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1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

This policy sets out the methodology and approach for all course fees in the academic year 2019/20, i.e. 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2020, as a minimum but may continue in operation thereafter if no subsequent policy is presented. The policy has been prepared following careful reference to the recommendations, guidance and rules of the appropriate funding bodies at the time of the review. However, the Group reserves the right to deviate from this policy if the funding guidance and rules change in year, or for future years and there is no replacement policy. Given the diverse nature of the provision undertaken across the Group, occasional deviation from this policy may be necessary, this should only take place on the express authority of the Principal & CEO or Executive Director of Finance.

At the time of review the funding bodies referred to are the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the Office for Students (previously known as Higher Education Funding Council for England [HEFCE]).

All staff should adhere to the fees policy and direct learners to it when there is a query.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Policy from the funding bodies makes it clear that the Colleges should apply a tuition fee to all funded programmes at a rate determined by their respective funding methodologies. In particular circumstances the ESFA pay this fee element on behalf of the learner, which is known as fee remission. In a prescribed set of circumstances for adult courses the ESFA contribute towards the costs of the course fee, with the expectation that the learner, or someone on their behalf, also pay a contribution, this is known as co-funded. The College needs to be clear that the fees are required in order to study at the Colleges and that individuals and employers are aware.

The fee structure at the College is complex, as it links to rules around available funding.

It is assumed that all learners will provide their own general materials required for the course i.e. stationery.

Learners are broadly split into the following categories:

- Learners under the age of 16 (as at 31 August 2019) will be required to pay the full fee for the course(s) of study unless related to, a specific contract or an agreement with the local authority school/agency.
- Young people (aged between 16 and 18 on 31 August 2019) on study programme or traineeship provision do not pay course fees, and it is anticipated that fees are only charged for resits and / or additional residential / trips linked to their course. Learners may apply for financial assistance in the form of a College bursary.
- Adult learners (19 years or over on 31 August 2019) are eligible to pay fees unless covered in full or part by the fee remission categories detailed in this policy. Learners may apply for financial assistance from Discretionary Learner Support funding.
- Apprenticeships – funding is dependent on the age of the apprentice at the start of the apprenticeship and the number of employees and / or payroll costs of the employer.

- Overseas learners who do not meet the criteria to enable the Group to secure funding will pay a fee.

3. FEE STRUCTURE

3.1. All fees

Fees are defined within the applicable course guides and online. Course fees will normally include registration and examination charges except where otherwise specified. Marketing information will clearly show the course fee and any additional charges that learners will have to pay. For any examination resits please see section 6.

3.2. Under 16 years of age

Course fees for learners under the age of 16 are determined by the Colleges to cover all costs incurred in the planned delivery with a contribution to cover support and administration costs.

3.3. 16-18 year olds

Learners aged between 16 and 18 years of age on 31 August 2019, on a study programme or traineeship provision will not pay course fees. The only fees due will be any resits and / or additional residential / trips linked to their course.

3.4. Adults

Fees for Adults (19+ years of age) are split into those covered by ESFA FE funding guidance, HE courses and non-funded/full cost provision.

- Adult ESFA FE funded provision covers those learners and courses for traineeships, Adult Education Budget (AEB) and Advanced Learners Loans (ALL). Traineeships are applicable up to the age of 24 and are fully funded. AEB provision can be subject to Government funding depending on the type of provision. ALL are available to eligible learners aged 19 and above studying at Level 3 and above, please see <https://www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan> for more detail.
- HE learners are eligible to pay fees and no fee exemption exists. All HE fees will be charged at an annual rate, agreed by the RNN Board, which will remain stable for the duration of their course. Each payment is for a single academic year only, for 2019/20 the fees are £6,900 full-time and no more than £4,400 for part-time. HE fees may be covered via a student loan from Student Finance England and learners should look into this in more detail at <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance>.
- None funded / full cost provision is charged in full with no fee remission. Full cost provision can be tailored to meet requirements and quotes are available on request, please ask business development team for more details.

