



# Fee Waiver Policy

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# Fee Waiver Policy

## 1. Introduction

1.1. The Policy has been developed within the context of the national fee waiver policy issued by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

## 2. Purpose and Aims

2.1. The Board of Management provides free education and training for certain people including those dependent on specific state benefits. The criteria below will help you to decide whether or not you qualify.

2.2. If you have difficulty understanding this document, then please contact the College's Finance Department or Student Services Department for assistance.

2.3. You should apply for free education before you begin your course. You will be required to provide proof of entitlement.

2.4. If you qualify for free education, then you may also be eligible for other assistance in terms of travel, study expenses and childcare expenses. Please contact the College's Student Services Department to find out whether or not you are eligible for additional financial assistance.

## 3. Scope

3.1. The College Fee Waiver Policy will be applied to all SFC fundable courses.

3.2. Free places are not available on commercial courses or other courses not eligible for SFC funding.

3.3. In claiming a fee waiver grant for any student on any course, the college cannot charge that student any other fees for that course and must abide by the Scottish Government's policy that such students should not have any charge levied from them that could be construed as 'top-up' fees.

3.4. The College cannot use fee waiver grant for a student being supported by an Individual Training Account,

3.5. The burden of proof is on the student to satisfy the college with evidence of their eligibility status.

## 4. Policy Statement

### 4.1. Eligible students

- 4.1.1. FE students following full-time non-advanced programmes for whom credits can be claimed. However, students on courses which do not meet the current definition of full-time but would have been classified as full-time under the previous definition are eligible for a non-means-tested part-time fee waiver based on the credits for the course.
- 4.1.2. FE Students for who credits can be claimed with learning difficulties or disabilities on courses on price group 5.
- 4.1.3. Students for whom credits can be claimed (see the Credit Guidance for more details) and who satisfy the conditions in paragraph 6 below, and who are studying either:
- A part-time FE programme. OR
  - A part-time programme of study that is credit bearing at HE level (equivalent to at least SCQF Level 7) up to and including a first degree.
- 4.1.4. State school pupils undertaking college activities that form part of their school-based curriculum. The fee waiver grant will similarly be available for other pupils whose education is funded by the state. Such students should not be means-tested.
- 4.1.5. Privately or home-educated school pupils will be eligible for a part-time fee waiver on a means tested basis. However, in exceptional circumstances, the college may waive the fees and claim fee waiver grant for privately or home-educated pupils even if the means-testing would otherwise rule them out. For example, where a pupil has additional support needs or other unavoidable circumstances that make it impossible for the pupil to be educated in the state school system.
- 4.1.6. Only state school pupils undertaking college activities that form part of their school-based curriculum are eligible for an automatic non-means tested fee waiver grant. Other students under the age of 16 are eligible

under the fee waiver policy like any other student. This means that for part-time activity, these students, like other students, should be means-tested.

#### **4.2. Part-time students**

4.2.1. Part-time students (referred to in paragraph 4.1.3 above) should satisfy the criteria below. The benefits and tax credits referred to relate to the UK benefit and tax credit system only:

**4.2.2. You or your family is in receipt of:**

- Income Support; or
- Working Tax Credit; or
- Pension Credit, or
- Income-based Job Seekers Allowance; or
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance
- Housing Benefit.
- Universal Credit

**4.2.3. Or where you are in receipt of:**

- Carer's Allowance (or carers who have an 'underlying entitlement' to the Carer's Allowance but gave up the allowance to, for example, claim their pension), Carer's Allowance Supplement or the Young Carer's Grant: or
- Disability Living Allowance: or
- Attendance Allowance; or
- Incapacity Benefit; or
- Contributory Employment and Support Allowance (this also includes people whose contributory ESA has ended due to the time-limited nature of this benefit, but who remain entitled to NI credits for incapacity); or
- Personal Independence Payment

4.2.4. Or the taxable income of the student's family in the previous financial tax year (2018-19) is equivalent to or lower than the threshold below;

<b>Households with only one person</b>	<b>£8,282</b>
<b>Households consisting of a couple without children</b>	<b>£12,395</b>
<b>Households with dependent children</b>	<b>£18,977</b>

Where there has been a material reduction in income from the previous financial tax year, the taxable income of the student's family in the current financial tax year can be assessed. The burden of proof is on you to satisfy the College with evidence of your family's income.

4.2.5. Or the student is a person, or the spouse or child of a person who is an asylum seeker living in Scotland as defined in section 18 of the Nationality, Immigration 7 Asylum Act 2002.

4.2.6. Or the student is under 26 and care experienced. This is defined as looked after and in the care of the local authority and can include situations where the student is living in a foster home, children's home, residential home, in kinship care or in the care of the local authority in their own home.

### **4.3. Residency**

A college will be able to use a fee waiver grant in respect of the activity of a student, only if they meet the criteria set out in this document and they are eligible for support on the basis of residence:

4.3.1. That person falls with the definition of eligibility in Schedule 2 of The Education (Access Funds)(Scotland) Determination 2018. The current residency regulations are on the SFC website. OR

4.3.2. The student is a person, or the spouse or child of a person who is an asylum seeker living in Scotland on either a full-time English for Speaker of Other Languages (ESOL) course or a part-time non-advanced or advanced course. OR

- 4.3.3. The student is a child of an asylum seeker or a young asylum seeking person on a full-time non-advanced course (excludes ESOL) and meets the criteria outlined in paragraph 10. OR
- 4.3.4. The student is a non-asylum seeker living in Scotland on a part-time ESOL course and the student's main purposes for being in the European Union (EU) is not to receive education (note that these students are still subject to the requirements as stated in paragraph 6).
- 4.3.5. If the student does not meet the 'Long Residence' requirement, the criteria referred to in paragraph 7(iv) are that the student's asylum application (their own or their family's application) must have been made prior to the end of 2006, and the student:
- Is resident on 1 August, 1 January, 1 April, or 1 July closest to the beginning of the first term of the course.
  - Has been resident in Scotland for a minimum period of three years.
  - Was under 18 years old on the date when the application for asylum was made (the application must have been made prior to 1 December 2006).
- 4.3.6. Is under 25 years old on 1 August, 1 January, 1 April of 1 July closest to the beginning of the first term of the course.
- 4.3.7. This will apply to those students starting a new course or those continuing on a course. These criteria ensure that we meet our obligations under the United Nations Conventions on the Right of the Child.

