

Fees Policy 2024-25

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to give details of the tuition (and associated) fees charged for courses offered by West Thames College. In addition to the tuition fee most courses will have an examination fee. Some students will also have to pay materials fees or other fees incurred. These charges will be made clear prior to enrolment.

Tuition fees and remission arrangements are generally determined with reference to the student age and/or the course characteristics. Broadly, students may be divided by age into the following categories:

- Under 16s
- 16-18 year olds
- 19-23 year olds
- Students aged 24 or over

Courses are classified as:

- Further Education (FE) funded by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) or, in the case of the devolved Adult Education Budget, by the Greater London Authority (GLA);
- Higher Education (HE) funded by the Office for Students (OfS) either directly or through a partner University; or
- Full-cost (commercial/self-financing).

Non-UK students may be charged a higher “international” fee.

Throughout the Policy reference is made to “home” students. A “home” student is defined as being “ordinarily resident for the last 3 years in the UK”. However, students who are 16-18 years old with indefinite leave to remain in the UK are treated as “home” students regardless of the length of residency.

All fees are listed in ProSolution, the College’s student MIS, and are set annually with reference to:

- Funding rates for qualifications as published on the [Find a learning aim \(FaLA\) web-based search facility](#) and in the ESFA’s [FE adult skills qualifications list with funding rates guidance](#)
- Fees charged by competitors and other institutions, i.e. with consideration to fee levels that the market will bear
- Prevailing price inflation
- Fees charged by the College in previous years

Tuition fees are not necessarily linked directly to the funding rates for qualifications as published by the ESFA as this would lead to multiple fees for same-level courses when consistency of fees charged to students is to be preferred. Instead, ESFA funding rates are used to gauge average funding levels around which more stable and consistent pricing can be established for full-time courses at each level of study and for part-time courses.

Proposed tuition fees for 2024-25 are shown in Appendix A to this policy.

1. Further Education students

- **Students aged 16-18**
 - **Students aged 19-25 with an EHCP**
 - **Students aged under 16 (ESFA direct funded students)**
- a. FE students who are aged 16,17 or 18 years on 31 August in the teaching year that they commence a study programme and are “home” students do not pay tuition fees and do not normally pay examination fees. They may be required to pay for specialist course materials which they wish to retain for use outside the course, or trips or visits which are not an integral part of their study programme. The same rule applies to Under-16 ESFA direct funded students with exceptions (see 1d below).
 - b. 19-25 year old students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will not be charged tuition or examination fees.
 - c. The College is unable to enrol any students who are enrolled full time with another ESFA funded provider and who may wish to follow part of their programme at the College during school hours. In these cases the school is expected to meet the costs of this provision.
 - d. The College enrolls some students under 16 years of age on programmes for which a school or local authority pays directly. In this case the school or LA will be invoiced for the tuition fee.

2. Further Education students aged 19-23 studying up to and including Level 1

Depending on employment status and prior attainment, FE students who are “home” students and aged 19-23 on the day they start a course at Level 1 or below may be charged tuition fees and examination fees, and may also be charged for materials or educational trips and visits.

Students aged 19-23 on courses up to and including Level 1 are exempt from tuition/exam fees if they fall into one of the following remission categories.

- a. Students on Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), including those receiving National Insurance credits only, or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) (please note this does not apply to dependents of claimants)
- b. Unemployed students who are in receipt of an income-related state benefit (other than JSA or ESA) who want to enter employment and need skills training to do so
- c. Students receiving Universal Credit because they are unemployed, and their take-home pay recorded on the UC statement (disregarding UC payments and other benefits) is less than £617 a month (where the student is the sole adult in their benefit claim) or £988 a month (where the student has a joint benefit claim with their partner)

- d. Students studying Functional Skills, adult basic skills, or GCSE English or maths who have not previously attained GCSE grade 4 (previously grade C) or above in these subjects
- e. Students studying Essential Digital Skills qualifications up to and including Level 1
- f. Students studying learning provision to progress to Level 2

3. Further Education students aged 19-23 (Level 2 and above)

FE students who are “home” students and are aged 19-23 on the day they start a course at Level 2 or above are normally charged tuition fees, exam fees, and may also be charged for course materials and educational trips/visits if required.

