

## HE Fees Policy 2025-26

### Review

|                             |                         |                               |           |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|
| Formal Review Cycle         | Annually                |                               |           |
| Latest Formal Review (date) | 24 Jan 25               | Next Formal Review Due (date) | 24 Jan 26 |
| Policy Owner                | Chief Financial Officer |                               |           |
| Policy Author               | David Howells           |                               |           |

### Approvals

|                   |   |                   |                               |                      |           |
|-------------------|---|-------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| Board of Corp Y/N | Y | Committee         | Finance, Resources & Projects | Date Board approved  | 18 Mar 25 |
| SLT Y/N           | Y | SLT date approved | 6 Feb 25                      | Additional committee |           |

### Publication

|             |   |              |   |                 |   |       |                  |
|-------------|---|--------------|---|-----------------|---|-------|------------------|
| Website Y/N | Y | Intranet Y/N | Y | Student VLE Y/N | Y | Other | Student handbook |
|-------------|---|--------------|---|-----------------|---|-------|------------------|

### Change History

| Version | Date Reviewed/<br>Revised | Description of Change   | Reviewed by | Approved by |
|---------|---------------------------|---|-------------|-------------|
| 2       | 24 Jan 25                 | Amended review dates and approval dates.<br><br>Amended Fees and included a further section regarding module re-sit fees. | DH          | DH          |
|         |                           |   |             |             |

# HE Fees Policy

## 1. Policy Statement

City of Sunderland College (“the College”) is an incorporated body established by Act of Parliament (Statutory Instrument). It reviews and publishes its fees annually, including Tuition Fees. This HE Fees Policy is intended to make clear to students and others how all major aspects of Fee setting and collection will operate, alongside arrangements for recovery and penalty in event of financial default and the basis upon which refunds may be made in certain circumstances.

1.1. It is the policy of the College, when setting fees, to:

- 1.1.1. Comply with the terms of its funding agreements where they stipulate conditions regarding fees and charges;
- 1.1.2. To apply this policy consistent with the requirements of the City of Sunderland College’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

1.2. Students and other interested stakeholders such as parents and employers will be given clear information about fees and charges before the student has committed to the course. The fees that the College charges are reviewed and set each year by the Board of Corporation, taking into consideration the requirements of government legislation and of the funding agencies.

## 2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all students undertaking a higher education programme, whose fees are payable to the College and to applicants where applicable and any staff member who enrolls as a student. It does not apply to students undertaking any other form of study including FE courses, apprenticeships and programmes funded via a 19+ Advanced Learner Loan.

2.2 City of Sunderland College is the incorporated name covering all sites trading as Sunderland College, Hartlepool Sixth Form and Northumberland College. This policy applies to all students and staff of those institutions.

2.3 The Fees applicable to each course year, are published on the College website and are attached as Appendix 1 to this policy.

## 3. Responsibilities

3.1 This Policy will be implemented by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT).

## 4. Implementation

### 4.1 Setting Tuition Fees

The College sets all higher education fees, The basis on which the fees are set is as follows:

#### 4.1.1 Undergraduate Students Eligible for Home Fee Status.

The UK Government currently sets the maximum tuition fee chargeable for undergraduate students who are eligible for home fee status.

#### 4.1.2 Basic and maximum fee levels

The College is registered with the Office for Students (OfS) as an Approved (fee cap) category institution and is therefore able to charge fees above the basic amount for “qualifying persons” on “qualifying courses”.

“Qualifying Persons” on “qualifying courses” are determined by regulations set out in the Higher Education and Research Act 2017. The current regulations are the Higher Education (Fee Limit Condition) (England) Regulations 2017 (SI 2017/1189), as amended by The Education (Student Fees, Awards and Support) (Amendment) Regulations 2021. The regulations provide the following definitions;

**Qualifying persons** are defined in Regulations 4-6 of the above legislation. This currently includes most Home students, but excludes most EU and other international students.