3.5. Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship funding is categorised as either 16-18 year olds or Adults, dependent on the age of the apprentice at the start of the apprenticeship. Funding / fees depends on the number of employees and / or payroll costs of the employer.

Funding is either non-levy, which is a combination of Government funding and employer contributions, or levy funded which is directly funded from employer levy pot.

Apprenticeship fees are charged at the maximum bands subject to price negotiation for specific circumstances.

3.6. Overseas learners

Fees for Overseas learners will be advised on application to the course.

4. FEE REMISSION

Fee remission is defined as the waiver of full or part fees. Fee remission can only be given to learners where both they, and the course, qualify for public funding. There is no fee remission for HE courses.

Fee remission will only be given where individuals can provide the appropriate evidence of their situation / status. Where this is not supplied, the relevant course fee will apply.

To qualify for fee remission learners must be a UK citizen or resident in the European Economic Area (EEA) for at least the previous three years. If this is not the case please ask for more details.

The following learners will be eligible for fee remission:

- 16-18 year old learners
- 19-23 year old learners studying their first Level 1 qualification
- 19-23 year old learners studying their first full Level 2 qualification
- 19-23 year old learners studying their first full Level 3 qualification
- 19-23 year old learners studying a traineeship
- Those people who are on Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) (including the partner where the claim is joint), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) in the Work Related Activity Group and are undertaking a course up to and including level 2.
- Those who are unemployed but on a recognised means tested benefit such as Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Working Families Tax Credit and Universal Credit (UC) are entitled to full fee remission provided they are actively seeking employment, sign a declaration to that effect and are undertaking a course up to and including level 2.
- ESOL will be fully funded for those who are on JSA or ESA in the Work Related Activity Group. This remission only applies to JSA and ESA claimants and not to those in the categories mentioned above.
- Learners that are eligible for co-funding and earn less than £16,009.50 annual gross salary.
- Community learning courses, covered by section 5.
- Asylum seekers are eligible to receive funding if any of the following apply:
 - They have lived in the UK for six months or longer while their claims is being considered by the Home Office, and no decision on their claim has been made,
 - They are in the care of the local authority and are receiving local authority support under section 23C or section 23CA of the Childrens Act 1989 or section 21 of the National Assistance Act 1948.
 - They have appealed against a decision made by the UK Government against

granting refugee status and no decision has been made within six months of lodging the appeal.

- They are granted support for themselves under section 4 of the immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

5. NON-FORMULA COMMUNITY LEARNING

5.1. Background

The purpose of Community Learning is to develop the skills, confidence, motivation and resilience of adults of different ages and backgrounds in order to:

- Progress towards formal learning or employment and / or
- Improve their health and well-being, including mental health and / or
- Develop stronger communities

Non-formula Community Learning forms part of the Adult ESFA funded provision through AEB.

5.2 Pound Plus & Local Fee Remission

The 'Pound' represents the public pound, the 'Plus' is everything else that we can generate in addition to the non-formula community learning funding allocation, such as fee income, funding from other sources, resources in kind and other sources of revenue / sponsorship / volunteering.

Contributions / resources in kind include:

- Accommodation such as schools / children's centres
- Equipment such as computers / ovens / materials
- Staffing such as volunteers / support staff

FEE REMISSION: learners in receipt of the following benefits will be eligible for fee remission in relation to Community learning fees:

- Income based Job Seekers Allowance (not contribution based)
- Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support (not Single Person's Discount)
- Employment Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Incapacity Benefit
- Working Tax Credit
- Employment & Support Allowance (ESA)
- Universal Credit (UC)
- Unwaged Dependents of those in receipt of the above benefits.
- Identified elements of Universal Credit

All benefits claimants will be required to provide evidence of their benefit status to qualify for fee remission.

