

POLICY AND PROCEDURE 52



OAKLANDS COLLEGE

THE STUDENT FEES POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Policy Statement

The College will set the fees payable by its students to promote the widest possible participation in learning amongst the communities which it serves, in accordance with the requirements of the relevant funding and regulatory bodies. In doing so the College will set fees at levels which also ensure the financial viability of its learning provision.

Scope of Policy

This policy covers all fees payable by students in relation to provision delivered by the College, specifically:

- Tuition Fees
- Examination and Registration Fees
- Materials Fees
- Trips Fees

General Principles

The College will seek at all times to clearly publish accurate and timely information about its fees.

The College will aim to maintain published fee levels wherever possible, but reserves the right in exceptional circumstances to change fees and other charges without prior notice.

The College will implement and maintain procedures which ensure the accurate assessment of fees due and to ensure that this fees policy is applied fairly and consistently across all courses and programme areas.

Individual students (and/or their sponsors) are responsible for ensuring the prompt payment of all fees due and for the timely and accurate provision of all information required to enable the accurate assessment and prompt collection of fees.

The College may reduce or waive its fees in cases of financial hardship (excluding tuition fees). The circumstances in which these apply are set out in the Bursary Policy.

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Tuition Fees

As a general rule, all tuition fees due must be paid to the College in full prior to the commencement of the course to which the fees relate. However, in order to ensure the widest possible participation the Finance Director (or his duly authorised representative) may agree to permit fees to be paid in instalments.

The Education Skills Funding Agency (“ESFA”) publish rules outlining the criteria in which students are eligible to attract full or partial funding for their course fees. These rules may change from time to time. Should the ESFA rules conflict with any part of this policy, the ESFA funding rules will take precedence.

Students who are not eligible for funding from the ESFA will be charged the full cost of the provision as determined by the Finance Director and as published in the College’s Full and Part Time Guides or on the College’s website. This also applies to courses which do not attract funding from the ESFA.

Tuition fees for Higher Education courses delivered on behalf of the University of Hertfordshire are set by the University. Fees for HNC and HND programmes are payable directly to the college. Fees for Foundation and Honours Degrees are payable to the University and they should be contacted directly for further details.

To apply for a Higher Education student loan to pay the tuition fees, students must apply to <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance>. If eligible, the tuition fee will be paid directly by the Student Loans Company (SLC). A student must bring a copy of their student finance application to enrolment. A student will not be permitted to enrol without proof of application. A student will be allowed up to 14 days after enrolment to provide their student loan application number. If for any reason a student is not successful in their student loan application they become liable for their tuition fees (which must be paid in line with the liability dates outlined in Appendix 3) or they will not be able to continue their course.

If an employer or other sponsor is paying the tuition fees the student will need to provide a completed and signed sponsor form within 2 weeks of enrolment. The student, unless the offer letter expressly informs otherwise, will be liable for the fees if they do not provide the form or if the sponsor does not pay the fees.

Separate funding arrangements exist where students are attending College provision as partnerships with schools and other agencies. These contractual arrangements are overseen by the Finance Director.

Examination/Awarding Body and College Registration Fees

Where a student is eligible for the 16-19 Programme Funding from the ESFA or through advanced learner loans for their tuition fees, then they will not be required to pay examination fees, material fees and college registration fees; these costs being included within the ESFA / advanced learner loans funding. Exam fees may be charged where the student is resitting an exam which has previously been taken and failed, or the exam is being retaken with the intention of improving their grade. The decision to charge these fees will be undertaken by the Finance Director (or his duly authorised representative), while taking into account medical and other potential mitigating circumstances.

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If a student is not eligible for ESFA funding (apart from those on advanced learner loans), then in addition to the tuition fees they will also be liable for examination and registration fees. The amount of these will be set with reference to the charges made to the College by the relevant examining body.

Materials Fees

Materials fees are only charged in accordance with the funding rules of the ESFA. Materials fees can be charged for clothing, equipment or consumables which are either necessary for health and safety or items which students can take away from the learning environment.

