



**Buckinghamshire
College Group**

Fees Policy 2021-23

Responsible Officer:	Executive Director MIS and Planning
Date of issue:	April 2021
Next Review date:	April 2023 (unless preceded by legislation)
Procedure available:	Intranet and website
Policy authorised by:	Executive and Corporation

1 Scope

- 1.1 This policy statement details how Buckinghamshire College Group will apply fees for courses funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), and the Office for Students (OfS) and those courses that receive no grant funding, often referred to as Full Cost Recovery.
- 1.2 This document outlines the College's Tuition and Examination Fee Policy for the 2021-23 academic year.
- 1.3 In exceptional circumstances Faculty Directors may seek approval from the Vice Principal Corporate Services, to set fees outside the guidance of this policy prior to the commencement of the course, to waive or amend the requirements for individual learner student circumstances.

2 Disclaimer

- 2.1 The College reserves the right to change or amend, at any time, any of the course details including content, dates, times, venues, fees payable, concessions available and terms and conditions. The College also reserves the right to close or not to start any published course.
- 2.2 If there is significant change to ESFA funding rules this policy will be renewed prior to the date shown.
- 2.3 Fees for each qualification will be set and reviewed every two years. This allows for the current and subsequent year fees to be advertised and available for potential students to review prior to enrolment.
- 2.4 All fees are subject to change

3 National fee guidelines

- 3.1 The ESFA funding approach assumes that all students, other than those eligible for fee remission, are charged a tuition fee as a contribution towards the costs of their learning. For 2021-23 the ESFA assumed fee element remains at 50% of the un-weighted funding rate for the learning aim.

4 ESFA Fee remission

- 4.1 For 2021-23 the ESFA will consider the following groups of students eligible for full fee remission if enrolling on an approved qualification as specified by the ESFA (this is also known as 'legal entitlement'). Information on qualifications approved for ESFA funding is available via <https://www.qualifications.education.gov.uk/>
 - Those aged 16-18 on 31st August of the current academic year
 - Adults taking English and maths, up to and including level 2 who have not previously attained a GCSE grade 4 (C) or higher
 - Unemployed adults in receipt of specific benefits
 - Adults on low income with earning of under £17,004 annual gross salary
 - Eligible courses and adults aged 19-23 taking their first full level 2 or first full level 3 qualification
 - Eligible adults aged 19-23 taking Entry or Level 1 qualifications that lead to a first full level 2
 - Essential digital skills qualifications, up to and including level 1, who have digital skills assessed below level 1

4.2 Definitions:

Unemployed: For ESFA funding purposes, a learner is defined as unemployed if one or more of the following apply, they:

- Receive Jobseekers Allowance (JSA), including those receiving National Insurance credits only
- Receive Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Receive Universal Credit, and their take-home pay as recorded on their Universal Credit statement (disregarding Universal Credit payments and other benefits) is less than £343 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £549 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner)
- Are released on temporary licence, studying outside a prison environment, and not funded by the Ministry of Justice)

The College may use its discretion to fully fund other learners if both the following apply. The learner:

- Receives other state benefits (not listed above) and their take-home pay as recorded on their Universal Credit statement (disregarding Universal Credit payments and other benefits) is less than £343 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £549 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner), and
- Wants to be employed, or progress into more substantial employment, and their take-home pay as recorded on their Universal Credit statement (disregarding Universal Credit payments and other benefits) is less than £343 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £549 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner), and the College is satisfied identified learning is directly relevant to their employment prospects and the local market labour needs.

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- Receives other state benefits (not listed above) and their take-home pay as recorded on their Universal Credit statement (disregarding Universal Credit payments and other benefits) is less than £343 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £549 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner), and
- Wants to be employed, or progress into more substantial employment, and their take-home pay as recorded on their Universal Credit statement (disregarding Universal Credit payments and other benefits) is less than £343 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £549 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner), and the College is satisfied identified learning is directly relevant to their employment prospects and the local market labour needs.

Learners in receipt of low wage: learners may be fully funded if they are employed, or self-employed, and would normally be co-funded (fee paying), up to and including level 2. The College must be satisfied that the learner is both:

- Eligible for co-funding
- Earns less than £17,004 annual gross salary

The College must see evidence of the learner's gross annual wages. This could be a wage slip or a universal credit statement within three months of the learners start date, or a current employment contract which states the gross monthly/annual wages.

5 Further Education Provision

5.1 ESFA Funded provision

- 5.1.1 Tuition fees will apply for those students not eligible for fee remission. See Appendix A for a summary of government contribution levels applicable to approved qualifications.