**Qualifying courses** - include most undergraduate courses and postgraduate initial teacher training courses, but exclude most other postgraduate courses. The courses are listed as designated courses in The Higher Education (Fee Limit Condition) (England) Regulations 2017.

The basic and higher fee caps are determined by the Secretary of State as part of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 and may be changed. The fee caps are published on the OfS website. In addition to the full-time undergraduate fee cap, the current fee regulations also include a fee cap for part-time students (regardless of how many credits are taken at any one time), study years abroad, sandwich placement years, and accelerated degrees.

If the College wishes to make any variations to the fees it charges because of changes to fee caps, any variations (and the processes and communications relating to them) need to comply with consumer protection law and regulatory requirements.

#### 4.1.3 Students Other than Undergraduate Students Eligible for Home Fee Status

For students and courses where the College has discretion to determine fee levels, rates are set with due regard to financial viability and market forces. This includes fees for all international students.

The College adheres to Government guidance when determining inflationary uplifts to fees for which it has discretion. The College uses the figure contained within the RPI index in January of each calendar year.

## 4.2 Student fee liability

- 4.2.1 When enrolling on a course all students shall be made aware of any fees due from them in respect of the course for which they are applying. It is a student's obligation to ensure they can pay all tuition fees.
- 4.2.2 A student is personally responsible for the payment, on time, of all Fees and Charges incurred in their name, unless by specific arrangement as outlined in this Policy. The College recognises that many students decide to rely on funding from another source, such as the Student Loans Company (SLC) to meet their obligations. In this instance, it is the student's responsibility to ensure they are eligible for the loan and have taken all necessary steps to secure the loan to ensure its timely payment. The College will not accept any responsibility for students who have failed to check their eligibility or have received a loan using incorrect information.
- 4.2.3 Students with an in-principle agreement for a loan to cover their fees can use this to enrol however if for any reason they become ineligible for the loan the student will be fully liable for any unpaid fees and subject to debt recovery as detailed in this policy.
- 4.2.4 Where the student's employer is paying for course fees this is considered by the College a "sponsorship agreement". Where a student has a sponsorship agreement the student remains ultimately liable for payment of their fees, whether invoiced or not. If the employer withdraws sponsorship or defaults on payment, the student is responsible for paying any outstanding fees. Further information is set out in section 4.5.
- 4.2.5 The College reserves the right to apply sanctions to those students who persistently refuse or fail to pay tuition fees in accordance with the College's standard payment policy. Such sanctions may include the withdrawal of library lending facilities, the removal of access to ICT services, the withholding of transcripts, and ultimately withdrawal from programme of study. Further information is set out in section 4.10.

## 4.3 Fee payment

- 4.3.1 The College will advise and inform students on the current range of options available to support the funding of their course. All students must be issued with an ID card before they may start a course. To obtain an ID card, students must make arrangements to pay fees, or gain applicable financial support for their fees.
- 4.3.2 Course Fees must be paid prior to commencement of study for each academic year, unless:
- 4.3.2.1 A direct debit or Instalment agreement has been completed (see section 4.4);
  - 4.3.2.2 Written confirmation of liability for fees has been supplied by an employer (see section 4.5)
  - 4.3.2.3 Evidence of student loan is provided (see section 4.6);
- 4.3.3 Full or partial contribution to fees can be paid by one or more of the methods below.
- 4.3.3.1 By instalment or by direct debit

