



## WESTMINSTER ADULT EDUCATION SERVICE

### FEES POLICY 2021-22

Policy schedule			
<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	Assistant Principal, Business Support Services	<b>Approved by</b>	Resources Committee
<b>Version</b>		<b>Date of approval</b>	February 2021
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<b>Policy applicable to</b>	All staff and learners		

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## **Vision & Mission**

The Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) vision is to transform our learners' lives through inclusive, inspirational lifelong learning. Our mission is to provide learning pathways that enable learners to achieve their career aspirations and fulfil their potential. This policy is informed by these principles and is committed to a learner-first culture to drive all decision-making. It is in this spirit that this policy and procedure is set.

### **1. Fees Policy 2021-22 Objectives**

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework within which Westminster Adult Education Service (WAES) can work to ensure that:

- Fees are levied appropriately and consistently.
- The Service is operating in accordance with the requirements of Greater London Authority (GLA), Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding rules and other monitoring bodies' regulations.

### **2. Scope**

The policy applies to all courses available for learners.

### **3. Approval**

The Fees Policy and any subsequent major amendments to this policy will require the approval of the Resources Committee and the Board of Governors. The Fees Policy will be reviewed annually\*.

\*WAES reserves the right to review this policy at any time.

### **4. Principles underpinning the policy**

WAES aims for:

- Clarity and transparency on prices with timely publication of fees
- Accessible information on pricing and to the Fees Policy

WAES endeavours to ensure that all fee information released to the public is accurate. To support equality of opportunity, WAES will provide:

- Information and assistance in applying for financial support for course fees
- Instalment payment options in accordance with Service procedures
- A range of information on funding, fees, bursary and financial support

WAES will publish and make available a fee structure annually, detailing fee costs and remission categories. These are the fees that will apply to all courses; changes to these course fees may only be made with the approval of the Executive Board. The fee structure for 2021-22 is included in the policy.

Important to note: The term ‘course fee’ refers to the tuition fee and, where applicable, the materials and exams fees. The term ‘tuition fee’ refers to the course cost only.

## **5. Policy Statement**

WAES reserves the right to cancel any course or change its charging policy where its costs may result in a financial loss; cancel any course where there is a lack of appropriate resources; and/or refuse entry to a course on any non- discriminatory grounds.

## **6. Introduction to learner fees**

The funding agency can change the rules during the year. All updates to this document will be recorded on the front sheet. There are some key changes which are imminent due to the United Kingdom’s exit from the European Union that will impact on what learners are entitled to within the category of ‘Home Student’ – explained under learner definitions. It is important that a learner who falls into the following categories understand that the eligibility rules are changing for EU, other EEA and Swiss nationals, and their family members who wish to access further education funding for those aged 19+, and apprenticeships, in England in the academic year starting in August 2021.

EU, other EEA and Swiss nationals will no longer be eligible for GLA or ESFA funded adult education budget funding or apprenticeships in England for courses or apprenticeships starting in the academic year 2021 to 2022.

It will not affect students or apprentices starting courses or apprenticeships in the academic year 2020 to 2021, nor those EU, other EEA and Swiss nationals benefitting from Citizens’ Rights under the EU Withdrawal Agreement, EEA EFTA Separation Agreement or Swiss Citizens’ Rights Agreement, respectively. These learners will have ‘Home Student’ status and will have access to public funds. The level of entitlement is still subject to a fee assessment.

In addition to the above, WAES’ main funder is the Greater London Authority, and this funding agency restricts the non-London learners from accessing government funding. This does not apply to learners undertaking an advanced learner loan and some of the Distance Learning courses where there is a funding agreement to work with particular regions within the UK to meet government priorities.

## **7. Learner fee definitions**

See below for the learner fee definition types:

### **7.1 Home Students**

Home students are British citizens. WAES is funded for those British citizens who have no conditions attached to them residing in the UK. A non-UK citizen is classed as a home student if they have permission granted by the Government to live in the UK, which is not for educational purposes.