Some 19-23 year olds funded by the ESFA are exempt from tuition and exam fees if they fall into one of the following fee remission categories.

- a. Students on Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), including those receiving National Insurance credits only, or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) (please note this does not apply to dependents of claimants)
- b. Unemployed students who are in receipt of an income-related state benefit (other than JSA or ESA) who want to enter employment and need skills training to do so
- c. Students receiving Universal Credit because they are unemployed, and their take-home pay recorded on the UC statement (disregarding UC payments and other benefits) is less than £617 a month (where the student is the sole adult in their benefit claim) or £988 a month (where the student has a joint benefit claim with their partner)
- d. Students studying Functional Skills, adult basic skills, or GCSE English or maths who have not previously attained GCSE grade 4 (previously grade C) or above in these subjects
- e. Students studying their first full Level 2 qualification eligible as part of [The Legal Entitlements](#) or studying an Entry/Level 1 programme (except ESOL) where they have an entitlement to a full level 2.
- f. Students studying their first full Level 3 qualification eligible as part of [The Legal Entitlements](#)

FE students aged 19 or older who have already attained a full Level 3 qualification and are enrolling on Level 3 or above courses are not eligible for Government funding unless the course studied is part of the Level 3 Free Courses for Jobs offer. These students will be able to apply for an Advanced Learner Loan to cover the costs of tuition and examination fees. For these loan-funded students, the tuition fee will be set at the full weighted value for the qualification being undertaken, in accordance with qualification funding rates published by ESFA on the [Find a learning aim \(FaLA\) web-based search facility](#).

If an FE student is not eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan or chooses not to take up a loan then they will be liable for the full combined tuition/exam fees.

4. Further Education students aged 24+

FE students who are “home” students eligible for funding by the ESFA and who are aged 24 or older on the day they start a course at level 2 or below will be charged a co-funded rate for tuition and exam fees.

Some 24+ students funded by the ESFA are exempt from tuition and exam fees if they fall into one of the following fee remission categories.

- a. Students on Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), including those receiving National Insurance credits only, or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) (please note this does not apply to dependents of claimants)
- b. Unemployed students who are in receipt of an income-related state benefit (other than JSA or ESA) who want to enter employment and need skills training to do so
- c. Students receiving Universal Credit because they are unemployed, and their take-home pay recorded on the UC statement (disregarding UC payments and other benefits) is less than £617 a month (where the student is the sole adult in their benefit claim) or £988 a month (where the student has a joint benefit claim with their partner)
- d. Students studying Functional Skills, adult basic skills, or GCSE English or Maths who have not previously attained GCSE grade C or above in these subject
- e. Students studying Essential Digital Skills qualifications up to and including Level 1

FE students aged 24 or older enrolling on Level 3 or above courses are not eligible for Government funding unless accessing a qualification on the [Level 3 Free Courses for Jobs](#) qualifications list. Where the qualification studied is not in the L3 Adult Offer, these students will be able to apply for an Advanced Learner Loan to cover the costs of tuition and examination fees. For these loan-funded students, the tuition fee will be set at the full weighted value for the qualification being undertaken, in accordance with qualification funding rates published by ESFA on the [Find a learning aim \(FaLA\) web-based search facility](#).

If an FE student is not eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan or chooses not to take up a loan then they will be liable for the full combined tuition/exam fees.

5. International (Non-UK) students

For international (non-UK) students the tuition fee will be set at the full weighted value for the qualification being undertaken, in accordance with qualification funding rates published by ESFA on the [Find a learning aim \(FaLA\) web-based search facility](#). Exam and material fees are also payable in addition to the tuition fee.

6. Higher Education courses

For West Thames College Higher Education funded students, the course fee is set by the College each year and only applies to HE students in respect of whom the College receives grant funding direct from OfS. Where the HE course is franchised from or delivered in partnership with an HE institution, that institution is responsible for setting and collecting fees from students.

7. Full-cost courses

These are courses run with no external funding. Fees are set using the College's curriculum planning software to identify the appropriate fee taking into account all direct costs and a contribution to College overheads. Students (or their sponsoring organisation) on non-fundable full-cost courses will have to pay the course fee set and there is no fee remission on these courses.