- 4.3.3.2 By credit / debit card
  - 4.3.3.3 Student Loan
  - 4.3.3.4 By cheque (made payable to “City of Sunderland College”)
  - 4.3.3.5 Sterling Bankers draft
- 4.3.4 We have to comply with strict Government regulations designed to stop money laundering. Unfortunately, this means our payment methods are restricted to those above. Therefore, we do not accept cash payments in person or directly into the College bank account.
- 4.3.5 Dishonoured or late payments may result in an administration charge to the student, exclusion from their course of study and certification of completion not being released.
- 4.3.6 If arrangements to pay tuition fees are not made by the student at the point of registration the College will subsequently make every effort to remind students that fees are due. However, these are reminders only and students are responsible for paying fees on time whether reminders are received or not.
- 4.3.7 If a student fails to make arrangements to pay fees within 6 weeks they will be withdrawn from their course. Even though they are no longer studying their programme, they will still be liable to pay the appropriate proportion of fees owing, in line with sections 4.8 and 4.9 of this Policy.
- 4.3.8 Where a student wishes to resit one or more modules of a full programme, if approved at the Board of Examiners, they will be charged a proportion of the fees of the full programme in line with the number of credits of that module. More information on this is contained within Appendix 1; HE Fees for 25-26 entry

#### **4.4 Instalments**

- 4.4.1 The College offers an instalment plan for Higher Education courses where the total amount payable at the point of enrolment is £200 or more, the course is 15 weeks or more in length and the student is not relying on Student Loans Company finance. A schedule detailing instalment will be issued upon payment of a 20% deposit at enrolment. This acts as acceptance of the College’s payment terms and conditions. The final payment of the instalment agreement must be paid 6 weeks before the end date of the course.
- 4.4.2 In the event of a failed instalment payment, the option of payment by instalment will cease and all outstanding fees will be due immediately. If a student knows in advance that a payment will fail it is essential that they contact the Finance office immediately in person or telephone to agree alternative arrangements for payment.
- 4.4.3 Students will receive written confirmation from the College of instalment dates and amounts at least ten days before the first payment is due. Reminders for individual instalments will not be sent.
- 4.4.4 On an exceptional basis, where extenuating circumstances have been demonstrated, The Finance Department may approve an individual payment plan with a student. If the terms of an exceptional payment plan are not met, the payment plan ceases and any outstanding balance of fees will be due for immediate payment. Students experiencing financial difficulties should

contact the Finance office as soon as they are aware of the problem.

#### **4.5 Employer fee liability and payment by employers/sponsors**

- 4.5.1 Where a student wishes to rely on a significant sponsor, such as an employer or other organisation, they must provide written evidence on corporate letterhead in the form of an authority to invoice or letter confirming liability for fees before enrolment. Billing details must be supplied by the employer at the point of enrolment, including a valid email address. Unless otherwise specified, employers are liable for fees in full.
- 4.5.2 The College Finance Department, as part of the enrolment process, will raise invoices. Payment is due to the College 30 days from the date of invoice.

#### **4.6 Student Loan finance**

- 4.6.1 Students funding their course via a student loan will be asked to provide evidence that their Loan Funding is in place to confirm their registration on their course. Students waiting for confirmation of support from Student Finance England will normally be required to provide evidence that they have applied for funding from Student Finance England and will also be required to complete a payment agreement in order to complete their registration/enrolment. Where payment agreement is provided this will be used to collect unpaid tuition fees if funding is not in place by the start of the second term. This will allow Student Finance England time to process applications.
- 4.6.2 Students are responsible for ensuring that tuition fee loan support from Student Finance England is arranged in a timely manner. The College will provide assistance and support to students regarding their loan applications where possible.

#### **4.7 Withdrawals and suspension**

- 4.7.1 The College reserves the right to withdraw the student from the course where the student has missed a substantial or critical element of the course or in the case of gross misconduct.
- 4.7.2 If a student wishes to suspend or withdraw from his/her course during the period of study then they must notify the College in writing stating their reason for withdrawing. In the absence of formal notification of withdrawal the student's last date of attendance shall be deemed to be their withdrawal date.
- 4.7.3 The College is required to inform the UK Visa and Immigration Agency of the withdrawal of students in the UK under a Tier 4 visa. A decision to withdraw will have an impact on the College's sponsorship of a student and students are therefore recommended to seek advice from a Student Support in these circumstances.
- 4.7.4 For students who fully withdraw during a period of suspension, their withdrawal date will be the date at which the temporary suspension began. Separate arrangements are in place for calculating fee liability for students needing to temporarily suspend their studies for reasons such as maternity or due to disability.

