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Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
Mhaigh Eo, Shligigh agus Liatroma
Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim
Education and Training Board

Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim Education and Training Board

Fee Policy V1.0

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1. Purpose

This document outlines Mayo, Sligo and Leitrim’s Education and Training Board’s (MSLETB) policy regarding the setting of appropriate course fees and the collection of same for Further Education and Training Programmes, Night Course Provisions, Outdoor Education Centre courses, Music Generation courses. MSLETB is committed to a fair and equitable approach to fee administration.

2. Scope

Areas covered by this policy include:

- Setting of fees
- Collection of fees
- Refund of fees
- Alleviating fees for any student in difficulty
- Guidance on the management of debts arising from uncollected fees

3. Definitions

Word or Phrase	Meaning for the purpose of this policy
Course Fee	<p>The categories of fees covered under this policy are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses 2. Self-Financing part time adult education programmes (which incorporates night classes/evening provision) 3. Outdoor Education and Training Centre courses 4. Music Generation 5. Further Education Learner Fees 6. Skills to Advance <p>The term course fee does not relate to voluntary contributions collected by second level colleges.</p>

4. Setting of Fees - General

- 4.1. Fees set must be cognisant of the financial pressures experienced by learners and set at a level which will cover the costs associated with the course on a break-even basis.
- 4.2. Fee proposals should be submitted by the programme coordinator to the Principal/A.E.O./FET Leader for formal approval.
- 4.3. All changes to or newly approved programme fees must be notified to the Head of Finance in advance of the programme beginning in order to set up the administrative/budgeting system requirements.
- 4.4. Any fee reductions or exemptions for learners who are unwaged, in receipt of Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) payments or for other reasons should be specifically stated in the fee proposal.
- 4.5. Approved fees should be published and clearly advertised e.g. on prospectus documents, websites, promotional materials etc. Each element of the fee should be separately disclosed and the purpose of the fee collected should be stated.

5. Setting of Fees - PLC

- 5.1. Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) course fees are to be guided by Circulars 13/2011 & 36/1995.
- 5.2. Fees are paid by registered learners in relation to the following:
 - PLC Programme Participant Contribution (Government Levy)¹
 - Student Services / Materials Charges
 - Examination Fees
- 5.3. Where Student Services / Materials Charges or Examination Fees are levied by providers in respect of PLC courses, it must be made clear to participants that any exemptions apply only to the PLC Programme Participant Contribution and/or the QQI exam fee.

The following chart shows details of the exemptions applying.

	Medical Card	Grant	BTEA	VTOS
PLC Programme Participation Contribution €200	✓	✓	✓	✓
Examination fees (QQI)	✓		✓	✓
Student Services/Materials Charges				

¹ Note – The PLC Government Levy fee of EUR200 is abolished effective from the 2022/2023 school year.

5.4. PLC Programme Participant Contribution (Government Levy). Budget 2011 provided for the introduction of an annual PLC programme participant contribution of €200. Course providers must collect the participant contribution from all eligible participants. This amount is payable prior to the census enrollment date, generally the 1st of October each year.²

Eligible participants on PLC courses of more than one year's duration must pay the contribution for each year of that course.

The following categories of participant are exempt from paying the contribution:

- Full medical card holders in their own right and their dependent children;
- Those who are eligible under the student grant scheme;
- Those in receipt of the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) or Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) allowances.

Providers must seek and retain evidence that a participant is exempt from paying the contribution.

5.7. Student Services / Materials Charges

The student services charge relates to the cost of covering services, materials and supports provided to the student or of benefit to the student. Examples of costs covered by this charge include but are not limited to

- Photocopying
- Books
- Course Materials
- Communications, Administrative & Technical Support

The student services charge will vary between courses and colleges and should be sought in one instalment where practical.

5.8. Examination Fees

Examination fees are set by awarding bodies (e.g. QQI) on an annual basis.

In some instances, the fee includes a requirement to register with the awarding board at the commencement of a course. In such cases, it may not be possible to

² Note – The PLC Government Levy Fee of EUR200 is abolished effective from the 2022/2023 school year.

refund any fees paid, even if the student does not complete the course for certification.

5.9. Additional charges may apply on a course by course basis as follows:

- Specialist class materials charge, including any specific excursion charges relating to that course
- Uniforms, clothing, other equipment and books which become the property of the student.

6. Setting of Fees – Self Financing Part Time Adult Education

6.1. The delivery of self-financing part time adult education classes in second level colleges is to be guided by Circular 46/2000.

6.2. The fees should be set at a level to cover all costs other than post of responsibility allowances. These would include costs of tuition, secretarial and caretaking services, lighting, heating, equipment, advertising, course materials etc.

