

## Newcastle College Fees Policy 2021-2022

### Background

The high level principles for the setting of fees are determined by the corporation of NCG, as set out in the NCG FE Fee's Policy, and these principles are incorporated into this policy. This document covers the specific policy on fees for Newcastle College ("the College").

The high level principle for the setting of fees for government funded courses is covered in Section A, the principles for fees for adults funded by Adult Learning Loans is covered in Section B and principles for all other fees in Section C.

### A. FE Fees Policy 2021-22

Provision for 16-18 year olds who are eligible for funding on Programmes of Study remains entirely free of fees.

The policy requirements in this section apply to government/devolved authority funded FE provision, this excludes Advanced Learner Loans and those courses covered in section C of this policy.

- NCG Divisions will observe national/devolved authority guidance that currently states that fees are remitted nationally and in devolved areas for the following categories of students:
  - 16–18 Students who are eligible for funding
  - Unemployed adults in the following categories:
    - In receipt of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), including those receiving National Insurance credits only
    - In receipt of 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 £345 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £552 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner)
  - Other unemployed adults who:
  - receives other state benefits (not listed in paragraph 120) and their take-home pay (disregarding Universal Credit payments and other benefits) is less than £345 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £552 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner), and;
    - wants to be employed, or progress into more sustainable employment, and their take-home pay (disregarding Universal Credit payments and other benefits) is less than £345 a month (learner is sole adult in their benefit claim) or £552 a month (learner has a joint benefit claim with their partner), and you are satisfied identified learning is directly relevant to their employment prospects and the local labour market needs.
  - First Full Level 2 qualification for students aged 19 up to 23 (if the qualification appears in the 'Legal Entitlements' list), 'Full level 2' is defined in the 'Adult education budget: funding rules'.
  - First Full Level 3 qualification for students aged 19 up to 23 (if the qualification appears in the 'Legal Entitlements' list), 'Full level 3' is defined in the 'Adult education budget: funding rules'.
  - Lifetime Skills Guarantee/National Skills Fund - Any adult aged 19-23 without a full level 3 or above accessing a qualification on the level 3 adult offer qualifications list
  - Lifetime Skills Guarantee/National Skills Fund - Any adult aged 24 and over without a full level 3 or above accessing a qualification on the level 3 adult offer qualifications list
  - Foundation learning for adults aged 19 up to 24 with no prior level 2 qualification
  - English and Maths provision for all adults up to and including level 2, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade A\* - C or grade 4, or higher.

- Students in receipt of a low wage who:
    - are employed and cannot contribute towards the cost of co-funding fees
    - are eligible for co-funding, and
    - Earn less than £17,374.50 annual gross salary if not a resident in the North of Tyne devolved authority
    - Earn less than the real living wage £18,525.00 annual gross salary if a resident in the North of Tyne devolved authority.
  - Digital Skills for those aged 19 and over – including individuals who are employed, aged 19 or older, assessed at below level 1, as part of their legal entitlement on the day they start the following qualification: Essential Digital Skills qualification.
  - Learners funded through SWAPs (Sector Work Academy Programmes)
- For college based courses the fee rate, for co-funded students (excluding loans based provision) is 50% of the 'Find A Learning Aim' System (FALA) matrix rate as shown on the Government system 'The Hub'.
  - Unless discretionary or statutory remission applies all courses which can bear a fee will be set at a level which will encourage participation and cover costs. These courses can be commercial, units/credits or full qualifications
  - Where information provided to the College is inaccurate and as a result the student's enrolment does not attract grant funding, the College reserves the right to charge a fee
  - Students who are continuing on the same learning aim which they enrolled to in 2020/21 will continue to be entitled to the same remission conditions that were operational at the time of the commencement of their study on that learning aim.
  - Enrolment to new learning aims starting in 2021/2022 will be subject to the relevant funding body's eligibility criteria for 2021/2022.

A reduced fee will be applied for the following adult category:

- Low paid individuals studying at entry to level 2 who are not ESFA/Devolved Authority fee remitted and have a personal gross income of less than £21,000 per annum or are in receipt of inactive benefits.

The reduced fees for students in this category are;

- £149; where the course duration is 3 terms
- £99; where the course duration is 2 terms
- £49; where the course duration is 1 term

For learners in this category these fees should be paid in full in all instances, there are no exceptions based on specific curriculum areas.

Heads of Curriculum (HOCs), have discretion to waive fees in instances of students wishing to enrol in receipt of registered asylum status.