## 4.8 Refunds

- 4.8.1 This section does not apply to instances where the Student Protection Plan has been implemented because the College is no longer able to preserve continuity of study for one or more students. This is an unlikely risk, but the College recognises that if it were to occur affected students should receive a refund of fees and appropriate compensation in line with a separate bespoke Refunds and Compensation Policy (Non Continuation of Study). That policy is available on the College website.
- 4.8.2 In instances except those outlined in 4.8.1, fees are non-refundable, except in the following circumstances:
- 4.8.2.1 When the College has cancelled the course, in which case all fees paid will be refunded.
  - 4.8.2.2 Where there is a complaint made through the College How are we Performing? Procedure about the quality of the course which is upheld (this could be a full or partial refund).
  - 4.8.2.3 When a fee has been paid in advance of, or at the beginning of, the course start date, and the College has received formal notification from the student of withdrawal within two weeks after the start date. This includes induction week. Such refunds will normally be subject to a £40 administration fee.
  - 4.8.2.4 Where a student withdraws from their course and has already paid in advance an amount more than their liability under section 4.9 of this Policy
  - 4.8.2.5 Where there are exceptional mitigating circumstances
  - 4.8.2.6 When the enrolment is concluded off College premises or by means of distance communication (i.e. online) and the student cancels within the 14-day cooling-off period. Students starting their course during the cooling-off period and who provide notice of withdrawal before the end of the cooling off period will be liable to pay a proportion (up to two weeks) of course tuition fees upon withdrawal. Such refunds will be subject to a £40 administration fee.
  - 4.8.2.7 The College will endeavour to make all refunds due within 14 days of authorisation of the refund. Refunds will be made to the person who paid for the course where this is different from the person who attended the course.
- 4.8.3 The College will consider eligibility for refund and/or compensation on a case by case basis, and will take into account factors including (but not limited to):
- 4.8.3.1 The scale and impact of the matters affecting the case;
  - 4.8.3.2 Travel or accommodation costs;
  - 4.8.3.3 Maintenance costs (e.g. childcare if student contact sessions have to be delivered at times outside the normal College teaching day/week);
  - 4.8.3.4 What mitigation has put in place – including the provisions set out in the Student Protection Plan;
  - 4.8.3.5 How much of the programme has been completed;
  - 4.8.3.6 What is reasonable in all of the circumstances.
- 4.8.4 In some cases, set rates for compensation of accommodation or travel costs will be established, which will be applied automatically to all affected students. The College will

explain clearly how it has calculated these set rates. In other cases, evidence of costs incurred, for which compensation is sought, may be required.

- 4.8.5 If a student is unhappy with the College’s decision on refund and compensation, then the College’s How are we Performing? Procedure should be followed to raise concerns.

#### 4.9 Fee liability reduction/waivers

- 4.9.1 Any request for a refund or reduced liability of tuition fees for students undertaking Higher Education Courses will be calculated from the last date of attendance. The following reductions shall apply in respect of each year’s tuition fee:

| <b>Students who withdraw:</b>   | <b>Liability</b>   |
|---|--|
| Within the first two weeks from the start date of their course (this includes induction week) | Will not be liable for tuition fees and will receive a refund of any contribution to fees paid, less an administration fee of £40. |
| After the first two weeks but before the end of the first term                                | liable for 33.3% of the annual tuition fee   |
| Before the end of the second term   | liable for 66.7% of the annual tuition fee   |
| During the third term   | liable for 100% of the annual tuition fee  |