## 7.2 Non-Home Students

A Non-Home Student is one who does not qualify as a 'Home Student'. They are charged fees at a higher rate to reflect the full cost of their individual learning programme. Fees for all courses will be determined by market conditions. The Fee Structure section on pages 10-11 sets out a framework of charges.

## 7.3 Fee remission – Fully-funded learners

Home students can be fully funded (pay no fees) if both their personal status and their chosen course meets the qualifying criteria. These include the learner's funding status, their age, their prior attainment, their benefits status, and the level and type of their course.

The following categories of learners undertaking funding agency funded learning aims below Level 3 will be entitled to full funding of their fees, subject to satisfactory evidence of status being provided at enrolment and signing necessary declarations:

- Aged 16 to 18 on 31<sup>st</sup> August in the calendar year when the student commences a programme of study.
- Aged 19-23 and undertaking a first full Level 2, 3 (for this category the age at which the learner starts the learning aim applies and not their age at the start of the academic year).
- Aged 19 and older on 31<sup>st</sup> August and is unemployed undertaking a course up to Level 2 and/or is a dependant of a person in receipt of either:
  - Job Seeker Allowance (JSA) or Employment Support Allowance (WRAG)
  - Council Tax Benefit
  - Housing Benefit
  - Income Support
  - Income Tax credits (applicable to dependants only)
  - Working Tax Credit (applicable to dependants only)
  - Universal Credit due to being unemployed and required to undertake skills training
- All learners without grades 9-1 or equivalent in GCSE English and Maths (no age restrictions apply) undertaking English and Maths up to Level 2.
- Learners aged 19-23 released in the community on a release of temporary licence to study outside of prison environment, and not funded by the Ministry of Justice and studying a course up to Level 3.
- Ex-British Armed Forces personnel discharged on medical grounds or having completed four or more years of service and undertaking their first full Level 2 or 3 qualification.
- Learners aged up to 24 and undertaking a Traineeship.

- Learners whose home postcode is in London and are aged 19 or older and are employed and earning less than £20,572, providing they are undertaking a course up to Level 2. Learners must provide a wage slip within 3 months of the learning start date.
- Learners whose home postcode is outside London and resident in and outside of the devolved authority areas undertaking ESFA funded Adult Education budget provision and are aged 19 or older and are employed and earning less than £17,004, providing they are undertaking a course up to Level 2. Learners must provide a wage slip within 3 months of the learning start date.

#### 7.4 Co-funded learners

The section below sets out the definition of co-funded learner:

- Home Students over 18, studying funding agency funded learning aims below Level 3, who do not meet any of the fully funded criteria.
- Some Home Students, dependent on age, benefits status and course, will be charged fees. These students are referred to as 'co-funded' because the funding agency pays the Service the remainder of the full funding value. Fees for examinations and materials will be an additional charge referred to as the 'course fee'.
- Tuition fee will be priced at 50% for the fully funded rate for new provision. This is subject to the submission of a WAES Full Cost Business Case that would require Executive Board approval.

#### 7.5 Advanced Learner Loans and Level 3 Programmes

Adult learners aged 19 plus on Level 3 courses who are not eligible for free Level 3 study will be able to apply to the Student Loans Company for an Advanced Learning Loan. Advanced Learner Loans are a route for learners to fund the following types of provision regardless of the mode of study:

- Access to Higher Education Diploma
- Level 3 Certificate and Diploma
- Level 4 Certificate and Diploma

If the learner is awaiting confirmation of loan approval from the Student Loans Company, WAES will allow a period of a month, after which the learner will be required to pay 50% of the fees due. This will be refunded upon confirmation of the loan approval.

Some learners applying for those courses may be eligible for free Level 3 study, under the GLA or National Skills Fund entitlement. Learners who believe they are eligible must produce evidence of their status for the following categories:

- Unemployed; or
- In receipt of a low wage; and

- Enrolled to vocational learning at Level 3
- Reside in London postcode entitlement

*Learners are required to pay for materials and examinations.*

## **7.6 Fee-paying learners**

These are learners who are not eligible for funding under the funding agency criteria for government funded courses, or who are studying a non-government funded course, often referred to as full cost.

