



Fees and Charges Policy 2026 - 2027

Local POLICY

Version 1

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Corporate Development

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Policy Compliance details:-

Compliance with Equality Legislation.

PLEASE NOTE: Policies must be equality screened before being submitted to SLT and Trade Unions:-

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1. Policy Aim

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to establish guidelines by which fees and charges may be levied for the provision of appropriate educational facilities and 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. The policy is subject to an annual review.
- 1.2 The policy is restricted to those facilities and services where the College is able to operate some discretion in the levying of charges. Therefore, the policy does not relate 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 and grants as made available from the Student Loan Company or Education Authorities
 - Those tuition fees established by external bodies, such as a university.

2. Fee Setting

- 2.1 The College's Governing Body has the power to set its own fees and charges as set out in articles 14(1)(b)(c)(g) & 14(2) of The Further Education (NI) Order 1997.
 - The fee for each course is set out in **Appendix 1**. The process of setting fees and charges considers all relevant direct costs and overheads, market forces, the College Development Plan, competitor analysis, skill shortages and other relevant factors such as equality issues and the prevailing economic climate.
 - Fees and charges are set annually.
 - Tuition fees apply to the financial year beginning 1 August and ending on 31 July.
 - Fees are chargeable for each year of study.
 - Fee rates are not reduced for late entry to a course.
 - In the event a learner is repeating an individual module, fees for the module will be charged at a pro rata rate to the full course fee.
- 2.2 The College reserves the right to vary the price charged and the concessions applied from course to course in the financial year.
- 2.3 Fees may be subject to change because of changes to Government policy. Some full-time courses are prescribed by NI Statutory rules and Student Support regulations for Higher Education (HE) courses and Awards and Benefit Committee for Further Education (FE) courses. Fees may be set as per franchising agreements with external institutions and as such may not attract concessionary rates or staff discount.

3. Definitions

Accredited Course	Accredited courses are those 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 DfE, or other courses approved by DfE including University validated courses.
Home Student*	The specific residence requirements applicable to students attending a Further Education College to be eligible for “Home Fee” status are set out in the <u>DfE circular FE 04/24</u> “Further Education Residency and Funding requirements”.
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”.
Asylum Seekers	Asylum seekers are defined as those who have made an application to the UK Border Agency for refugee status.
Tuition Fee	This refers to the amount due from a student (or their sponsor) as stipulated in the Fees and Charges Policy
Examination Fee	The money collected by the College that is then forwarded to the Awarding Body.
Validation Fee	A sum of money required by a third-party organisation e.g. Ulster University for ratifying the issue of qualifications.
Course Fee	Tuition Fee plus any examination, validation, material fees.
Fee waiver	This refers to a reduction in the tuition fee due as stipulated in the Fees and Charges Policy.
Refund	This refers to the paid fee to be reimbursed to a student or their sponsor.
Deferral	This refers to deferred entry to the following academic year and may only be considered where fees have been paid in full. Additional charges may apply on year of re-entry.

A Glossary of Terms is included at Appendix 2

* Home students are defined in DfE circular FE 04/24 as follows:

- UK nationals;
- those settled in the UK (subject to the requirements set out in FE Circular 04/24);
- Republic of Ireland nationals (subject to the requirements set out in FE Circular 04/24);
- EU, other EEA and Swiss nationals and their family members who are covered by the Withdrawal Agreements (subject to residency requirements)

- UK nationals and their family members living in the EEA, Switzerland and EU Overseas Territories (subject to the conditions set out in FE Circular 05/22);
- Frontier workers as defined by FE Circular 04/24; and
- Refugees and those set out in paragraphs 6, 7 and 8 of FE Circular 04/24. Refugees are defined as those having been granted leave to remain in the UK by the Home Office.

The College reserves the right to amend the definition of 'Home' or 'International' student if new guidance is issued from DfE.

Asylum Seekers, Refugees and persons Resettled in Northern Ireland

Asylum seekers, refugees and persons 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.