In addition, the College may require any student who is over 19 years of age at the date of enrolment onto their course and who is required to pay tuition fees:

- To contribute towards the cost of materials for the course onto which they have enrolled
- To purchase uniform or equipment as prescribed by the College prior to enrolment.

For students who are either under 19 years of age, or who are over 19 years of age but enrolled onto further education provision which is fully funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency, Bursary will be made available where possible to support students who are assessed to be in financial hardship.

Every effort will be made to ensure that the charge to the student matches the cost to the College of purchasing the materials, uniform and equipment, and that the amounts payable will be advised to students prior to, or at, enrolment.

All Higher Education Courses delivered by Oaklands College will state on the website under the relevant course fact sheet (see Course Additionality) if there are any additional costs for materials or activities to the tuition fees for which the student is directly liable to pay and whether these are mandatory or optional.

Trips Fees

The College reserves the right to charge students in full for the cost of a trip or other visit or event.

Every effort will be made to ensure that the charge to the student matches the cost to the College of the trip / visit / event, and that the approximate amount payable will be advised to students prior to, or at, enrolment.

For fully funded students who are aged 19 and above and not on an Advanced Learning Loan, charges will only be rendered for trips where the Principal, Deputy Principal or relevant Director of Curriculum considers that attendance on that trip / visit / event is not essential to obtain the relevant qualification.

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STUDENT FEES PROCEDURES

The College will ensure that:

- Fees are payable for a programme/qualification and will not be unduly varied (e.g. for variations in the length of the delivery of the programme)
- Fees are correctly set up for all courses on the student records system
- Fees are readily available and easily accessible for all current and prospective students, including information on any bursary which might be available (including 24+ Advanced Learning Loans)
- Clear information is provided to all students regarding the fee policy, fee concessions and entitlement to refunds
- Fees are due in full on enrolment and by enrolling, the student is committing to pay the whole fee irrespective of whether they attend for the whole of the course in question or any part of it
- Staff enrolling students onto the system are fully trained and briefed to ensure that they fully understand the process and implications of entering data into various fields
- Instalment plan arrangements are available as required and as appropriate
- Procedures exist for agreeing non-standard fees
- The College has a refund policy that sets out clearly the circumstances under which refunds will be made.

Operational Outcomes

- On enrolment, students are clear about the fees they are expected to pay, and understand what options are available for financial assistance as required.

Supplementary Documentation

- Refund Guidance Notes (Appendix 1)
- Refund Policy for ESOL-EFL (Appendix 2)
- Fee Information (*available in full time and part time prospectus*)
- Enrolment Briefing Notes
- Refunds Policy for Higher Education Courses (Appendix 3)
- Refunds Policy for Apprenticeships and Work-based Learning (Appendix 4)

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Appendix 1

Guidance notes on application for refund or adjustment of course fees

- Application must be made for either refund of course fees paid or adjustment to course fee due
- Application forms are available from any of the College's Student Centres
- Applications must be received by the College within 4 weeks of last date of attendance
- We will endeavour to process refunds within 20 working days of receipt of application, with the exception of reason 5 below.

Refunds and/or adjustment will be made as follows:

When	Refund/Adjustment of	Application Required
Course or class fails to start	All fees	NO In this situation we do not expect an application to be made. We will ensure full fees are refunded back to debit/credit card or a cheque is posted
Student withdraws more than 7 days before the start of the course	All Fees	YES
Student withdraws for medical reasons directly affecting course attendance	Pro-rata tuition fees	YES Along with a medical certificate
Transfer to new course within 4 weeks of start of original course	Any fee difference in full	NO Fees refunded back to debit/credit card or Cheque posted (after tutor advises of transfer)
Student makes a written complaint regarding the course and/or quality of teaching which is upheld by the Director of Quality	Fees as recommended by the Director of Quality	YES Together with details of complaint in writing

Refunds/adjustments will not normally be made when:

- Student withdraws from course for personal reasons, such as moving house or change of employment
- Student withdraws from course for medical reasons not directly affecting course attendance (in certain situations credit notes may be issued)

Additional information

- If an application for refund/adjustment is unsuccessful an explanatory letter will be sent
- Any appeal against refusal should be made in writing to the College within 2 weeks of receipt of letter

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Appendix 2

Oaklands Refund Policy ESOL-EFL

Courses offered by Oaklands assume that all students who start a course will finish it. The cost of the course is calculated on this basis. Consequently, the college does not expect to offer refunds except in exceptional circumstances.

