COLLEGE TUITION FEE POLICY FOR 2026/27

Background

1. The college reviews its fee policy on an annual basis and has seen fee levels rise as government funding has been targeted at specific groups of adult learners.

2. Department for Education (DfE) 2026/27 funding guidance has been published but can be subject to change. Small operational changes may be required to respond to the DfE's requirements.

3. Due to competition law requirements and restrictions, the DfE/DWP and East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) are not empowered to set college fees. The setting of fees remains a matter for the college corporation and is a key role identified within the Instrument and Articles of Government and the Financial Memorandum. However, the DfE and ministers continue to retain an interest in the levels of income raised by FE colleges through fees and each year, as government policy is to balance the contributions for adult learning between the state, individuals and employers.

4. The principles underlying the proposed College Tuition Fee Policy for 2026/27 remain consistent with prior years. The key changes are:
    - commercial course cancellation policy added as section 38-40

5. The charging of fees relates primarily to adult learning, either paid by individuals or employers, and fee policies always recognise established fee remission categories, particularly for 16-18 learners where legislation requires tuition fees not to be charged and for adults in receipt of certain benefits. In recent years, remission categories have included those learners studying first full Level 2 qualifications and some basic skills courses. The college has also established and maintained additional remission categories outside of national policy in the interest of supporting the local community and providing a pathway into learning and employment.

6. Guidance on the **eligibility of EU Nationals**, Nationals of European Economic Community Countries or Irish citizens can be found here: www.gov.uk/guidance/studying-in-the-uk-guidance-for-eu-students (or the latest version on the Gov.uk website).

7. Guidance on the eligibility to DfE funding for types of immigration status can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules/adult-skills-fund-funding-rules-2025-to-2026 (or the latest version on the Gov.uk website).

    a. Note that the East Midlands Combined County Authority has responsibility for adult skills funding for residents within its area. For 2026/27, it is applying DfE funding rules. Where variations are being applied, these will be noted in the policy.

    b. Note that these rules change periodically, and the latest version will apply.

Fee remission categories

8. The current policy includes reference to the national fee remission categories as required by the funding guidance, including for 16-18 learners and adults (whether unemployed, self-employed, or employed with an income threshold of less than £25,750) and those who are economically inactive.

9. All 16-18-year-old learners and those who are 16-24 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are fully fee remitted as a blanket national policy entitlement. Employers of 16-18 apprentices and 19+ apprentices with an EHCP or who have been in local authority care and who are with a small employer with fewer than 50 employees will not be liable to pay any fees for the programme. For adult learners, the following will apply from 2026/27:

Fully remitted fees

Provision	**Learner**
Students undertaking English and maths learning aims up to and including Level 2 as part of their legal entitlement.	Adults aged 19+
Unemployed, employed, or self-employed adults up to and including Level 2 and the eligible Level 3 offers, with an annual gross income below £25,750 and those who are economically inactive but seeking work.	Adults aged 19+
English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) learning up to and including Level 2 with an annual gross income below than £25,750 and those who are economically inactive but seeking work.	Adults aged 19+
Level 2 Legal Entitlement qualifications, if your prior attainment is less than a full Level 2 (qualification specific).	Adults aged 19-23 as at 31/08/2025
Level 3 Legal Entitlement qualifications if your prior attainment is less than a full Level 3 (qualification specific).	Adults aged 19-23 as at 31/08/2025
Level 3 Free Courses for Jobs qualifications if: • your annual income is less than £33,796.80 and you are resident in the EMCCA area • your annual income is less than £25,750 • you are economically inactive but seeking work • you are aged 19-23 with an annual income above £25,750 but have not achieved a full Level 3.	Adults aged 19+
Essential Digital Skills qualifications (EDSQs) OR Digital Functional Skills qualifications (FSQs), up to and including Level 1, for individuals aged 19 and over who have digital skills assessed at below Level 1.	Adults aged 19+
Note that the criteria for fee remission can be amended by DfE/DWP and EMCCA. The college will follow the latest guidance.	

