing difficulties.
- 7.5 A record of all communications should be kept as well as a record of any actions taken on foot of responses/non-responses.
- 7.6 Prior to any course assessment, any students with outstanding fees must be written to, advising them of the amount outstanding
- 7.7 If at the end of the course there are debts that are deemed irrecoverable, any request for write-off should be recorded and approved in accordance with WWETB's Financial Authority and Approval Levels Tables.

Review & Update

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed and updated every 2 years or more frequently if necessary to ensure any changes to WWETB's organisation structure and business practices are properly reflected in the policy.