DISCRETIONARY FEE REMISSION: there are some categories of learners, for example but not limited to travellers, the homeless and hostel dwellers who, whilst not necessarily in receipt of benefits, are clearly unable to contribute to the cost of their learning. In such instances,

we may agree discretionary fee remission to groups of learners or individual learners without the prior consent of the ESFA. Records of all such discretionary remissions will be retained.

6. EXAMS & RESITS

Registration and exams fees are usually included within the overall course fee however, these are normally identifiable from the total fee.

Where learners are charged for any re-sits the fee will be charged direct to the learner and no final exam booking will be made until the fee has been paid.

6.1 Test/exam excluding functional skills & HE

Where a learner is required or wishes to re-sit an exam the following will apply:

- Full time learners and part time learners aged 16-18 (including Apprenticeships) and additional qualifications studied alongside a full time programme:
 - Where learners have attended and failed an external test/exam they may have one re-sit entry at no charge, providing the usual test/exam entry criteria are satisfied. After this the Group may charge learners for any costs incurred from awarding bodies, or towards the administrative costs of staff booking the exams.
 - Where learners wish to re-sit to improve their grade they may do so but will be required to pay the re-sit entry fee in full.
- Part time learner aged 19 & over - learners may be charged for all re-sits, regardless of whether or not they were required to pay for the first entry.
- Where learners have failed to attend an exam without good reason, they will be required to pay the re-sit entry fee in full.

6.2 Functional Skills Re-Sit Tests/exams

Learners should only be entered if they are predicted to pass and realistically expected to complete their portfolio. Learners will be allowed 2 re-sits free of charge, at each Functional Skills Test which they fail. Learners may be allowed a subsequent attempt, free of charge, if approved by the English and Maths Curriculum Manager.

6.3 HE exams

All HE re-sits / retakes involving re-doing the full year and will be charged to the learner as usual HE fees.

6.4 November re-sits for GCSE English and/or Maths

Candidates who sat the same GCSE in the previous Summer (May / June) series and obtained a Grade 3 will NOT be expected to pay re-sit fees.

6.5 Apprenticeship End Point Assessments (EPAs) resits

Any EPAs will be negotiated on an individual basis based on the End Point Assessment Organisation's (EPAOs) policies and practices.

7. PAYMENT

Fees will be due for one year of study at any one time. For courses of more than one year fees will be due at the start of each year.

Fees are due immediately upon enrolment unless agreed otherwise. The Colleges reserve the right to specify that payment of fees can only be by a certain method where enrolment is at external venues to protect the safety of staff.

Fees may be paid in full or partly by:

- Fee remission.
- In Full via credit card / debit card, cash or cheque made payable to “RNN Group”.
- Employer invoice – subject to the proof of the employer’s commitment to fund all years of the course being enrolled to. This could be a letter, the letter must be on company letterhead and signed by an authorised individual.
- Loans – Advanced Learning Loan (ALL) for learners aged 19 years or over studying at level 3 or above, or Higher Education (HE) loan for HE courses. Learners required to secure an ALL or HE loan may enrol prior to receiving confirmation from the Student Finance England on production of evidence that a loan application has been completed. Learners are required to produce evidence, of a loan, within 60 days of the commencement of their course. Failure to do so will result in the learner being invoiced for the full cost of the course fees. ALLs and HE loans are non-secured loans repayable when a learner’s future earnings reach the repayment level. Repayment is made via employers through payroll deductions.
- Instalments - only available for courses with fees over £100 and a minimum duration of 3 months. The maximum number of instalment payments is 8, with the first payment taken at enrolment and subsequent payments taken on a monthly basis. Full payment of fees must be made before the course ends.
- Approval for Discretionary Learner Support funding (DLSF) - learners aged 19 or over, on a further education course and facing financial hardship, can apply for assistance through Student Services for help from the Discretionary Learner Support funding.
- Other relevant bursary applicable at the time of enrolment - learners aged 19 or over, on a course and facing financial hardship, can apply for assistance through Student Services for help from the relevant bursary applicable to their course funding.