Contribution towards cost of study (co-funded)

Provision	**Learner**
Apprenticeships	Apprentices of non-levy employers and where levy employers have fully utilised their levy. These employers will pay the full fee required by the DfE.
Entry, Level 1 and Level 2 qualifications	Learners aged 19 and over whose income exceeds the earnings threshold.
Level 3 or 4 qualifications	Learners aged 19+ who do not qualify for full funding have access to Advanced Learning Loans.

10. In addition, the college has developed and set its own fee remission categories, which include the

following:

a. Staff on college-delivered courses – where the course is deemed essential to the employee`s personal development plan (PDP), the college will support the full cost of the programme.
b. College staff will also receive support as follows:
    i. Attendance on AEB-funded courses in their own time – the standard fee will be waived.
    ii. Attendance on other college programmes – the fee will be discounted by 50%.
c. Adult full-time learners will pay a fee of £550 when neither the learners nor learning programmes are included within national fee remission categories for courses of study nor covered by the Advanced Learning Loan facility. A full-time adult learner programme must be greater than or equal to 360 guided learning hours to qualify for this remission. Examination, registration and materials costs are included in this amount.

11. Students funded through the student loan system via Student Finance England will not receive any refund of monies paid to the college by SFE and will not be liable for any unpaid fees. However, if SFE recovers any amounts received by the college, the college reserves the right to recover those fees from the student.

12. Exceptions to the policy for the amount of fees liable by the student in the event of withdrawal will only be made on production of a medical certificate which evidences the inability of the student to complete their studies.

Non-Refundable Registration/Professional Membership Fees Policy

If a non-refundable registration/professional membership fee is required for the participation of the course and this fee is essential to cover administrative costs and to reserve your place in the program, please be advised of the following:

13. **Registration/professional membership fee payment:** The registration/professional membership fee is included in the price of the course and WNC must pay in full at the time of registration. This fee is non-refundable under any circumstances, including but not limited to cancellation, withdrawal, or failure to attend.

14. **Significant loss:** In the event of significant loss due to unforeseen circumstances, such as cancellation of the event or course by the organizers, we will make reasonable efforts to offer alternatives or rescheduling options. However, the registration fee remains non-refundable.

15. **Cancellation by participant:** Should you choose to cancel your registration or fail to attend, the registration fee will not be refunded.

16. **Force majeure:** In cases of extraordinary events beyond the control of the organisers (e.g., natural disasters, pandemics, etc.), the registration fee remains non-refundable unless otherwise determined by the organisers in specific situations.

By registering, you agree to these terms and acknowledge the non-refundable nature of the registration fee.

Fee Policy for 2026/27 – Further Education

17. In 2026/27, the college is seeking to increase local demand and so is making limited changes to fees. Fees still remain at levels to encourage demand, whilst incurring a 5% increase to reflect rising costs.

18. The college will continue to charge 'market rate' fees where these are likely to be greater than the assumed national fee.

19. Any departure from the fee policy in relation to the charging of fees below policy levels will need to be supported by market evidence and a full business case to ensure that appropriate information can support any decision process. Departure from the policy in this instance must be authorised by the chief financial officer.

20. Full-cost and commercially competitive course offerings will continue with a margin contribution model. The college will cost each programme individually to reflect group size, delivery location, material, staffing costs and the competitive landscape in each individual sector. Programmes will normally be priced on a full-cost recovery basis, including a minimum margin of 20%. All pricing decisions for full-cost and commercial courses are subject to approval by the chief financial officer.

21. Some commercial courses run by the college will have different terms and conditions, and these will be confirmed at the time of booking.