6.3. Fees should be pitched at a level which equals at least 130% of the tuition cost. (Where the cost of the course has been covered by existing fee collection, there is the potential to offer reduced fees at a rate of 30% of tuition fees, to second chance learners)

7. Setting of Fees – Outdoor Education and Training Centre Courses

7.1. Fees should cover all costs of delivery of outdoor provision. This includes staffing, insurance, depreciation of equipment and running costs of the Centre. Rates vary depending on the requirements of the group i.e. numbers, meals, bus collection etc.

7.2. Achill OETC regularly check our pricing with the 11 other ETB outdoor Centre's to maintain reasonable price parity across the network.

7.3. Fees are set at rates that encourage active participation in Outdoor Education for the learner and non-loss making for the Centre.

8. Setting of Fees – Music Generation

- 8.1. Music Generation is Ireland’s National Music Education Program. Initiated by Music Network, co-funded by U2, The Ireland Funds, The Department of Education and Local Music Education Partnerships.
- 8.2. Music Generation fees are guided locally by the need for accessibility to performance music education for all.
- 8.3. Music Generation fees are set locally to encompass it’s funding model which is based on providing subsidised access to music education and in such offers an inclusive, sustainable, high quality music education through Local Music Education Partnerships at an accessible rate.
- 8.4. Fees are set locally to cover 50% of programming costs where possible.

9. Setting of Fees – Further Education

- 9.1. The delivery of Further Education programmes (e.g. Back to Education Initiative, Adult Literacy Programmes etc.) are guided by their respective Operational Guidelines issued by Department of Education and Skills 2012 and current National FET Strategies.
- 9.2. Those learners who do not qualify for free tuition under the respective guidance as outlined above, must pay a reasonable fee that will cover apportioned tuition and marginal costs. The current cost per module can be found on the MSLETB website.

10. Setting of Fees – Skills to Advance

- 10.1. Under route 1: Direct Employee Access
- Employees within the priority target group undertaking relevant programmes at or below level 5 will be free of charge.
 - Employees qualifying under the policy and undertaking level 6 programmes will make a cash contribution equating to 30% of programme costs.
- 10.2. Under route 2: Enterprise Engagement and route 3: Regional Initiatives
- Employees will not contribute to the cost of the programme.

11. Collection of Fees

11.1. In line with Government Policy to move away from cash transactions, MSLETB encourages that fees should be collected using the online payment facilities where available. Where online payments are not possible, payments will be accepted via cheque, bank draft or postal order (made payable to MSLETB) or debit/credit card (where available). The taking of cash should be restricted and only done in exceptional circumstances.

11.2. All fees should be paid in full prior to commencement of the course.

11.3. Where the provider has determined that the level of fees payable is significant they may offer a structured payment plan to learners. Any payment plan put in place will aim to recoup the total fee over the shortest possible period.

11.4. In the case of payments of fees by third party organisations, the organisation must pay the fees for the applicant before s/he can be registered on the course. Any subsequent refund will be repaid to the third party organisation.

11.5. It is the responsibility of the applicant/student to

- Pay all fees due within the specified timeframe
- Ensure they keep all receipts and documentation as evidence of payment
- Engage with the course provider immediately if they are experiencing difficulties in relation to paying fees.

12. Refund of Fees

12.1. An applicant wishing to request any refund must complete a fee refund request form (See Appendix A), and sign and return it to their programme coordinator with proof of fee payment.

12.2. Applications for refund of fees in each case must be approved by the designated course leader (e.g. Principal, FET Leader, A.E.O.)

12.3. Online payment refunds will be made back to the credit card/debit card used to pay the fee where possible, where it is not possible to refund to the card, the refund will be via E.F.T.

12.4. Refund of non-card payments will be made via E.F.T.

- 12.5. The processing of larger refunds (multiple e.g. cancelled courses) must be notified to MSLETB Finance Department in advance of processing.
- 12.6. Refunds will not be made to a student who has commenced on a course, except in exceptional circumstances.
- 12.7. The review of refund applications should reference the date of last attendance in addition to the date the refund was requested.
- 12.8. A clear record of each refund decision must be held including
- The reason for the refund application
 - The amount of the refund
 - Sign-off authorising the refund decision
- 12.9. Guidance in relation to specific fees:
- If examination fees have been paid by the student but those fees have not yet been remitted to the external examination body, those fees may be refunded less any applicable cancellation fee charged by the external examination body.
 - If uniforms, kits, books etc... have been given to the student, the fee in respect of these costs should not be refunded.
 - With respect of PLC courses, the PLC Programme Participant Contribution (Government Levy) cannot be refunded if a student leaves a course after the 30th of September.³

13. Alleviating Fees for any Student in Difficulty

- 13.1. MSLETB recognises that some students attending courses may face financial difficulties that could impact on their participation and ability to complete the course they have enrolled on. While the level of fees associated with a course are calculated to be at a level which minimises any possible barrier to participation, and are set to reflect the costs associated with that course, it is recognised that even these minimal charges may create difficulties for some students.

³ Note – The PLC Government Levy fee of EUR200 is abolished effective from the 2022/2023 school year.