- 5.1.2 All co-funded students over the age of 19 may also be charged certification/examination/assessment fees at the time of enrolment if appropriate.
- 5.1.3 Full Time adult FE students wishing to take additional part time courses to those agreed as part of their study programme will be charged the tuition and other fees as set against the course.
- 5.1.4 Where a student is not eligible for funding on an ESFA course they will be charged tuition costs at the full cost or overseas rate.

5.2 Students aged 16-18

- 5.2.1 In accordance the ESFA regulations tuition, registration or examination fees will not normally be charged to students aged 16-18 taking full or part time courses funded by the ESFA.
- 5.2.2 However, the College may charge students aged 16-18 for Full Cost Recovery courses (or non ESFA funded provision) and for exam and resit charges if they do not achieve the required attendance levels or progress.
- 5.2.3 Materials or personal equipment fees, reflecting actual costs, may also be charged.

5.3 Adult students

- 5.3.1 Adult co-funded students (those aged 19 and above) taking full time courses funded by the ESFA will be charged a fee.
- 5.3.2 Adults will be eligible for funding if they are a citizen of a country within the European Economic Area (EEA) and have been ordinarily a resident in the EEA for at least the previous three years on the first day of learning.
- 5.3.3 As a general principle, the default fee level will be broadly 50% of the funding value.
- 5.3.4 Learners whose fees are being paid by an Employer must supply written confirmation of sponsorship at enrolment. The confirmation must be on company headed paper, be unconditional, name the student and the course and be signed by an authorised signatory (not the learner).
- 5.3.5 Materials or personal equipment fees reflecting actual costs may also be charged.

5.4 Advanced Learning Loans

- 5.5 For students aged 19 or over, approved qualifications at levels 3 to 6, may be funded through Advanced Learning Loans administered by the Student Loans Company (SLC). More information on loans and eligibility is available <https://www.qualifications.education.gov.uk/>
- 5.5.1 The fees for students aged 19 and over for provision at level 3 and above will be at the full ESFA funding rate.
- 5.5.2 A student taking out a loan to fund their learning may also be charged College certification, examination or assessment fees as appropriate.
- 5.5.3 Materials or personal equipment fees, reflecting actual costs, may also be charged where students are taking out a loan to fund their learning.
- 5.5.4 If a student is loan funded, they must sign an agreement at the time of enrolment to confirm that if they withdraw from their course after the initial two week liability period, they will be liable to pay the balance of the fees for that academic year which is no longer covered by their loan.
- 5.5.5 A summary of the levels of government contributions towards skills is provided in Appendix A.

5.6 Apprenticeships (Workbased Learning)

- 5.6.1 Government policy is that Apprenticeships are the preferred workbased learning route for all young people aged 16 to 25 who are capable of achieving NVQs at level 2 and 3.
- 5.6.2 An apprenticeship funding system has been in place from May 2017, which will apply to all employers, both levy paying and non-levy paying. The reforms give employers more control over the design, choice and payments for apprenticeship training.
- 5.6.3 As per the College Apprenticeship Reforms; the College recognises that the changes to funding and working arrangements will require a pricing structure, payment schedule and contribution model that is cost effective, transparent and fair.
- 5.6.4 Should an employer require a refund this should be calculated based on the amount of learning the apprentice has already received

6 Managing Agents and Partner provision

- 6.1 Where fees are paid to the college by other organisations in receipt of ESFA funding, approval will be required by the Vice Principal Corporate Services before delivery commences.
- 6.2 Where courses are delivered by partners on behalf of the College, the College will agree with the partner whether the College or the partner will collect fees and the two parties will account between each other for the fees collected.

7 School Pupils and 14-16 provision

- 7.1 ESFA funding is generally not available for under 16 year olds. The following generally applies to those aged 14-16 who are still at school.
- 7.2 School pupils, whatever their age, taking evening courses at the College will be charged the fees quoted in the prospectus. The enrolment of school pupils under 16 requires the prior approval of the school, parent or guardian and the College.
- 7.3 When school pupils, whatever their age, wish to follow part of their programme at College during school hours, the College will require the agreement of the school and will charge the school for the cost of the provision.
- 7.4 The responsibility for negotiating Specific School Provision (also known as IF provision) with the School and/or LEA rests with Deputy Principal Learning & Quality.

8 Staff

- 8.1 Fees, including examination and material fees, for ESFA funded courses attended by College staff may be funded by the Professional Development budget with the prior approval of the relevant budget holder and the Head of Digital Learning & Marketing.
- 8.2 Staff may apply to do non work related/non job specific College courses outside normal working hours during an academic year. In this instance courses that attract funding are permitted; however, staff may not apply for full cost recovery courses. The only exception to this would be if the course was essential for the member of staff to be able to carry out their role.
- 8.3 Full details are included in the Professional Development Policy.