#### 4.10 Non payment

- 4.10.1 Students retain ultimate responsibility for the payment of their fees and all other monies owing to the College regardless of sponsorship agreements or student loan funding arrangements, including where sponsored by an employer.
- 4.10.2 If a student is having problems paying tuition fees or any other monies owing, it is essential that the student contacts the Finance office as soon as possible to discuss any alternatives.
- 4.10.3 Should a student default on, or miss an instalment payment the College will view this seriously. Any student who fails to pay the College fees within 28 days following the date on which they became due may be suspended by the College until payment is made in full. If the monies due to the College are not paid within 28 days following the commencement of suspension the College will be entitled to withdraw the student and to terminate the student’s course of study.
- 4.10.4 Students may be required to attend an interview with their curriculum manager (or their nominated representative). Any decision about suspension or withdrawal of the student by the College will be made by the curriculum manager (or their nominated representative) after the interview. If a student fails to attend any interview a decision may be made in the students’ absence. Please note; even if a student is withdrawn from their course due to non-payment and is no longer a student, the student will still need to pay outstanding fees.

4.10.5 Should payment of outstanding fees be made within a reasonable timescale, and providing that the student has not missed any substantial or critical element of the course they may be permitted to resume studies.

4.10.6 Students with outstanding academic fee debt may, until all outstanding monies have been paid:

- 4.10.6.1 Not be permitted to re-register for new courses or to continue their course
- 4.10.6.2 Not be entered for assessment or examinations pertaining to the course.
- 4.10.6.3 Not be permitted to attend the Awards Ceremony
- 4.10.6.4 Not be issued with any academic references
- 4.10.6.5 The College will refer unpaid amounts to an external agency to pursue payment
- 4.10.6.6 Any additional costs incurred by the College in the collection of the debt will be the liability of the student and will be added to the debt

4.10.7 Students whose enrolment has not been terminated but who owe money relating to other charges will not be prevented from graduating but will remain liable to the College settlement of those charges and may be subject to debt collection activity in relation to such charges even after graduating. A student whose debt is referred to a debt collection agency will become liable for charges and interest in addition to the balance of the debt owing to the College.

#### **4.11 Complaints and appeals**

If a Higher Education student is unhappy with the College's decision on refund and compensation, then they may use the College's Concerns, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure to raise their concerns. The College hopes this procedure will satisfactorily resolve the problem. Very occasionally this may not be the case; in this instance, a student of Higher Education is able to ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) to review the complaint and the way in which it has been handled by the College. The student can only refer the complaint to the OIA when they have exhausted the College's How are we Performing procedure.

### **5 Associated Documents**

The following documents should be read in conjunction with this Policy:

- (i) HE Refunds and Compensation Policy (Non Continuation of Study)
- (ii) Student Protection Policy and Plan
- (iii) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- (iv) College's How are we Performing? Procedure
- (v) Informing Students and Staff

### **6 Policy Monitoring and Review**

6.1 This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by ELT and the Board of the Corporation.

6.2 This policy will be monitored by ELT.

7 Equality Impact Assessment

|   |   |                              |                 |                                 |
|---|---|------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Have you sought consultation on this policy?</b>                     |   |                              |                 |                                 |
| <b>Details:</b>   |   |                              |                 |                                 |
| <b>Could a particular group be affected (negatively or positively)?</b> | <b>Impact Y/N</b>   | <b>Description of Impact</b> | <b>Evidence</b> | <b>Mitigation/Justification</b> |
| Protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010                   |   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Age   | N   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Disability  | N   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Gender Reassignment   | N   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Marriage and Civil Partnership  | N   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Pregnancy and maternity   | N   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Race  | N   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Religion or belief  | N   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Sex   | N   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Sexual Orientation  | N   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Additional characteristics to consider                                  |   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Young Persons in Care & Care Leavers                                    | N   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Young Carers & Care Givers  | N   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Young Parents   | N   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Youth Offenders   | N   |                              |                 |                                 |
| Those Receiving Free School Meals                                       | N   |                              |                 |                                 |
| <b>If there is no impact, please explain:</b>                           | The policy is designed to promote and enable access to courses for all learners and to provide access to careers advice and welfare. It is a requirement of the policy to apply it consistently with the Colleges Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy. |                              |                 |                                 |