Eligibility requirements for access to English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in Further Education Colleges are as specified in the DfE circular FE 10/22.

4. Concessions & Discounts

4.1 Self-paying students

A reduction in fees may be applied to tuition fees on part time accredited courses for individual self-paying students. This reduction applies to the tuition fee only and is not applicable to examination or other costs.

Course Type	Discount
Accredited Courses	40%

Table setting out reduction for self-paying students

To qualify for the reduced rate, the student must be EITHER:

- 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 1 July 2026 and in receipt of (or dependent on spouse / partner in receipt of)
 - Income Support
 - Income Based Jobseekers Allowance
 - Working Tax Credit (a threshold does apply)
 - Child Tax Credit
 - Guaranteed Pension Credit
 - Housing Benefit (Rates Relief) or Rate Rebate
 - Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
 - Universal Credit
- Any part time student sponsored by a Charitable or Community organisation where the student would have been eligible for a concession without the charity support, (e.g. The King's Trust, Victims & Survivors Commission).

Documentary evidence is required at the time of enrolment to prove entitlement.

4.2 Staff Discounts

Course Type	Discount
Accredited Courses full-time	40%
Accredited Courses part-time	100%
Approved Staff Development	100%

Staff discount

4.3 Exceptions

Concession fees do not apply to the following courses:

- Professional Courses
- Bespoke Training (FCR)
- Non DfE funded courses
- Non accredited courses

5. Payment of Tuition Fees and Charges

Tuition fees are payable in full at the time of enrolment. Tuition fees can comprise course fees, registration fees or any other charge relating to the course. Payment is accepted online via Worldpay or by cash, direct debit or credit card (Visa, MasterCard).

5.1 Payment of Fees by Direct Debit

Students with a UK bank account that facilitates direct debit can arrange for fees to be paid in instalments if they are enrolling on a course(s) of 16 weeks duration or more and the total cost is greater than £200. Students will have to pay a minimum of 25% of the total fee at the time of enrolment, followed by three consecutive monthly equal payments by direct debit. Fully completed Direct Debit Forms must be provided at time of enrolment.

5.2 Payment by Sponsor or Employer

Where fees are payable by a third party e.g. employer, students must produce evidence and all available information to allow College staff to raise an invoice to the fee payer. A letter must be provided at time of enrolment confirming the sponsor will pay the fees. It is the personal responsibility of the student to ensure the fees are paid.

5.3 Payment of Tuition Fees by Student Loan Company (SLC)

If fees are to be paid by the Student Loan Company the student must, at time of enrolment, present a letter from SLC confirming they will pay the fees or provide evidence of application to SLC for funding. If students do not have either of these, at the time of enrolment, the student will have to pay the fees and will be reimbursed once the College receives payment from SLC. Please note that if you are awarded a tuition fee loan from the SLC, but withdraw before completing your course, the SLC will not pay your tuition fees in full. In these circumstances, you will be liable for any unpaid amount and expected to repay this outstanding balance to the College in addition to any outstanding fees.

5.4 Late Payment

If students become aware that payment will be late, they must contact the Finance Department by post to Belfast Metropolitan College, Shared Services Centre, 398 Springfield Road, Belfast BT12 7DU or by email to **accountsreceivable@belfastmet.ac.uk** to explain the situation. If there is genuine difficulty with payment, an authorised member of the Finance Department will agree a student payment plan. In the event of default of payment, the student will be contacted within two weeks and asked to make an immediate payment. If this payment fails, sanctions listed in paragraph 5.9 will be applied.

5.5 Difficulty with Payment

Students who experience difficulty in paying tuition fees should seek help at the earliest possible opportunity. Student Funding Office or Students' Union staff may provide information about support available, including the possibility of Hardship Funding, the eligibility criteria regarding this and how to apply, contact studentfunding@belfastmet.ac.uk.

The College will be sympathetic and assist where possible, however, in order to maintain the quality of teaching and activities for all of our students, the College must act to recover all outstanding debt.