9 Full Cost Recovery Courses

- 9.1 Fees for commercial courses or full cost recovery courses are approved by the relevant Faculty Director and the Vice Principal Corporate Services.
- 9.2 Fees are to be based on market rates and must at least recover the full costs including overheads and therefore will differ between courses. All full cost courses need to achieve the target financial contribution unless agreed by the Vice Principal Corporate Services.
- 9.3 There is a standard course costing model which is to be used for all full cost courses.
- 9.4 There is no fee remission or concessionary fees for full cost courses unless agreed by the Vice Principal Corporate Services.
- 9.5 Students who, through their own volition, have failed to complete their learning programme within the agreed contract period will be required to pay additional costs associated with an extension. Charges will be on a 'full cost' basis; however, this may be amended at the discretion of the appropriate Faculty Director with agreement of the Vice Principal Corporate Services.

10 Part Time Courses

- 10.1 Fees for part time courses funded by the ESFA will be set within the national fee guidelines described in Section 3.
- 10.2 Fees for part time courses are approved by the relevant Faculty Director and the Vice Principal Corporate Services.
- 10.3 If a student transfers to another higher priced course, the fee difference will be invoiced within 30 days.

11 Examination and Assessment Fees

- 11.1 All co-funded adult students and those not eligible for ESFA funding are normally charged a contribution towards the cost of the examination/registration fees at the time of enrolment.
- 11.2 Awarding Body fees are not charged for 16-18 year old students whose tuition fees are remitted, providing the following criteria is met:
- It is the students first attempt at this centre
 - The examination is supported by the relevant subject lecturer
- 11.3 Students retaking examinations (with the exception of English and Maths qualifications) will be charged the examination retake fee; which is payable prior to the examination entry.
- 11.4 Students in receipt of a free attempt at an examination who do not take the examination without good reason may be charged the fee.
- 11.5 If a student requests a re-mark of an examination paper the awarding body fees will be payable by the student.

12 Materials and other fees

- 12.1 Where a course has significantly increased costs for special expensive items such as uniforms, equipment or consumables these costs will be passed on to students. Any material costs must be agreed with the Faculty Director, reflect the actual cost and be published in all appropriate literature.

13 Payment terms and instalments

- 13.1 All fees are normally payable online prior to the start of the course.
- 13.2 Students with a total fees over £250, may elect to pay four instalments of 25% via recurring card payment that must be set up prior to the start of the course. However, the following will apply:
- The course(s) must run for a minimum of two terms.
 - The first instalment of 25% of the total fee, will be payable prior to the start of the course, and the subsequent instalments will be monthly thereafter.
 - In exceptional circumstances the subsequent monthly instalments may be reduced to allow longer to pay in full.
 - All instalment agreements must be settled at least two months prior to the planned end date of the course.
 - Instalment plans may be refused if students have previous poor payment history with the College.
- 13.3 Adult learners studying level 3 and above courses are no longer co funded by the ESFA. UK and EU students will be able to apply for an Advanced Learning Loan for approved ESFA qualifications. Loans may be used to fund the following types of provision regardless of the mode of study:
- A Levels (including A2 and AS Levels)
 - Access to HE Diploma
 - Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) Level 3 Certificate
 - Level 3 Diploma
 - Level 4 Certificate
 - Level 4 Diploma
 - Level 5 Diploma
- 13.4 All loans will be paid directly to the College by the SLC; liability will be incurred after the student has attended the course for two weeks and on a monthly basis thereafter.
- 13.5 If a student is loan funded, they must sign an agreement at the time of enrolment to confirm that if they withdraw from their course after the initial two week liability period, they will be liable to pay the balance of the fees for that academic year that is no longer covered by their loan.
- 13.6 If a student fails to pay their tuition fees the Finance team will commence internal debt collection procedure, once this has been exhausted and unsuccessful the debt is then passed onto a third party external debt collection company where additional collection fee/interest cost will be added to the initial debt and payable by the student.

14 Higher Education (HE) provision

- 14.1 The College will use the OfS fee bands to determine the HE fees chargeable to the student.
- 14.2 For HE courses, the fee level shall be shown in Appendix B.
- 14.3 The fee for HE students is deemed to be payable by the student unless they have full or part time sponsorship from Student Finance England (SFE), evidenced by a financial assessment letter showing the contribution to be paid by the SFE.
- 14.4 In certain circumstances SFE evidence may not be available at enrolment in which case written evidence of an application being made to the SFE is accepted as an interim measure. All students that do not have a financial assessment letter will be required to sign a disclaimer stating that should SFE funding not be approved the student will be liable for all fees.