8. Payment

Full payment of course fees is due at the time of enrolment, except where an invoice is being raised, and can be made in person, by post or phone.

The College accepts payment of fees by individuals through the following means:

- a. Cash (sterling)
- b. Debit card
- c. Credit card (excluding American Express)

Where an employer or other third party has agreed to pay a student's fees on behalf of an individual, payment will be by invoice on condition that a purchase order from the third party confirming payment is provided at the time of enrolment. In the absence of such confirmation, the student remains liable for the full cost of the course.

In the event of non-payment of course fees, students may be required to withdraw from the course and the College will pursue the individual for full payment of the fees. Students with outstanding fees due to the College will not be allowed to enrol onto a new course until the debt has been paid in full.

Payment by instalments is available on certain FE, HE and full-cost courses that meet the following criteria.

- a. The course duration is 20 weeks or more
- b. The tuition fee (excluding exam and material fees) is £300 or more

There is an administration charge of £20 for payment by instalments.

Students wishing to pay in instalments will be required to sign an Instalment Agreement. The second and third instalment payments are payable by direct debit from a UK bank account or by debit/credit card and will be automatically deducted on the due dates shown below.

For courses starting in the autumn term and finishing in the summer term:

- 40% payable on enrolment
- 30% payable on 2nd December 2024
- 30% payable on 3rd March 2025

For courses starting in the spring term and finishing in the summer term

- 60% payable on enrolment
- 40% payable on 3rd March 2025

For courses that start in the summer term payment by instalments is not available.

9. Refund Policy

- a. Fees are refundable in full if the College should close a class.
- b. No refunds will be made in the event of a student withdrawing from the course for personal reasons.
- c. Where an instalment agreement is in place for payment of fees, students who withdraw from a course remain liable for any fee instalments outstanding.
- d. At the discretion of the College and where the student can demonstrate that extenuating circumstances exist to prevent them from continuing with their course, the College *may* authorise a refund or credit note for a proportionate amount of the tuition fee.
- e. Refund charges of £20 will be made for processing the refund.

Any request for a partial or full refund must be made in writing to the College Information Centre (info@west-thames.ac.uk), who will liaise with the relevant Director to investigate any mitigating circumstances.

10. Specific tuition fees for each course

The definitive list of fees is entered into ProSolution each year by MIS as part of the College's curriculum planning process.

The correct fee must be assessed and charged for each course at the point of enrolment. Staff must refer to the latest data available when enrolling students to ensure the correct fee is charged.

11. Policy review and approval

This policy will be reviewed annually in the spring term by the Executive Director of Finance, HR & Development and will be subject to approval by the Corporation (or designated sub-committee).

Last review: Feb-24

Next review: by 28-Feb-25

Appendix A: 2024-25 Tuition Fees

Tuition fees for 2024-25 are summarised in the table below¹.

Programme	2024-25	2023-24
Full-time courses at:		
Level 1	£1,175	£1,130
Level 2	£1,570	£1,510
Level 3 (Year 1)	Various ²	Various ²
Level 3 (Year 2 returners only)	£3,360	£3,230
Part-time/Evening courses	£5.70 per hour	£5.50 per hour
ESOL adult courses	£3.85 per hour	£3.70 per hour
HE Specialist Makeup	£5,900	£5,900
All other HE courses	£5,000	£5,000
Full-cost courses	Various ³	Various ³

Notes

- 1) Fees for HE courses are unchanged at 2023-24 levels. Fees for all other courses have been increased by 4% in line with the prevailing rate of inflation then rounded as appropriate.
- 2) Fees for Level 3 courses will be set at the full weighted value for the qualification being undertaken, in accordance with qualification funding rates published by ESFA on the [Find a learning aim \(FaLA\) web-based search facility](#). Students for whom this fee is payable may be eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan.
- 3) Fees specific to each full-cost course are published on the College's website. These vary but are set with reference to:
 - a) expected enrolment numbers, costs and a target contribution to overheads;
 - b) competitor prices; and
 - c) fees charged in prior years and for similar courses – to ensure consistency.