Arrangements for fee refunds on withdrawals

22. The following fees are payable if a student is paying their own fees or if they are being paid by a sponsor. If you withdraw from the course
    a. and have not started: full refund
    b. and have attended for less than four weeks: full fees less an admin charge of £30 will be refunded
    c. and have completed less than 50% (based on the start and end date of the programme/course) but more than four weeks: 50% of the fee will be refunded
    d. and have completed 50% (based on the start and end date of the programme/course): no refund will be due.

23. Exceptions to the policy for the amount of fees liable by the student in the event of withdrawal will only be made on production of a medical certificate which evidences the inability of the student to complete their studies.

24. All of the above is subject to the Non-Refundable Registration/Professional Membership Fees Policy above.

The Further Education Advanced Learning Loan system

25. Advanced Learning Loans (ALL) are available for qualifying students over the age of 19 who study Level 3 programmes and are not eligible for fee remission. No public funding support is available for these students.

26. As with all other fee-paying students, those funded through an ALL are, at all times, personally responsible for paying their fees.

Arrangements for student withdrawals

27. Students using the ALL system for funding their studies who withdraw before the end of the course will not receive any refund of monies paid to the college by SFE and will not be liable for any unpaid fees.

Full-cost and commercial programmes

28. Full-cost and commercially competitive course offerings will continue with a margin contribution model. The college will price each programme individually to reflect group size, delivery location,

material, staffing costs and the competitive landscape in the sector being serviced. Programmes will normally be priced on a full cost recovery basis, including a minimum margin of 20%. All pricing decisions for full-cost and commercial courses are subject to approval by the chief financial officer.

Discretion

29. The assistant principal will continue to have discretion to set fees at a higher level than the assumed rate to reflect the market conditions. This must be agreed before the commencement of any delivery of the programmes under consideration and should not change once the academic year has begun, other than in exceptional circumstances.

30. Discretion to charge fees lower than required by this policy may only be exercised as part of the curriculum planning process and must be approved by the principal.

Apprenticeship programmes

31. Employers paying the Apprenticeship Levy will pay fees directly from their digital apprenticeship accounts. These employers will need to pay a top-up of 5% of the monthly cost if their Apprenticeship Levy account has insufficient funds to meet the cost of the apprenticeship.

32. Employers who do not pay the Apprenticeship Levy will be required under the DfE funding rules to make a co-investment payment towards the total cost of the apprenticeship training of 5%. Small employers may be entitled to remission when employing individuals aged 18 and below.

33. The college will set its initial fees for apprenticeships at the top of the published band within which each apprenticeship framework or standard qualification is placed by the DfE. Each fee is reviewed to consider any prior learning and the cost of delivery, in accordance with DfE requirements.

34. The fee of 5% charged to non-levy paying employers through co-investment is mandatory and cannot be waived under any circumstances. However, it should be noted that co-investment fees not paid within 90 days of the commencement of a programme automatically lead to withdrawal of funding by the DfE.

35. Levy-paying employers will pay the full chargeable fee through the Digital Apprenticeship Account in accordance with the system and scheme rules set by the DfE.

36. The college, however, has agreed that payment of the apprenticeship 5% will be collected by invoice for the full sum or direct debit instalments based on the length of programme, with a minimum of £60 per month for fees under £800 or a minimum payment of £100 for fees over £800.

School students attending college

The college will raise an invoice at the time of enrolment for the academic year, based on the guided learning hours of the course.

<u>Arrangements for short course refunds</u>

37. The following fees are payable if a student is paying their own fees – if you withdraw from the short course
    a. and have not started: full refund.

b. and have attended less than 25% (based on the start and end date of the programme/course): full fees less an admin charge of £30 will be refunded
c. and have completed less than 50% (based on the start and end date of the programme/course) but more than three weeks: 50% of the fee will be refunded.
d. and have completed 50% (based on the start and end date of the programme/course): no refund will be due.

Commercial course cancellation policy

38. Cancellations made more than seven working days before the course start date:
    a. You are entitled to a full refund.
    b. Alternatively, you may reschedule to another available course date at no additional cost.