13.2. In order to minimise the impact that such fees may have the following mechanisms may apply:

- Structured Payments
- Fee Waiver

13.3. Structured Payments

For many students experiencing financial difficulties, the application of a structured part-payment plan may provide students the flexibility required to ensure that they can participate or continue to participate on the course. Applying a structured payment plan is decided by the approver who is the course coordinator, principal or centre manager. It should meet the following criteria:

- The approver must satisfy themselves that the case presented by the student is genuine and that there is a realistic expectation and commitment that the payment will be met.
- There should be a written agreement in place setting out the amount to be paid, the instalments required and the expected timeframe. This should be signed by both the approver and the student.
- The payment should be collected over the minimum possible period and not extend beyond the initial weeks or months of the course.
- A log of all payments made must be kept by the approver.
- Students who fail to adhere to the terms of the agreement will be prevented from receiving any certification outcomes until all obligations are met.
- Any materials, equipment etc... that is provided to a student entering into a part payment agreement remains the property of MSLETB until the agreement is met in full.
- In the event that the student fails to complete the course, the approver makes every effort to recoup the monies owed/outstanding.

13.4. Fee Waiver

Students in certain defined categories are entitled to exemptions for the PLC Government Levy and QQI certification costs as outlined in section 5.6. Outside of these circumstances these fees can only be waived in exceptional circumstances.

Fees associated with equipment, kits, uniforms etc... which become the personal property of the learner on completion of the course (or on receipt of payment) may **not** be waived.

Applying a fee waiver should be decided by the course coordinator in the first instance and submitted to the Principal/A.E.O/FET Leader for final approval. It should meet the following criteria:

- The approver must satisfy themselves that the case presented by the student is genuine and that there is a realistic expectation that the student may fail to complete the course if a waiver is not provided.
- There should be a written agreement in place setting out the reasons for approving the fee waiver, and the amount and description of the fees (in accordance with data protection regulations) being waived. This should be signed by both the approver and the student.
- A log/register of all waiver agreements must be kept by the approver and reported to the Director of FET and the Finance Department.

14. Guidance on the Management of Debts Arising from Uncollected Fees

- 14.1. Any unpaid course fees are considered to be a debt of the student payable to MSLETB.
- 14.2. Where a student has not paid his/her fees in full and has not contacted the course provider regarding any difficulties they are experiencing with the payment of fees the following remedies are available
 - Removal of college identity card until fees are paid in full or an agreed arrangement is put in place to provide for payment
 - Refusal to sign attendance forms (BTEA, Third party or student card request forms etc...)
 - Suspension from involvement in college activities, including availing of classes/tutorials, study and library facilities and completion of exams etc.
- 14.3. The course provider is required to keep an up to date record of fees paid and monies owed and to review this on a regular basis.
- 14.4. Each course provider is advised to review the fee record at least monthly and seek payment of outstanding fees. At commencement of the course, the course provider should communicate with all students who have fees outstanding and who have not engaged to agree alleviation measures if they are experiencing difficulties.

- 14.5. A record of all communications should be kept as well as a record of any actions taken on foot of responses/non-responses.
- 14.6. Prior to any course assessment, any students with outstanding fees must be written to, advising them of the amount outstanding.
- 14.7. If at the end of the course if there are debts that are deemed irrecoverable, any request for write-off should be authorised by the school/centre board of management.
- 14.8. All irrecoverable monies should be recorded and notified to MSLETB Head of Finance.

15. Review and Update

- 15.1. This policy will be reviewed and updated every 2 years or more frequently if necessary to ensure any changes to MSLETB's organisation structure and business practices are properly reflected in the policy.

16. Appendix A – Fee Refund Request Form



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Part 1 – Applicant Details

Applicant's Name	
Address Line 1	
Address Line 2	
Address Line 3	
Name of School/Centre/College	
Course Name	
Reason for Refund	
Amount Paid	
Date of Payment	
Method of Payment	<input type="checkbox"/> Cash <input type="checkbox"/> Cheque <input type="checkbox"/> Credit/Debit Card <input type="checkbox"/> Way2Pay <input type="checkbox"/> M.I.T. <input type="checkbox"/> Bank Draft
Refund Category	<input type="checkbox"/> PLC Government Fee <input type="checkbox"/> Examination Fees <input type="checkbox"/> Materials Fees <input type="checkbox"/> Tuition Fees <input type="checkbox"/> Additional Fees (Please specify)

Applicant's Signature: _____ Date of request: _____

- All refund requests must be accompanied by appropriate documentation.
- Refund charges may apply.

Part 2 – School/Centre Use Only

Date Received	Course Code	Learner Code (PLSS no. if avail)	Date of last attendance	Cost Centre	Refund Category	Amount to be refunded.

Recommended by Signature: _____ Date: _____

Role of Person Recommending: _____

Approved by Signature: _____ Date: _____

Role of Person Approving: _____