- 14.5 If no SFE application evidence is provided the learners must pay at least £600 at enrolment; the balance of fees may be paid by instalment (see section 13).
- 14.6 Learners whose fees are being paid by their employer must supply confirmation of sponsorship at enrolment. The confirmation must be on company letter headed paper and signed by an authorised signatory (not the learner).
- 14.7 Fee liability dates (for OfS funded qualifications only) are based on OfS funding regulations, should the regulations change, the College reserves the right to amend this section. Students will be deemed to have passed the liability date if they have attended the first week of each of the three terms.

Liability Date	% of fee due
After first 2 weeks of attendance in the academic year	25%
First week after the Christmas break	50%
First week after Easter break	100%

- 14.8 If a student has attended for less than three weeks and wishes to intermit their studies, there will be no charge for the academic year. Where a student has attended the third week of their study, the initial 25% liability will have been incurred. Students who wish to intermit their studies in accordance with the College regulations and have been approved by the Senior Lead Teaching, Learning & Assessment & HE will have their fee reduced, when they resume their studies, by the fee that has previously been paid.

15 Re-takes, re-sits and re-submissions

- 15.1 If a student has to re-sit or re-submit work to complete their year of study, the cost is included within the original fee structure and there is no additional charge. Where a learner has used their re-submission and has to re-take any of their programme modules, there is a charge of £150 per module.

16 Refunds (excluding HE)

- 16.1.1 Refunds may be approved in the following circumstances:
- 16.1.2 If the College cancels a course, or the course does not start due to lack of support, every effort will be made to offer an alternative. If the student does not find the alternative course suitable or no suitable course is available, a full refund will be given.
- 16.1.3 If learners withdraw from their programme within two weeks of the course start date, they are eligible for a full refund.
- 16.1.4 A full refund will be given if a learner's complaint regarding the quality of delivery of a course or about the advice/guidance provided is upheld by the relevant Director following an investigation in accordance with the Colleges complaint procedure. The refund must be agreed by the Vice Principal Corporate Services
- 16.1.5 A full refund will be given if a student has been charged a fee at enrolment and can later provide evidence that they are eligible for a full fee waiver (see Section 4).
- 16.1.6 Once a student attends the third week of their course, refunds will not normally be given and all amounts outstanding (e.g. outstanding instalments) remain payable.
- 16.1.7 Written requests for refunds relating to exceptional personal factors will be considered by the Vice Principal Corporate Services.

Below are some examples of circumstance that would, or would not be considered for a refund. This list is not exhaustive and each circumstance will be considered on an individual basis.

Circumstances that may be considered exceptional:

- Severe illness or injury that necessitates the learner being away from College and unable to complete their studies, supported by a medical certificate and the relevant Curriculum Manager.

Circumstances that would not normally be considered exceptional:

- Difficulties with childcare arrangements
- Changing jobs and/or moving away
- Loss of employment
- Emigrating

In some circumstances a refund will be offered, in others a credit note than can be used to offset future fees at Buckinghamshire College Group.

16.1.8 Excluded students – No refunds or credit notes will be made where a student has been excluded from College due to a breach of the Student Code of Conduct or they are withdrawn as a result of the Student Disciplinary procedure and all amounts outstanding (e.g. outstanding instalments) remain payable.

17 Financial Support

17.1 Financial support may be available for students who are experiencing financial difficulties via the College Support Scheme to help with material and other costs. More information is available in the College Support Scheme for Students or via Student Services.