Any other fee reductions for any other purposes must be agreed in advance of a course starting, with the Newcastle College Head of Funding, Planning and Resources or Head of Finance, no local Director or HOC discretion can be used.

Where a fee reduction has not been approved by the Newcastle College Finance Team the Student will be liable for the full fee as per the terms stated in this agreement.

## **Fee Levels**

Where fees are to be set for FE provision, they will be based upon LARS funding rates where available and include registration, tuition and examination fees. Exceptions maybe provided for some professional courses (where a FALA rate does not exist) and those negotiated with employers, any exceptions to fee levels must be approved by the Newcastle College Head of Funding, Planning and Resources, Director of Finance or College Principalship before being agreed.

## **Tuition Fee Payments**

All FE and full cost tuition fees are currently due to be paid on enrolment. However, instalments are permissible (please refer to the NCG Credit Control Policy) for courses where the fee is greater than £200, and as follows:

- For students who may be unable to pay their fees in full at enrolment the college offers a payment plan deposit of 25% upon enrolment followed by three equal instalments by Direct Debit. The final Instalment date must not extend beyond the length of the course.
- The credit control policy sets out rules surrounding instalments/methods of payments and implications and actions surrounding non-payment. This is an NCG policy and must be adhered to in conjunction with this policy.
- Students whose employers have agreed to pay their tuition fees will be required to produce a letter/purchase order from their employer at the time of enrolment confirming that they will cover the amount they will pay.

In the case of most two year courses the fees are payable each year upon enrolment in each year.

Students are made aware through the Student agreement that fees may increase annually.

## **Fee Refunds**

It is recognised that there may be occasions where fee payments need to be refunded back to the Student/sponsor. This process needs to be fair and consistently applied and the following sets out the College's Fee Refund Policy.

The student has the right to withdraw from a course within 14 calendar days of the start of the programme, and expect a full refund less administration fee. For short courses, those of less than 1 months duration, a cooling off period of 14 calendar days will also apply. However where delivery of an agreed short course takes place within the cooling off period the student will be liable for payment of the % of the course that has been completed to the point where withdrawal has been communicated to the College Finance Department.

After the relevant 'cooling off period' described above:

- If Newcastle College has to cancel a course, we will credit the fee and refund any fee payments to the student/sponsor.
- If the student agrees to an appropriate alternative then the original fee payment would need to be credited and the payment would be re-receipted against the new alternative course and in this instance then fees will not be refunded.
- Newcastle College may refund a proportion of the tuition fee if a Student withdraws from the course due to ill health or another reason approved by the Principalship.

For refund purposes, cooling off periods and the length of time on a course will be calculated from the date the student starts the course to the date that withdrawal is communicated to the students lecturer/Head of Curriculum/School Office. Where the desire to withdraw from a course is not communicated to the college the period of time on programme, and therefore costs associated, will be calculated to the point at which the Newcastle College Finance, Planning and Resources department receive the withdrawal request from the curriculum team.

For FE students we will reduce the commitment to pay outstanding fees on the following basis;

- Pro rata based on the number of months remaining on the students programme, out of the total of the whole programme duration. This is determined from the point the student requests to be withdrawn or from the point at which the Finance, Planning and Resources department receive the withdrawal request from the curriculum team if a student does not communicate the desire to withdraw from programme. Where withdrawal is requested mid-month, by either the student or the curriculum team, that months fee's will remain payable in full.
- Short courses will be refunded based on the % of the course remaining from the point the student requests to be withdrawn or from the point at which the Finance, Planning and Resources department receive the withdrawal request from the curriculum team if a student does not communicate the desire to withdraw from programme.

Students may apply for a refund or partial refund of tuition fee payment and this should be directed to their School Office/Head of Curriculum in the first instance, who will then request a decision by the Head of Funding, Planning and Resources/Head of Finance.

Following a refund decision, or in extenuating circumstances, an appeal may be submitted by the student to the Head of Funding, Planning and Resources/Head of Finance, this will be presented to a member of the College Principalship team for final decision.

Requests for refunds will only be considered up to two months from the withdrawal date, this applies to all types of provision and is not limited to just FE courses.

A £25 administration fee plus examination costs will be deducted from any refund made.

### **Missed payments of instalments**

Students who fail to make any of their instalment payments in line with their Direct Debit Mandate/Agreement will have their student status withdrawn, which means they will be unable to attend College or sit examinations. Any unpaid fees will be referred to 3<sup>rd</sup> party debt collection agency to collect the outstanding fee(s) on behalf of the College.

