



WESTMINSTER ADULT EDUCATION SERVICE

FEES POLICY 2023-24

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1. Purpose

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.
- Fee information is published in a manner that is timely, transparent and accessible.
- The Service is operating in accordance with the requirements of Greater London Authority (GLA), Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding rules and any other applicable funding or monitoring bodies' regulations.

2. Scope

The policy applies to all fees relating to courses available at WAES.

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.

WAES reserves the right to apply its discretion when making fee-setting decisions in order to meet the needs of the local areas in which WAES delivers and to ensure the provision offered is priced competitively.

Examination and materials fees ('course fees') may be charged in addition to the tuition fee.

Payments for tuition or course fees are non-transferrable.

3. Introduction to learner fees

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 tuition and 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 fees may only be made with the approval of the Leadership Team. The fee structure for 2023-24 is included in the policy.

4. Learner fee definitions

4.1 Home students

Home students are those learners who pass the initial residency and eligibility checks of the applicable funding agency for the course on which they wish to enrol, and are therefore deemed to be eligible for funding in principle.

4.2 Non-home students

Non-home students are those learners who do not pass the initial residency and eligibility checks of the applicable funding agency for the course on which they wish to enrol, and are therefore deemed to be ineligible for funding. They are charged the full cost of their learning programme.

4.3 Fully-funded learners

Home students can be fully funded if both their personal status and their chosen course meet the qualifying criteria. Relevant criteria include age, prior attainment, benefits status and the level and type of the course on which they wish to enrol.

The following categories of learners will be entitled to full funding, subject to satisfactory evidence of status being provided at enrolment and signing necessary declarations:

- London-based asylum seekers.
 - Aged 16 to 18 on 31st August in the calendar year when the student commences a programme of study.
 - Aged 19-23 on the start date of their course and undertaking a first full Level 2, where the qualification is on the government's Legal Entitlements list.
 - Aged 19-23 on the start date of their course and undertaking a first full Level 3, where the qualification is on the government's Legal Entitlements list.
 - Aged 24 or older on the start date of their course and undertaking a first full level 3, where the qualification is on the government's Legal Entitlements list. This is provided for by the government's Lifetime Skills Guarantee.
 - Aged 19 or older on 31st August and undertaking a course up to Level 2 and is in receipt of:
 - Job Seeker Allowance or Employment Support Allowance; or
 - Universal Credit due to being unemployed and required to undertake skills training; or
 - Any other benefit and their take home pay is below the threshold set by their applicable funding agency, (£617 a month sole or £988 a month) and they want to be employed or progress into more sustainable employment.
 - All learners without grades C/4 or higher in GCSE English or maths undertaking English or maths up to Level 2.
 - All learners undertaking a digital skills course at or below level 1.
 - Learners aged 19-23 released in the community on a 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.
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- Learners aged up to 24 and undertaking a Traineeship.
- Learners whose home postcode is in London, are aged 19 or older and are employed and earning less than £25,642.50, providing they are undertaking a course up to Level 2 (£11.95 per hour)
- Learners whose home postcode is outside London and not in any of the other devolved authority areas, are aged 19 or older and are employed and earning less than £20,319, providing they are undertaking a course up to Level 2. (£10.42 per hour)
- Learners, whose home postcode is in London, who are out of work and not in receipt of benefits and or want to be employed and or are seeking exceptional support with social integration including with no recourse to public funds.
- All learners who meet the specific funding criteria of additional projects funded either nationally or locally, such as Multiply, Skills Bootcamps or Free Courses for Jobs.

4.4 Co-funded learners

A co-funded learner is a Home Student who undertakes a course up to level 2 but does not qualify for full funding as per the definition above.

The majority of co-funded learners will be charged a tuition fee equivalent to 50% of the unweighted national Learning Aim Reference matrix rate, as shown on the government's 'Find a Learning Aim' service.

Co-funded learners on Distance Learning courses will not be charged a fee.

5. Advanced Learner Loans

Learners aged 19 or older on the 31st of August undertaking a course at level 3 or above (and who do not otherwise qualify for fee remission) will be able to apply to the Student Loans Company for an Advanced Learner Loan.

If, at the start date of the course, 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.

6. 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. 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 also access the bursary fund, which includes support with costs associated with their study, such as trips, textbooks and materials. Early applications are encouraged. Please contact your local WAES reception or see www.waes.ac.uk for further information.

Westminster residents also have access to nursery provision at Pimlico and Lisson Grove sites. Where learners meet the set of criteria as set out by the funding agencies, this service can be accessed free. Early applications are encouraged. Please contact your local WAES reception or see www.waes.ac.uk for further information.

7. Examination fees

Examination fees are payable with tuition fees as part of the course 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.

8. 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 Leadership Team approval.

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.

8.1 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.

8.2 Cooling-off period

A 14-day cooling-off period commences from the day the learner is enrolled (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.

8.3 Refunds relating to transfers

Learners will be able to transfer to another course 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 (or have refunded) any difference in course fees relating to the new course, subject to a £25 transfer fee.