Adult bursary funding:

- Bursary funding is not applicable to all courses and subject to funding available at that time from funding bodies or other organisations.
- Any bursary funding is only available to support learners whilst they are on programme, which may mean withdrawing from a course leaves outstanding course fees to pay that are not covered by the relevant bursary.
- Some bursary funding is linked to loans and only applicable whilst any loan funds are being received by RNN Group on behalf of the learner.
- Bursary funding criteria depends on the funding body / organisation’s stipulations or allowed local variations.
- Bursary funding is not guaranteed to cover all fees. If approved DLSF is there to support 75% of fees only, and only in exceptional circumstances will 100% support be available.

8. REFUNDS / CREDITS

A refund relates to the repayment of sums paid by a student, or on behalf of a student, to the Colleges. A credit relates to an appropriate reduction in the amount of sums owed by the student, or in relation to the student.

Full refunds / credits will automatically be given / applied when a course is cancelled by RNN Group before the start date. Should this action prove necessary this will be actioned by the Group and no formal request or refund form is required.

Part refunds /credits will automatically be given / applied when a course is cancelled by RNN Group once it has commenced. Should this action prove necessary this will be actioned by the Group and no formal request or refund form is required from individual learners. In such an event the following learners will not be eligible for a refund / credit:

- Learners who have voluntarily left the course.
- Learners who have not attended due to a pre-notified absence / leave.
- Learners who have not attended for a period of four weeks prior to the decision to cancel the course.
- Learners who have already received a refund for the course.
- Learners where a refund request has already been denied.

Where a course is postponed the Group will work with learners to look at options for deferring payments already made to the rescheduled course.

Refunds / credits will be considered when apprenticeship provision has commenced but cannot continue in a timely manner due to circumstances beyond RNN Group's control, i.e. long term sickness of relevant staffing. This will be considered on an individual basis but may involve the deferring of payment until such time that provision can re-commence.

Refunds /credits will not be made for any personalised kits or materials which are being retained by the learner or any registration fees which have been paid to a third party by the Colleges on behalf of the learner.

Fees will not be refunded / credited where course cancellation is temporary or due to circumstances beyond the control of the Colleges, including but not exclusive to fire, flood or other force majeure, adverse weather conditions, failure of public utilities or transport systems/networks, restrictions imposed by the government, terrorist attack or threat of, epidemic or pandemic disease, temporary staff absences or changes including those due to industrial action.

Refund / credit of fees requested by a learner, once the course has already started, will only be approved in exceptional circumstances. All refund / credit requests, except these noted above, require the completion of a Refund of Fees form which will be assessed and approved or declined based on individual case basis. Forms can be obtained from Student Services and completed forms must be submitted to the Students Services team.

Refund / credit requests will be considered only where written / e-mailed application for a refund / credit is received within 30 days of the last date of attendance or of the start date of the course.

Where a refund request is in response to a course issue or problem the Compliments & Complaints Guidance document should be reviewed.

Where refunds / credits are approved for FE courses this will be based on the number of remaining months pro rata to the length of the course. This is the same approach applied by the Student Loan Company to ALLs taken by the learner reducing the loan liability through a credit rather than a refund.

Learners on HE courses who have a refund / credit approved will have final costs as follows based on their withdrawal date falling into a term:

- Term 1 - 25% charge
- Term 2 - 50% charge
- Term 3 - 100% charge

Depending on payment method this will result in a refund or reduced loan liability.

Learners paying by instalments who withdraw from their course before the expected end date and have a refund / credit approved, will be charged on a pro rata basis for the number of months attended. This will result in credit to their invoicing arrangements which may still leave a balance due remaining.

Student Finance England will automatically make adjustments to FE and HE loans based on change of circumstances actioned from refund requests.