Enrolment will not be permitted on any further courses until all outstanding fees with the College are settled in full.

### **B. FE Loans Policy - Advanced Learning Loans/Student Loans Company (SLC)**

Advanced Learner Loans are now available to students aged 19 or over and undertaking:

- A-levels and AS-levels (up to a maximum of four full A-levels)
- Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Access to Higher Education Diplomas
- Vocational qualifications including technical and professional qualifications at Levels 3, 4, 5 and 6

The following level 3 provision is not covered by loans as ESFA/Devolved Authority FE funding is continuing:

- Advanced and Higher Apprenticeships
- First full level 3 provision for those aged 19-23/24+ (subject to qualification eligibility)

Student Finance England will 'write off' any outstanding Advanced Learner Loan balances owed for an Access to HE course once the student completes a higher education course. This means the student does not have to repay it. The higher education course must be eligible for student finance.

### **Enrolment**

Students will be enrolled on the presentation of a Loan Confirmation Letter (provided by SLC after successful application). Students who incur fees but are not able to produce a SLC confirmation letter will be required to sign a Direct Debit mandate to confirm accept of their liability to pay fees. Where a student does not complete a Direct Debit mandate it is deemed that the student accepts liability for any course fees, as per this policy, by signing the Student Learning Agreement.

Students not wishing to enter into a loan agreement will be liable for payment of the relevant tuition fee, or any up-front fees not covered by loans pre payable at the time of enrolment. This will follow the payment schedule noted in "Tuition Fee Payments" above.

Tuition fees funded by Loans are paid to Newcastle College directly by the SLC. Payments are made on a monthly basis for each month when the Student is still active on their course on the first day of the month. The value of the loan for which the Student becomes liable will increase with each monthly payment made to the College. It is in the Student's best interest to inform the College of any Changes to their Circumstances as early as possible.

In the event of a change of circumstance where the loan is withdrawn by SLC, the student will become liable for their fees.

We will work with the Student to make them aware of this situation and arrange instalment payments by direct debit mandate. Otherwise please refer to our refund policy, as stated above.

Students that have funding applications rejected or cancelled by Student Finance after they have started their course remain liable to pay their tuition fees in full.

If a student fails to make arrangements to pay fees they will be withdrawn from their course. Even though they are no longer a student, they will still be liable to pay the full tuition fees for the course subject to the Colleges refund policy.

### **Fee Levels for loan based provision**

The ESFA/Devolved Authority allow providers to set a maximum fee for loan –based provision based on the fully funded value set on the HM Government 'Hub'. The minimum threshold to generate a loan is a fee level of £300. The maximum fees for individual qualifications are as per FALA. It is the responsibility of the Student to enter into an agreement with the Student Loans Company and secure a loan facility to pay for this provision. NCG and its Divisions will offer support and guidance to the Student to undertake the loan application.

Fees for classroom based provision funded by a loan will be set at 100% of the listed fee (FALA matrix rate). This can only be modified after consideration of the market and at the discretion of Principalship or the Newcastle College Finance Team, no local level discretion (for Directors or HOC's) will apply for fee reductions.

## **Loan Liabilities**

All tuition fees are currently due to be paid on enrolment. For Advanced Learning Loans this requires the Student to ensure that the college receives confirmation that the loan facility has been agreed before starting the programme or that a Direct Debit instalment plan is in place.

Students funding their learning through Advanced Learner Loans should be aware that, in the event that they cease to attend their course, amounts due in respect of tuition fees cease to be paid by Student Finance to the College on behalf of the student. In the event that a student withdraws/is withdrawn, any outstanding balance of tuition fees not paid by Student Finance will become immediately payable to the College by the student.

## **Tuition Fee Refunds for Advanced Learning Loans**

It is recognised that there may be occasions where loans may need to be refunded back to the Student Loans Company and hence reduce the outstanding debt to the Student. The following principles apply:

- Where the College cancels a programme, the Student Loans Company will be notified and the loan for this programme cancelled in full.
- If the Student agrees to an appropriate alternative then the Student Loans Company will be informed if this results in a change of circumstances or loan level.
- Should a student wish to apply for a refund or partial refund of their current loan liability if there are extenuating circumstances, then the same process should be followed as for FE fees on page 3 of this document.
- This would result in a change of circumstances being recorded with the Student Loans Company and the Student's loan liability being adjusted accordingly.
- For the avoidance of doubt, the above would follow the refund policy as set out in this document.