39. Cancellations made less than seven working days before the course start date (with the exception of those made within 48 hours of course start date):
    a. A £20 cancellation fee will apply.
    b. The remaining balance will be refunded, or you may choose to reschedule (subject to availability) with the cancellation fee deducted.

40. Cancellations made within 48 hours of the course start:
    a. **No refund** will be issued.
    b. Due to the short notice, we are unable to reassign your place or offer rescheduling.

Those who do not cancel but do not attend the course are subject to ruling 40, where no refund will be issued.

Course Fee Credit Policy

Introduction and background

The college has a strong interest in collecting fees as early as possible to ensure cash liquidity and to reduce the effort and cost involved in chasing late and overdue debts.

However, it is equally in the college's interests to encourage students to enrol on its courses, particularly as some students find it difficult to pay all of their fees in advance of their course starting.

Therefore, it is important that the college allows students to settle course fees in certain circumstances through the granting of credit and payment by instalments. In order to minimise the risk of losses, the policy for granting credit and the ability to pay by instalments must be strictly followed.

Policy

Important points about responsibility for fees

- The payment of student tuition fees is the responsibility of the student and the student alone.
- The student will be responsible for fees, irrespective of whether they are paid by their employer or any other third-party organisation.
- In the event of fees remaining unpaid, the college will seek to recover fees from the student.

Individuals

Payment of fees by instalments is only permitted in the circumstances below.

Students studying Further Education courses – ALL of these conditions must be met:

- The total student fee for the year is £175 or greater.
- The course lasts for 12 weeks or more.
- The student has relevant identification and valid bank account details.

Instalment payments will only be authorised for direct debits.

Fees under £1,000 may be paid by four instalments: 25% deposit payable at enrolment with a further three consecutive monthly payments (payable by direct debit) until the debt is settled.

Fees over £1,000 may be paid by four instalments: 25% deposit payable at enrolment, with a further three bi-monthly payments (payable by direct debit) until the debt is settled.

Students will be sent a direct debit form via either Signable or DocuSign to enable the college to process the final three instalments based on the criteria above.

If the college does not receive a completed direct debit form within 30 days of the commencement of the course, a £30 administration fee will be applied to the account for each month that the completed form or full payment has not been received.

Employer payments

If your employer wishes to pay your course fees, you will need to provide a purchase order or, if the company does not produce purchase orders, a letter on headed paper detailing the costs covered at the start of each academic year of study. Details to be provided are:

- name of student/s
- course details
- amount of fees
- agreement that they are funding the course.

Fees are payable in full and will be due for payment 30 days from the date of invoice. The enrolled student will, at all times, be liable for the full payment of fees relating to their course, irrespective of the payment method applied to the course of study.

Apprenticeship co-investment invoices – either 30 days from date of invoice or via direct debit payments (minimum per month £60 based on the length of the course) – employer contract advises which method of payment.

Collection of payment instalments

Overdue instalments

A failure to make payment on the due date will result in all outstanding fees being immediately due from the student. Continued failure to pay course fees may result in removal from the course of study.

In respect of overdue instalments, the Finance team will inform the student of a failure to make a payment and obtain agreement to amend future direct debits or take payment via card over the phone.

If the above agreement has not been made, a letter/email will be sent to the student to inform them that they may be excluded from their exams and college facilities if the overdue instalment is not received within a specified time.

Finance will advise the assistant principal and the tutor that the student has outstanding fees and ask the student to contact Finance straight away. Failure to pay may lead to withdrawal from the course.

Details of the outstanding debt will be processed by the Finance team and subject to the standard debt recovery procedure. This includes referral to a debt collection agency or application to the small claims court as appropriate.

Once the debt recovery has entered this phase of collection, tutors should not engage in the provision of advice in relation to those fees. At all times, students should be referred to the College Finance Cashbook and Sales Ledger team.

The college will make a charge of £30 for each payment where collection has been refused.