8.4 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 provision of a doctor's certificate. The learner will receive a proportional refund of the fees paid, based on the date the doctor confirms the learner's medical condition and subject to a £25 admin fee.

8.5 Refunds for rescheduled classes

WAES occasionally has to reschedule a class due to unforeseen circumstances. Alternative arrangements will be made to suit the majority of the class and availability of suitable accommodation. By request, the learner is 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.

8.6 How refund payments are made

If the learner has paid by debit or credit card, the amount due will be refunded to the same 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 to refuse to refund any learner who has an outstanding debt with WAES.

9. 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, an initial deposit of 50% plus any additional course fees must be paid prior to starting the course, with the remaining 50% to be paid within one month. Where required, payment plans can be more flexible for the remaining 50%; this can be discussed with the Admissions Team.

For courses with tuition fees over £1,000, an initial deposit of 30% plus any additional course fees must be paid prior to starting the course, with the remaining 70% split over a maximum of three monthly payments, with exact details dependent, in part, on the duration of the course.

10. 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 enrolled on any further courses.
- Exam certificates will not be issued.
- Refunds will not be paid.

If a learner has an outstanding debt for the current year, 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.

11. 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 fees. Learners who are paying by instalments or who are funding their course by an Advanced Learner Loan will also be liable for the full course fees.

12. Fee reductions

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

13. Discretionary/Learner Support Fund

Learners who are unable to meet the cost of tuition and/or course fees and meet specific eligibility criteria may be able to get assistance from the Discretionary/Learner Support Fund. Learners can access information online: www.waes.ac.uk/services/learner-support-fund

14. Pound Plus statement

Pound Plus - the 'Pound' represents the public pound, the 'Plus' is everything else generated in addition to non-formula community learning funding allocation, such as fee income.

At WAES, additional income generated through fees chargeable on some community learning is reinvested in order to provide further learning opportunities, expanding the potential breadth and reach of the available provision and improving the efficiency of our delivery.

Delivery in this area, and, ergo, the effectiveness of the Pound Plus approach, will be monitored on an ongoing basis throughout the academic year.

15. Fee Structure 2023-24

	Funding type	Explanation
1.	ESOL Adult Education Budget	From £3.50 per hour + any applicable course fees.
2.	English & Maths to level 2, and Digital Skills to level 1.	Free for home students. LARS rate for non-home students.
3.	Adult Education Budget (non-ESOL)	From £6.50 per hour + any applicable course fees.
4.	Distance learning	Free for home students. LARS rate for non-home students.
5.	Advanced Learner Loans	LARS rate for home students. Not available to non-home students.
6.	Commercial courses	From £6.50 per hour + any applicable course fees.
7.	Community Learning	Most courses are free. From £2.50 per hour where charges apply.
8.	Discounts for Westminster City Council staff	20% discount on the tuition fee. Any applicable course fees to be paid in full.

9.	Admin fee for refunds / transfers / exam retakes	£25
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Equality Impact Assessment / Safeguarding Considerations

Westminster Adult Education Service is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and providing a supportive environment for all members of our community. Our commitment means that this policy has been reviewed to ensure that it does not discriminate (either intentionally or unintentionally) any of the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender (including gender identity), race, religion or sexual orientation and meets our obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Name of Policy/Procedure	Fees Policy
1 If Equality Impact Analysis is not relevant to this function, give reasons and proceed to section 5.	
2 In what ways could this function have a negative impact on any of the groups above? What actions have been taken to eliminate these?	Lack of awareness and/or access to the policy may lead to particular groups not understanding the process, concessions and opportunities available to them resulting in a reluctance to enrol. Dissemination of this policy to staff and to prospective learners via the website and supported by the Admissions Team will help to prevent this.
3 In what ways could this function have a positive impact on any of the groups above? How will this function be used to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different groups? Are there plans for the future that will further advance equality?	Applying this policy should ensure that all learners are made aware of the processes involved and that these are applied fairly and consistently to all, regardless of background.
4 What evidence supports your judgement eg. Observations, Consultations, expert opinions, quantitative or qualitative surveys. If the evidence is in the form of additional documentation where is this stored?	A range of staff, including operational members, have been consulted in the production of this policy. Fee appeals records.

<p>5 Has this function taken into account and cross-referenced where appropriate to Safeguarding policy and procedures? Give Details.</p>	<p>GDPR regulations have been considered and we ensure that we comply with data protection requirements. Staff are supported and trained to treat all learners with dignity and respect.</p>
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<p>POLICY OWNER Signed: Date:</p>	<p>C Spithray Head of MIS & Exams 30/08/2023</p>
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Version Control Information

Version	Date	Revision Author	Summary of Changes
V2	30/08/2023	Chris Spithray	<p>Section 4.3 TBC removed</p> <p>Take home threshold included</p> <p>Addition of new eligibility to full fund learners who are unemployed and not on benefit</p> <p>Included the hourly rate for the low wage - as this should be used to calculate the gross wage if they were on a 37.5 hours contract to ensure we are supporting low wage , rather than simply part time</p> <p>Added section 14. Pound Plus information in regards to community learning.</p>