5.6 Fee Refund

The College policy is that all tuition fees are paid in full and are not refundable. The exceptions to this are as follows:

1. A course/session is cancelled by the College. Where the cancellation of a course takes place, students will be offered either a place on a suitable alternative course or a full refund.
2. Where a student has not attended a course and has provided written notification to the College at least 5 working days before the course commences.
3. If the time, day or evening meeting of the class has been changed and the student is unable to continue attending because of these changes.
4. Students on specified¹ Higher Education Courses (year 1) and international students on Full Time Further Education courses who withdraw from a course, or go on a leave of absence, will be charged a percentage of the full annual tuition fee as set out in Appendix 1.

Other refund applications shall be considered only in exceptional circumstances such as medical reasons. In such circumstance medical evidence from your GP/Doctor will be required to support your application which will be considered by a member of the

¹ As specified by the Department for the Economy.

College Directorate or designated authority (Head of Finance). Where a refund has been authorised, the student will be refunded within 20 working days.

If an applicant has made one or more attendances, no refund or reduction in fee may be given, except in circumstance 3 above. However, where a refund has been refused it may be possible to transfer the tuition fee paid to another programme.

5.7 Fee Waiver

The College policy is that fees are not waived except in the circumstances outlined under Fee Refund points 1 to 4. Applications for fee waiver shall be made in writing by an individual or organisation or by College staff on behalf of the applicant.

Applications shall be considered only in exceptional circumstances by a member of the College Directorate or designated authority (Head of Finance).

5.8 Deferral of Fee

All applications for deferrals must be made in writing to the Finance department.

Applications may be supported by the Business Services Unit Manager or Curriculum Area Manager but only a member of the College Directorate or Head of Finance have the authority to authorise a deferral of fees.

Where a deferral has been authorised, the student will be issued with a letter to bring with them to enrolment at an agreed future date. Please note deferral of fees to a later year of entry is only possible when fees have been paid in full.

5.9 Sanctions against debtors

If a student owes outstanding tuition fees any or all of the following sanctions may be applied, as authorised by the Head of Finance:

1. Immediate withdrawal of IT, library and reprographics privileges.
2. You will not be entitled to receive tuition i.e. you will be withdrawn from the course with immediate effect.
3. You will not be entered for examinations.
4. You will not have your assessment marks forwarded to the examining body.

5. You will not be allowed to enter the examination room to sit your examinations.
6. Your examination results will be withheld.
7. Your examination certificates will be withheld.
8. You will not be eligible to attend the College's Graduation Ceremony.
9. You will not be able to progress to second or third year of your course or to enrol on another course.

Outstanding student fees will either be referred to a Debt Recovery Agency for recovery or placed with the Small Claims Court for judgement and payment. Costs associated with either procedure will be added to the student account. If a student cancels their Direct Debit agreement at any time after their course has begun, they will continue to be regarded as a debtor until outstanding fees have been recovered.

5.10 Reinstatement on payment of Full Tuition Fees

Students excluded from the College due to non-payment of fees may be reinstated if the debt is paid in full before the end of the academic year. However, if they are consequently behind with studies, and need to repeat parts of the programme, there may be additional fees incurred. These fees will be payable by the student.

5.11 Student Debt from previous years

Students with debt outstanding from a previous year are not allowed to enrol for a course. If the student agrees either, to pay the outstanding debt in full or, agree an arrangement with the College to pay both the outstanding balance and the current year tuition fee, they may be enrolled. Please note the College will set off payments received against the outstanding debt first, i.e. payments received will be used to settle the old debt before the current year fees. If a student fails to honour the agreed arrangement, the sanctions outlined in section 5.9 above will be applied.

5.12 Appeals Process

If a student is unhappy about any matter relating to fee payments, they should contact the Finance Department. If the matter remains unresolved a complaint may be brought forward under the College's Complaints Procedure.

The College reserves the right to introduce bursaries, offer concessions and vary fees within this schedule during the financial year to ensure optimal participation.

The College reserves the right to vary fees within this schedule during the financial year in line with amendments to Government policy.