Students funding their learning through a student loan should be aware that, in the event that they cease to attend their course, amounts due in respect of tuition fees cease to be paid by the Student Loans Company to the College on behalf of the student. In the event that the student withdraws/is withdrawn any outstanding balance of tuition fees not paid by the Student Loan Company will become immediately payable to the College by the student.

## **C. Fees Policy - Other Provision**

### **Full Cost**

Fees for commercial (non-government funded) courses or full cost will be charged at a level to reflect the full price to the College and be approved by a member of Principalship or the Newcastle College Finance, Planning and Resources Team.

### **Apprenticeship Fees**

Newcastle College will be observing guidance specified by the NCG FE Fees Policy in respect of charges for Apprenticeship provision that begins in the 21/22 academic year. This states;

Learners do not pay fees for apprenticeships, but the cost of apprenticeships is borne by employers, in part or via the apprenticeship service. From 1st April 2021, all new apprenticeship starts will be via the apprenticeship service. For levy employers, the full value of the Total Negotiated Price should be met by funds in the Apprenticeship levy account. Non levy paying employers will continue to be required to pay mandatory co-financing of 5% of the Total Negotiated Price (which should include an explicit amount for End Point Assessment.) All employers are also liable to pay any cost where the Total Negotiated Price of the apprenticeship exceeds the ESFA funding band for the apprenticeship standard. This should be actioned as per the NCG standard operating procedure for apprenticeships. All fees for learners starting prior to 1st April 2021 should be set as per the 2020-21 FE Fees Policy.

For Apprenticeship provision that began before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 guidance in the Newcastle College 20-21 Fee's Policy will apply. This states; The policy requirements in this section apply to the provision of apprenticeship frameworks and standards, where the funding draw-down is predicated by the payment of the employer fee. This will apply to employers not eligible to pay the levy and also to levy-paying employers who have exhausted their levy funds.

Newcastle College will observe national guidance for apprenticeships that states:

- Fees must be aligned to the appropriate band for the applicable apprenticeship standard or framework.
- Fees will be charged based on individual costings for each separate Apprenticeship Framework or Standard and an itemised price provided to the employer detailing the price breakdown as agreed.
- Any variation to this fee for any variation in delivery for any employer must be approved by either the Director of Apprenticeships, a member of the College Principalship, the Head of Funding, Planning and Resources or the Head of Finance.
- The fee contribution must be cash and not any sort of 'in kind' arrangement and must equal 5% of the total agreed price
- The total cost of the apprenticeship can be set at any level up to the cap and forms part of an 'apprenticeship agreement' with the provider. This will be part of the total cost of the apprenticeship, which the employer contribution would be 5% of the total.
- The employer may be eligible for incentive payments; however these incentive payments must be made to the employer by the provider in line with the funding methodology.
- The College has complete discretion over the nature of the payments from the employer, both in terms of the timing and number of instalments. Funding, however, will only be paid if fees are evidenced as being received. Invoices must be paid within 30 days or by direct debit if paid in instalments.
- The College will apply fair processes in place to ensure that fees and/or funding are repaid if the programme is terminated.
- Newcastle College is committed to observing national guidelines around the reduction of Apprenticeship fees to account for accredited prior learning, please refer to the separate "Apprenticeship price duration reduction in relation to prior learning process policy" for more information.

The fees will be upfront payment in full, or four equal instalment payments over the duration of the Apprenticeship.

The discretion to approve the provision of instalment payments for an employer or group of employers resides with either the Director of Apprenticeships, the Head of Funding, Planning and Resources or the Head of Finance.

Where subcontractors are used to deliver part of a programme Newcastle College will ensure that a specific apprenticeship contract is in place.

### **Apprenticeship Fee Refunds**

It is recognised that there may be occasions where fee payments need to be refunded back to the employer. This process needs to be fair and consistently applied and the following sets out the College Fee Refund Policy.

- Where the College has to cancel an apprenticeship arrangement, they will normally credit the pro-rated fee paid for that year and refund any fee payments to the employer.
- If the employer agrees to an appropriate alternative then the original fee payment would need to be credited and the payment would be re-receipted against the new alternative programme and in this instance the fees will not be refunded.
- The Service Level Agreement must state where employers may apply to for a refund or partial refund of their fee payment in any extenuating circumstances.

The employer has the right to withdraw from an Apprenticeship within 14 days of enrolment, and expect a full refund less administration fee. After this time Apprenticeship fee refunds, where applicable, will be calculated on a pro-rata basis.