## **8. Staff discount and Westminster residents' benefits**

### Staff discount

There will be a 20% discount for all staff (including Westminster City Council staff) on courses offered by WAES. The discount will be available for the tuition fee only. Any additional costs, e.g., materials, exams etc., will be payable in full. Staff can only access the staff discount after completing their first full year of service.

### Westminster residents' benefits

All Westminster residents receive a 10% discount on Community Learning courses.

Westminster residents can access the bursary fund, which includes support with costs associated with their study, such as trips, textbooks and materials. Learners need to apply. Learners who meet the criteria as set out by funding agencies and WAES will be assessed and allocated funds as appropriate. Early applications are encouraged. Please contact receptions at all three sites and go online for further information: [www.waes.ac.uk](http://www.waes.ac.uk).

Westminster residents have access to nursery provision at Pimlico and Lisson Grove sites. Where learners meet the set of criteria as set out by funding agencies, this service can be accessed free. Early applications are encouraged. Please contact receptions at all three sites and go online for further information: [www.waes.ac.uk](http://www.waes.ac.uk).

## **9. Examination fees**

Examination fees are payable with tuition fees. Learners retaking examinations may be charged the examination retake fee and an additional administration fee of £25. Where applicable, this will be payable prior to the examination entry.

## **10. Fee refunds procedure**

This section sets out the criteria by which refunds are approved. Refunds may be considered in other exceptional circumstances; however, these cases will require Executive Board approval.

### **10.1 Course cancellation**

WAES will refund fees in full if we close a course in the first two weeks or cancel a course before it starts. If WAES cancels a learner's course prior to the start date and is unable to provide a suitable alternative, they will be entitled to a full refund of the fees. If WAES changes a course venue, date or time and the alternative offered is unsuitable for the learner, a full refund will be given.

### **10.2 Cooling-off period**

The 14 calendar days cooling-off period commences from the day the learner is enrolled in the system, not from the start date of their course. During this period, the learner will have the right to cancel the course and obtain a full refund. Once the cooling-off period has expired, there is no obligation on WAES to make any refund, unless this is due to service failure.

### **10.3 Refunds relating to transfers**

Learners will be able to transfer without any additional fees if this arrangement has been made by WAES. If it is by the request of the learner, they will be liable to pay any additional fees relating to the new course plus the standard charge of a £25 transfer fee. If a learner transfers to a course that is of less value, they will be refunded the difference after a deduction of a £25 transfer fee.

Payment for a course cannot be transferred to another person, i.e., if a learner is unable to attend the course, the course fees cannot be transferred to another person at their request.

### **10.4 Refunds relating to a learner's medical condition**

Refunds for leaving a course due to a learner's medical condition will only be given on proof of a doctor's certificate. The learner will receive a proportional refund of the fees paid in relation to the number of classes remaining. The refund will be dealt with from the date the doctor confirms the learner's medical condition.

There is a £25 administration charge for each refund. The learner must complete the refund application form. Any request for a refund must be made within three months from the last date of attending the course. Every refund application is assessed fairly, taking into consideration appropriate documentation submitted by the learner.

### **10.5 Refunds for rescheduled classes**

WAES occasionally has to reschedule a class due to unforeseen circumstances. Arrangements would be made to suit the majority of the class and availability of suitable accommodation. On request, the learner would be entitled to a refund in vouchers to the value of the session/s missed in circumstances where a rearranged class is not convenient for them to attend. The request must be made within three months of the rescheduled class.

### **10.6 How refund payments are made**

The learner must complete a refund application form in all instances. If the learner has paid by debit or credit card, the amount due will be refunded to the card. If the learner has paid in cash, the refund will be in the form of a cheque issued by Westminster City Council. The process of issuing a cheque can take up to 28 days. WAES reserves the right of refusal to refund any learner who has a current debt with WAES.

### **10.7 Instalment plans for Adult Education Budget (AEB) courses, including Advanced Learner Loans**

Payment of fees can be made by instalments for courses with tuition fees greater than £250. For courses with tuition fees between £250 and £1,000, 50% must be paid upfront and the remaining 50% within one month. Repayment plans can be more flexible; if you require further flexibility discuss with the enrolment team. This minimum of 50% as first payment is non-negotiable.