Students will be informed, at the earliest opportunity of any rate change.

All course fees must be paid, or payment terms agreed with the College in advance of course commencement.

APPENDIX 1 – Fees Schedule 2026/27

Full-time Courses (Home Students)

Table setting out costs for full time courses

Higher Education	Fee/Charge
BSc (Hons) Degree in Social Work	£4,985
Foundation Degree <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queen's University Belfast University of Ulster Open University 	£3,323 £3,235 £3,235
Higher National Diploma / Higher National Certificate	£3,235
Placement Year	£955
Further Education	Fee/Charge
Further Education (including Applied A Levels) <i>Students must be 16 years on or before 1 July 2026 up to the age of 19</i> <i>(Exam fee may be payable in some circumstances)²</i>	£Nil
Level 3 Further Education Courses including Access to Higher Education Eligibility criteria applies in line with Learning for free nidirect	£570
Non-Applied A-Levels per subject (If aged 19 or over on 1 July prior to the start of your course) <i>Note: concession rates do apply under certain circumstances.</i>	£570 Plus exam fee

² If you are 18 years of age, but have not turned 19 on 1st July and are attending a full-time course such as 'A' Level, you will have to pay an examination fee.

Higher Education Tuition Fee Liability

Full time and Part time Higher Education students, and international students on Full Time Further Education Courses who withdraw from a course, or go on a leave of absence, will be charged a percentage of the full annual tuition fee as detailed below.

Table setting out withdrawal fees

Withdrawal Dates	Fee Liability
From the first day of the first term	25% of the full annual tuition fee
From the first day of the second term	50% of the full annual tuition fee
From the first day of the third term	100% of the full annual tuition fee

Part-Time Courses (Home Students)

Table setting out part time course fees

Higher Education	Fee / Charge
HND / HNC / Other HE programmes (infill)	£3.65 per hour
Honours Degree – Per module resit (20 credit points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queen’s University Belfast University of Ulster Open University 	£830 £830 £830
Foundation Degree – Per module resit (20 credit points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Queen’s University Belfast University of Ulster Open University 	£554 £540 £540
HND / HNC – Per Module resit (15 credit points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pearson 	£405
<i>Note: concession rates do not apply to any part-time HE course; Registration fees will apply and are set by the awarding organisation</i>	

Further Education	Fee / Charge
Vocational (Accredited) Further Education	£2.65 per hour
Access to Higher Education	£555
Non-vocational Programmes (non-accredited) courses	£4.15 per hour
Severe Learning Difficulties or Disabilities (SLDD) discrete tuition fees	£Nil
Part time Discrete SLDD community courses	£3.20 per hour
<i>Note: concession rates do apply to part-time FE courses; Registration fees will apply to vocational programmes and are set by the awarding organisation</i>	

International Students - *All fees are payable in advance of course commencement*

Table setting out fees payable by international students

Higher Education (all awarding bodies)	Fee/Charge
Foundation Degree	£8,045
Higher National Diploma	£8,045
Higher National Certificate	£8,045
Part time HE courses	£14.05 per hour
Further Education	Fee/Charge
Vocational Courses (excluding A Levels)	£6,560

Full-time A-Levels per subject	£2,750
Part time FE courses	£9.55 per hour

Fee rates in table above are a full fee (including tuition, exam and registration fees).

Other Courses (Home Students)

Table setting out fees for other and non-accredited courses

Title	Fee / Charge
English as Second or Other Language (ESOL)	£1.90 per hour
Entry level ICT	£Nil
CELTA (rate dependent on class size)	Customised rate
Essential Skills (Numeracy, Literacy and ICT)	£Nil
Traineeships and Apprenticeships	£Nil
Blended Learning Provision These are courses for Part Time learners, which involve some form of online <i>study through the College's Virtual learning platform.</i>	£2.50 per hour
School Partnerships³	£70 per hour

³ Schools will be charged as appropriate for Entitlement Framework activities as defined by the current Department of Education (DE) Funding Model. Schools may also be charged for any additional courses at a specific school related cost recovery rate.