APPENDIX A – Government contribution table

Provision	19 to 23-year-olds	24+ unemployed	24+ other
English and maths, up to and including level 2 (Must be delivered as part of the legal entitlement)	Fully funded*	Fully funded*	Fully funded*
Essential Digital Skills Qualifications up to and including level 1	Fully funded*	Fully funded*	Fully funded*
Level 2 (excluding English and maths) (First full level 2 must be delivered as part of the legal entitlement)	Fully funded* ⁼ (first and full)	Fully Funded	Co-funded+
Learning to progress to level 2	Fully funded [^] (up to and including level 1)	Fully funded	Co-funded+
Level 3 legal entitlement (learners first full level 3)	Fully funded* ⁼	N/A	N/A
Level 3 adult offer (learners without a full level 3 or above accessing a qualification on the Level 3 adult offer qualifications list)	Fully funded ⁼	Fully funded	Fully funded
Level 3 (a learner has already achieved a full level 3)	Loan-funded** ⁼	Loan-funded	Loan-funded
Traineeship [#]	Fully funded (including 16- to 24-year-olds ^{##})	N/A	N/A
English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learning up to and including level 2	Co-funded+	Fully funded	Co-funded+
	Fully funded – unemployed		
Learning aims up to and including level 2, where the learner has already achieved a first full level 2, or above	Co-funded+	Fully funded	Co-funded+
	Fully funded – unemployed		
Learning aims up to and including level 2, where the learner has not achieved a first full level 2, or above	N/A	Fully Funded	Co-funded+
<p>*Must be delivered as one of the English and maths, Digital entitlement and/or first full level 2 or first full level 3 qualifications required as part of the legal entitlements.</p> <p>[^]Must be delivered as entry or level one provision from local flexibility.</p> <p>[#] Excludes flexible element where funding depends on age and level.</p> <p>^{##} 16- to 18-year-old learners must be eligible under the ESFA's young people's residency requirements.</p> <p>** Availability of loans at level 3 does not replace the legal entitlement to full funding for learners aged 19 to 23 undertaking their first full level 3.</p> <p>+ Low wage flexibility may apply, refer to paragraph 161.</p> <p>= One year high value courses for school and college leavers: skills offer for 19-year-olds, may apply refer to paragraphs 166 to 168</p>			

Appendix B – Tuition Fees

The College fee matrix is based on the funded values and/loan amounts as set by the ESFA.

Full cost recovery courses and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), will be set by the Faculty Director and based on the cost of delivering the course and market intelligence.

All fees will be published at course level on our website www.buckscollegigroup.ac.uk and a full list is available upon request.

Any variation to published fees must be agreed by the Vice Principal Corporate Services.

Fee Matrix

Qualification	Entry and Level 1	Level 2	Level 3 and above
Award	£200	£250	£600
Certificate	£575	£575	£725
Diploma	£1,150	£1,850	£4,000
Extended Diploma	-	-	£5,500
Technical Certificate	-	-	£2,500
Foundation Diploma	-	-	£2,500
Professional L3+ Diploma*	-	-	£2,500

*Professional L3+ Diploma consists of - Hair, Beauty & Catering, Law & Accounting, Construction & Electrical, Counselling

Higher Education	
Access to HE	£3,000
Higher National Certificate / Diploma	£6,000
Foundation Degree	£5,000

Appendix C – Definitions

Term	Definition
Adults	Students aged 19 or over at the start of the course
Co-Funded	Where the ESFA funds up to 50% of the course and the remaining 50% is payable by the student
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency – Agency that funds post 16 education
ESOL	English for Speakers of other Languages
Fee Remission	Where fees are waived and not payable by the student
First full level 2 or 3	Studying for a course that will qualify the students to level 2 or 3 where they do not already hold a qualification at that level
Full Cost Recovery	Courses that receive no external funding other than the fee charged to students
Full Time	Courses that are 540 guided learning hours or more each academic year
Fully funded	The fees are fully met or funded by the ESFA
Home Students	Students that meet eligibility for ESFA funding (usually being resident in the EU for the past three years)
Levy paying Employer	The levy is paid by large employers with a pay bill of over £3 million (they pay 0.5% of their total annual pay bill). Currently, only 2% of employers pay the apprenticeship levy
Liability	Being legally responsible for the fee
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification – a type of qualification to demonstrate vocational skills. Each NVQ level involves a range of on-the-job tasks and activities that are designed to test you on your ability to do a job effectively
OfS	Office for Students – Agency that funds Higher Education
Part time	Courses that are less than 540 guided learning hours per academic year
WBL	Work based Learning

Equality Impact Statement

We have a duty to consider the impact of changes on groups with Protected Characteristics (race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership).

What are the overall aims of the change? Why are you proposing it?	The aim of this policy is to provide a framework to ensure that the guidelines are in place to support all stakeholders
Given the aims of your proposal, what issues does your data/information highlight?	Everybody is included within this policy, and all groups are given equality in regards to their needs and provisions
How could the proposed change affect positively/negatively on groups with protected characteristics?	This has a positive impact on all groups with protected characteristics, as they are ensured equal treatment and provision based on their needs. Risk assessments may be carried out to ensure that this is the case and provisions maybe altered to accommodate specific needs
What actions will you take to mitigate any negative impact?	No negative impact to having this policy
Is there any potential negative impact justified in light of wider benefits of the proposal	No negative impact to having this policy
Recording final decision	This policy requires Executive and Corporation approval
Has the policy taken into consideration the requirements of GDPR regulations? Are there any actions that need addressing, e.g.; data sharing agreement; has data consent been considered; data retention timescales?	GDPR regulations have been considered and actions comply with data protection requirements.