You will be able to request a refund in the following situations:

- Course cancellation
- Unsuitability of the course – tutor evidence provided **within 2 weeks** of starting the course. ***This includes dissatisfaction with the course in any way and is subject to investigation by the Head of Department**
- Serious illness - medical evidence provided e.g. a signed letter in English from a GP or Doctor
- Serious illness/death of a family member whether in UK or abroad - medical evidence provided e.g. a signed letter in English from a GP or Doctor
- Caring responsibilities whether in UK or abroad– evidence provided e.g. a signed letter in English from GP or Doctor. This must be a direct family member who did not need caring prior to the start of the course at Oaklands College.

You will **NOT** be able to request a refund in the following situations:

- Start of a new job
- Change of job
- Change of shift in a job
- Loss of job
- Moving from the area
- Pregnancy

Refunds will be at the discretion of the Head of Department/Finance Director. Achievement of in year exams will be taken into consideration.

Refund forms must be completed and returned to The Finance Office within 4 weeks of leaving the course, after this date your refund will not be considered.

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Appendix 3

Refunds Policy for Higher Education Courses

Students will be liable for their tuition fees for the entire year of study unless they formally notify the College (by sending an email to the programme manager and HE co-ordinator) that they wish to withdraw, defer, or apply for a suspension of their studies.

The student may claim a fee refund, if they have paid a fee greater than the revised fee applicable on the withdrawal date.

The College, at its discretion, may refuse a fee refund if the student uses any other method of notifying withdrawal.

If you need to apply for a refund, please check the information below to determine whether you are eligible for a refund and if so, how much you are entitled to. The dates are dependent on the Semester they begin their studies and are outlined below.

e.g. Student starting in Semester A	Amount Due
5 th October 2020	No fee liability
6 th October 2020	25% of tuition fees
11 th January 2021	50% of tuition fees
19 th April 2021	100% of tuition fees

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Appendix 4

Oaklands Refund Policy – Apprenticeships & Work-based Learning

Apprenticeships and work-based courses offered by Oaklands assume that all students who start a course will finish it. The cost of the course is calculated on this basis. Consequently, the college does not expect to offer refunds except in exceptional circumstances.

An employer will be able to request a refund of the employer contribution towards an Apprenticeship or work-based course in the following circumstances:

- Course cancellation / withdrawal
- Unsuitability of the course – Assessor evidence provided **within 6 weeks** of starting the course.
- Serious illness / death of an Apprentice - medical evidence provided e.g. a signed letter in English from a GP or Medical Practitioner
- Serious illness/death of an Apprentice’s family member whether in UK or abroad - medical evidence provided e.g. a signed letter in English from a GP or Medical Practitioner
- Apprentice has left their employment and moved to a new job external to the company

You will **NOT** be able to request a refund in the following situations:

- Termination of an Apprentice due to performance management
- Redundancy of an Apprentice
- Change of shift in a job
- Pregnancy

Refunds will only be at the discretion of the Head of Department/Finance Director. Achievement, progress and length of time on programme will be taken in to consideration.

Refund forms must be completed and returned to The Finance Office within 4 weeks of the Apprentice withdrawal, after this date your refund may not be considered.

Incentive Payments

Incentive payments which have been made to an employer for individuals who are deemed to not have met the eligibility criteria or are not in employment and/or learning at the defined census points will need to be repaid by the employer to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) within 21 days or receiving such notification. This repayment will be collected by Oaklands College in line with ESFA funding rules.

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