#### **4.4. Other Requirements**

- 4.4.1. The burden of proof is on the student to satisfy the college with evidence of the eligibility of their status. If the circumstances of the student change during the course so that the student becomes eligible for a part-time fee waiver when they were not previously, the college can at their discretion, claim back the full fee from SFC and reimburse the student. The change must occur and be reported to the college by the student before the 'required date', which for AY 2019-20 is:

- 1 November for full-time courses/programmes starting in the summer session.
  - The date on which 25% of the course's duration in days has elapsed for other FT and PT courses/programmes (see Credit Guidance AY 2019-20 for more information).
- 4.4.2. Changes to student circumstances occurring after this date cannot be claimed back from SFC. However, colleges are free to use their own discretion with college funds.
- 4.4.3. There is no upper or lower age limit on a student's eligibility for a fee waiver grant.
- 4.4.4. The college will be able to use the fee waiver grant in respect of students who satisfy the eligibility rules for the course (as defined in the Credit Guidance) and where the college is claiming credits for their activity in the current academic year.
- 4.4.5. With the exception of any fee waivers for state school pupils who are undertaking college activities that form part of their school-based curriculum, additional part-time activity over and above full-time study will not be eligible for a fee waiver grant although it may be eligible for credits (to determine if additional part-time activity is eligible, please refer to the Credit Guidance).
- 4.4.6. Students taking two or more part-time courses will be eligible for a maximum of one full-time fee waiver. The maximum amounts claimable for each student will be:
- The FE fee (£1,008 in 2019-20) for students taking FE courses.
  - The FE fee (£1,008 in 2019-20) for students taking a mix of FE and part-time HE courses.
  - The HE fee (£1,285 in 2019-20) for students taking part-time HE courses - fee waivers should not be claimed for full-time HE courses, as these are funded through the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS).



#### **4.5. Full-time advanced (higher education) fees**

4.5.1. Fees for full-time advanced courses are assessed and paid, if eligible, by SAAS. Fees for full-time advanced courses are therefore not included in this fee waiver grant policy.

#### **4.6. Programmes which span academic years**

4.6.1. Colleges should record students eligible for fee waivers on programmes which span academic years, in the academic year in which the course ends. This is consistent with how activity is claimed under SFC's student activity guidance.

#### **4.7. Veterans scheme**

4.7.1. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) programme to assist service veterans gain access to education is continuing. The MOD will meet the fees for study up to Scottish Credit Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 6 for some service veterans who do not meet our fee waiver criteria. The number of students falling into this category is expected to be very small. Colleges should note that the fee waiver grant cannot be used for any students being supported through this scheme. More information is available on the Enhanced Learning Credits Administration Service website.

#### **4.8. Forces personnel and veterans**

4.8.1. Under the temporary non-resident arrangements, forces personnel and veterans are treated as being resident in the country in which they were ordinarily resident before they signed-up/enlisted. If they are ordinarily resident in Scotland but are serving overseas, they would also be eligible. Family members of serving forces personnel and veterans are also considered eligible in the country in which the serving forces personnel was ordinarily resident.

## 5. Definitions

Fee waiver	Free place on a College course
SFC	Scottish Funding Council

## 6. Responsibilities

### 6.1. COMPLAINTS

6.1.1. If your application is rejected, then you will be responsible for the immediate payment of the appropriate course fee.

6.1.2. You may complain where:

- The facts are in dispute;
- You consider that you have exceptional circumstances, which would merit a review of your application.

6.1.3. If the complaint is successful then your fees will be refunded to you.

6.1.4. If you wish to make a complaint, then a complaint form can be obtained from the College's Student Services Department or Finance Department.

### 6.2. DATA PROTECTION ACT

The personal data provided by you will be kept in a manual filing system. In addition some of the information may also be transferred into the College's computerised student record system. Personal information will be used by College staff to process your application. The information will also be used to compile College grant claims and the preparation of statistical information. The information will be available to a range of external auditors who carry out audits on the College's financial and student records systems.

## 7. References

### 7.1. Policy Framework

Associated Policies and Procedures	Title

### 7.2. Other College Policies and Procedures

Policy / Procedure	Title

### 7.3. External References

Source	Title
SFC	SFC Fee Waiver Policy 2019-20 <a href="http://www.sfc.ac.uk">www.sfc.ac.uk</a>

## 8. Document Control and Review

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<b>Board Committee</b>	Finance & Physical Resources Committee	
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## 9. Revision Log

Version Date	Section of Document	Description of Revision
V1		Initial post merger policy
V2		Update in response to SFC 2012-13 policy
V3		Update in response to SFC 2013-14 policy
V4		Update in response to SFC 2014-15 policy
V5		Update in response to SFC 2015-16 policy
V6		Update in response to SFC 2016-17 policy
V7		Update in response to SFC 2019-20 policy