For courses with tuition fees over £1,000, the first payment is 30% of the tuition fee plus the cost of materials and exams. The remaining amount due will be split over a maximum of three consecutive monthly payments, or for courses of a shorter duration, at least six weeks before the expected end date of the course.

### **10.8 Sanctions against non-payment of fees**

If a learner has an outstanding debt from the previous year, this must be paid in full before enrolling on another course. If fees are due:

- The learner will not be re-enrolled on any further courses
- No refund will be given to a learner in debt with WAES
- Exam certificates will not be issued until debt is paid in full

The learner will not be allowed to continue the course until the debt is paid. WAES will take reasonable steps to advise and support learners in financial difficulty. If support measures are applicable, failure to pay agreed monies in line with arrangements will, in most cases, result in suspension or withdrawal from the course.

### **10.9 Early withdrawal from or late start on funded courses**

All learners (including non-starters) on funded accredited courses who withdraw before the end of the course will be charged the course fee. Learners who are paying by instalments or who are funding their course by an Advanced Learner Loan will also be subject to paying the full fee at the point of withdrawal.

## **11. Fee reductions**

There is no reduction in fees for those learners who join a course late. The full fee applies in all circumstances.

## 12. Discretionary/Learner Support Fund

Learners who are unable to meet the full costs of tuition fees and meet specific eligibility criteria may be able to get assistance from the Service Discretionary/Learner Support Funds. Learners can access information online: [www.waes.ac.uk/services/learner-support-fund](http://www.waes.ac.uk/services/learner-support-fund)

## 13. Fee Structure 2021-22

	Funding type	Explanation
1.	ESOL Adult Education Budget	Home student rate is £3.50 per hour Non-Home student rate is £8.50 hour
2.	English, maths and digital skills	These courses are free as per funding agency rules for Home students.
3.	Creative Adult Education Budget	Home student rate is £3.50 per hour Non-Home student rate is £8.50 hour
4.	Professional Pathways	Home student rate is £3.50 per hour Non-Home student rate is £8.50 hour
5.	Distance learning	There are no costs for home students. The costs are under review and are subject to change following Executive Board approval.
6.	Full Level 1 or 2 courses , e.g., Diplomas with UAL, C&G, BTEC/CACHE Diplomas in a range of subject areas.	Some Home Students, dependent on age, benefits status and course, will be charged fees. The tuition fee which will be approximately 50% of unweighted funding value of the qualification studied. These students are referred to as ‘co-funded’ because the funding agency pays the Service the remainder of the full funding value. Fees for examination and material will be an additional charge referred to as the course fee.
7.	Level 3	<p><b>To be updated once the GLA publishes the 2021/22 funding rules</b></p> <p>In July 2020, the London Recovery Flexibility Fund enables providers to fully-fund Level 3. These learners must complete their study in 2020-21. These learners are London residents.</p> <p>Adult learners aged 19 plus on Level 3 courses enrolling on 2021-22 programmes will see that some of the courses are free for Home students and some are subject to fees. Learner who wishes to enrol on a course which has a fee attached can apply for funding through the advanced learner loans fund. This is subject to eligibility and learner will need to have Home student status to access the fund.</p> <p>Learners must produce evidence of their status and present the following documents:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployment</li> <li>• In receipt of a low wage under £20,572</li> <li>• London post code</li> </ul> <p>Learners are required to pay for materials and examinations.</p>
8.	Non-Home student aged 16 -18	These applicants must be referred to Assistant Principal and/or Head of Learner Development to approve admissions. In cases where they are approved, this would be subject to an £8.00 per hour fee. WAES reserves the right to adjust fees depending on learner circumstances and the agreement of admissions.
9.	Apprenticeship	The provision is no fee to a Home student.
10.	Traineeships	The provision is no fee to a Home student
11.	Community Learning	There will be no fee applied to the portfolio, including the Creative community offer
12.	Non-Home student	These courses can be priced in line with competitors, subject to submission of a WAES Full Cost Business Case that would require Executive Board approval.