Refunds will only ever be made via BACS / cheque and never by cash.

There will be no refunds for bespoke / full cost provision.

9. LINKED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

RNN policies and procedures

Single Equality Scheme

Compliments & Complaints Guidance document

External links

FE complaints are referred to the The Complaints Adjudicator, Education & Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry CV1 2WT
complaintsteam@sfa.bis.gov.uk

HE complaints are referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIAHE). <http://www.oiahe.org.uk/making-a-complaint-to-the-oia/how-to-make-a-complaint.aspx>

Consumer Credit Service disputes are made to the Financial Ombudsman. The investigation can take up to 8 weeks. Refer to the Director of Finance for further information.
<http://www.financialombudsman.org.uk/consumer/complaints.htm>

Impact assessment review date TBC.

Debt Control / Non-Payment of Fees

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all members of staff to ensure that all students who are on programme have the means and intention to pay for their course, if they are not subject to fee remission. This includes apprentices where the employer is responsible for a non-levy contribution or must have sufficient funds in their levy pot to cover relevant fees. A key part of this is timely liaison between departments including Academic staff, Work based learning staff, Finance, MIS and Student Support.

Enrolment staff must ensure that students are fully aware of the College's fees policy. This also applies to apprentices where it might be the responsibility of the business development staff / enrolment officer to ensure employers are aware of the College's fees policy. They must also ensure that the fee source is correctly recorded at the point of enrolment and all completed paperwork provided to MIS / Finance on a daily basis.

Processes

Finance will run the reports daily from the Management Information Centre and upon receipt of the correct paperwork, invoice processing will be complete within 2 working days. Where the student's employer is to pay the fees and a confirmation letter is attached, the invoice will be raised in advance of the course start date.

Where students have been rolled over on the MIS system and the employer is due to pay for their 2nd year, it is the responsibility of MIS staff to ensure that a confirmation letter is passed to Finance.

Direct debit mandates supporting the payment of fees for any learner will be passed to finance to enable timely collection.

The relevant reports should only show enrolments where fees are outstanding and should clearly show the fee source for each student. All reports should be in the format as requested by Finance and MIS will endeavour to resolve any issues within 2 working weeks.

On a weekly basis, Finance will provide MIS with details of any enrolments where the fee source is not known. MIS will respond to Finance within 5 working days advising of the correct fee source. Finance will then process in line with the above timeframes.

Loans

The student is responsible for their fees and Student Support will support the student with any loan applications. Student Support must also ensure that registration and attendance confirmations are done for all students on programme in line with SLC timescales (2 weeks for registrations and quarterly for attendance) to allow funds to be released to the College.

Where learners have not produced proof of a Loan within the 60 day period an invoice will be produced and issued. Failure to provide either loan documentation or payment of the invoice will result in being withdrawn from the course and prevented from sitting future examinations, or graduation in the case of HE loans.

Non-payment of Fees

On a fortnightly basis, Finance will circulate details of all unpaid fees, cancelled Direct Debits and students with outstanding loan paperwork to Curriculum Managers (CMs), MIS and Student Support.

It is the responsibility of CMs to follow up as necessary, liaising with other departments if required. If the student has withdrawn, this must be recorded by CMs/MIS in a timely fashion on pro-solution. CMs will inform Finance of the outcome for all students within 5 working days.

Where the above procedures do not result in the recovery of fees, Finance will inform the relevant department and the Colleges may suspend continued study and / or prevent future enrolment on additional courses if any fees are outstanding. 100% of the debt will be charged to the relevant department. The Group may additionally or instead take appropriate legal action where fees are outstanding. Any costs incurred in the recovery of fees will be added to the amounts already outstanding, along with interest, calculated as per specified guidance on interest due. In suspending / withdrawing learners ID cards will be disabled to restrict access to building and learners will be prevented from sitting future exams, where relevant. HE learners will be prevented from graduating.