Other Charges (to be confirmed)

Table setting out other charges

Title	Fee / Charge
Examination Registration Fees	As per Awarding Body
Examination resits	As per Awarding Body
Accreditation of Prior Learning	As per Awarding Body
Late Registration charges	As per Awarding Body
Student Membership of Professional Bodies	At cost
Graduation Ceremony Fees (including 2 Guests)	£49
Graduation Extra Guest Ticket	£17
Football Academy (coaching support and training kit)	£350
Rugby Academy (coaching support and training kit)	£350
Boxing Academy (coaching support and training kit)	£250
AccessNI	£32
Course materials	At cost
Replacement Student / Staff card	£10

All examination, registration fees and/or course related fees where appropriate, will be charged in full irrespective of concessions and/or other support provided.

Economic Engagement - Bespoke Programmes

Self-financing courses will be based on a number of factors such as:

- Delivery costs
- Support Staff costs
- Premises costs
- Materials and Administration
- Market factor
- Overhead Absorption
- Level of Course
- Assessor Fees
- Travel and expenses costs

Any examination fees payable are charged at actual cost

With the exception of those identified as Free of Charge, a minimum fee of £30 applies to all courses.

APPENDIX 2 – Glossary of Terms

Glossary

GLOSSARY OF TERMS	
DfE	Department for the Economy
FE	Further Education – Entry Level to Level 3 (inclusive)
HE	Higher Education – Level 4 and above
HND	Higher National Diploma
HNC	Higher National Certificate
CELTA	Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
ESOL	English Speakers of Other Languages
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
EUSS	EU Settlement Scheme
Accredited Course	An accredited course is one defined on the National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ) and the Qualification Credited 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.
FCR	Full Cost Recovery
Levels	The college offers qualifications at levels 1 to 7.
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework: Framework for vocational or work-related qualifications. There are 9 levels in the QCF Levels 0 – 8 (Entry Level is Level 0)
ROI	Republic of Ireland
SLC	Student Loans Company
SLDD	Severe Learning Difficulties or Disabilities

APPENDIX 3 – Document Change History

Version Number	Author	Reason for Change	Date
1.0	Finance	Annual review of fees paper. Fees amounts updated following DfE guidance. Paragraph d) amended following discussion at Admissions and Enrolment Group.	November 2021
1.1	Finance	Removed reference third party sub-contracting rates following Executive Team review	December 2021
1.2	Finance	Embedded link to DfE circular FE 12/15 following discussion at Right to Study Group.	December 2021
1.3	Finance	Paragraph 6a, Page 15 threshold temporarily changed from £200 to £150 due to economic situation at the time.	August 2022
1.4	Finance	Updated to reflect latest DfE guidance on FE Residency, Funding and ESOL	September 2022
1.5	Finance	Annual review of fees paper. Fees amounts updated following approval by ELT. Overall document format updated to reflect best practice across the FE sector.	January 2023
2.0	Finance	Annual review of fees paper. Fees amounts updated following DfE guidance and ELT approval. Appendix A has been modified to reflect this change. Policy title changed to reflect fees for 2024 - 2025	13 December 2023
2.1	Finance	Update to legislation on FE Residency Funding requirements effective 1 August 2024. Update to Corporate Development and Finance Department contact details.	August 2024
3.0	Finance	Annual review of fees paper. Fees amounts updated following DfE guidance and ELT approval. Appendix A has been modified to reflect this change. Policy title changed to reflect fees for 2025 - 2026	October 2024
4.0	Finance	Annual review of fees paper. Fees amounts updated following DfE guidance and ELT approval.	September 2025

Version Number	Author	Reason for Change	Date
		<p>Appendix A has been modified to reflect this change. Policy title changed to reflect fees for 2026 – 2027</p> <p>Section 3 Definitions, update to paragraph on International Students.</p> <p>Section 5.9 reference to ‘miscellaneous charges’ removed on recommendation of OU and CMA review March 2025.</p>	

Table outlining when changes were made to this Policy and by whom