### **Apprenticeship fees – Group impact**

Where an individual College of NCG agrees a primary contract with an employer and the intention is that other Colleges will service the local office of the employer, the payment terms of the primary contract will take precedence over and must be complied with in preference to any local arrangement of payment terms.

### **Commercial Fees**

Commercial Fees and International Fees will be adjusted only at the discretion of the College Principalship or Finance, Team.

Commercial fee refunds will be calculated in line with the FE refunds policy.

### **Traineeships for 16-24 year olds**

No fee will be charged to 16-24 year olds who have not achieved a full level 3 qualification.

Students with a full level 3 at the beginning of their traineeship will be chargeable as full cost of provision.

Students aged 16-24 whose traineeship planned duration is greater than 6 months will be chargeable as full cost provision.

### **Higher Education Courses**

Newcastle College will be charging fees for new undergraduate entrants as per the NCG HE fees structure.

We will reduce the commitment to pay outstanding fees by the following:

- Three quarters of the tuition fee if the Student withdraws during the first term;
- Half of the tuition fee if the Student withdraws during the second term and
- No refund will be made if the learner withdraws during the third term.

Students funding their learning through a Student Loan should be aware that, in the event that they cease to attend their course, amounts due in respect of tuition fees cease to be paid by the Student Loans Company to the College on behalf of the student. In the event that the student withdraws/is withdrawn any outstanding balance of tuition fees not paid by the Student Loan Company will become immediately payable to the College by the student.

For all students, refund amounts, cooling off periods and the length of time on a course will be calculated from the date the student starts the course to the last date of engagement with the student. Where the desire to withdraw from a course is not communicated to the college the period of time on programme, and therefore costs associated, will be calculated from the date the student starts the course to the last date of engagement with the student.

### **International Students**

Newcastle College will be charging fees for students as per the International Fees Policy, which will be made available as appropriate.

From 1st July 2021, all EU, EEA and Swiss nationals will require an assessment to determine whether they are eligible for home fee status.

Terms and Conditions for International students are available separately.

### **Subcontracted Provision**

Newcastle College follows the NCG 'Subcontract Management Framework' and 'Supply Chain Fees and Charges' policies, please refer to these documents separately for further information.

### **Examination Fees**

All courses are normally charged the examination/registration fees set by the awarding bodies for their qualification at the time of enrolment.

Awarding body fees are not charged to 16- 18 year old students whose tuition fees are remitted.

Students retaking examinations may be charged the examination retake fee which is payable to the college prior to the examination entry, excluding 16-19 English and Maths students and Adults studying 'Legal Entitlement' qualifications.

Non-attendance at an examination for which they have been entered may be charged the examination fee plus an administration charge of £25, excluding 16-19 English and Maths students and Adults studying 'Legal Entitlement' qualifications.

### **Confirmation of Past Results**

Anyone wishing to obtain a statement of past results who has not been enrolled with the College for the present or previous academic year, will be required to pay a fee of £40 to cover the administration costs involved.

## **External Candidate**

A Student is classed as an external candidate once they are no longer enrolled on a course which an exam/assessment is related to. The College does not typically take external candidates.

## **Other Charges**

Where a course has significant increased costs for special or expensive items such as uniforms, equipment or consumables these costs will be passed on to students. These charges include;

- Clothing or equipment, if necessary for student's health or safety a charge will be made for clothing and equipment retained by student;
- Sale of learning materials;
- Fines for late return of library books or other disciplinary fines;
- Deposits on lockers, ID cards, keys, library cards and equipment that are fully refundable except in cases of theft or damage;
- Non course-specific photocopying and printing;
- Recreational use of leisure facilities and other non-academic facilities where activity taking place is not a requirement of a course syllabus;
- Optional extra activities where activity is taking place outside a required part of an agreed study programme

## **Staff**

For courses not directly supported by the Staff Development budget the College will not charge a tuition fee for ESFA funded courses provided:

- Attendance is wholly in the staff members own time.
- The course must meet the business needs of the College.
- The course would be viable without the member of staff i.e. staff will not be able to enrol to make up the numbers to ensure the course runs.
- If courses are oversubscribed outside students will take priority over staff with subsidised places.
- All other fees e.g. examinations must be paid by the member of staff.
- A 30% discount will be given to staff who enrol on a recreational course for one class per 10 week block.
- No discount will be given for enrolment on a Full Cost course.