



# Fees Policy 2021 - 2022



## 1. Introduction

This policy outlines the tuition and other fees chargeable to learners and employers of apprentices by Northumberland County Council Northumberland Skills, based upon funding rates as outlined by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and North of Tyne Combined Authority (NoT) for courses commencing in the academic year 2021/22. The policy should be read in conjunction with the latest ESFA and NoT guidance for learner eligibility for public funding.

Northumberland Skills will take into consideration market analysis regarding demand for provision and the market rate for fees when setting individual tuition fees and will set the fee suggested by the funding body, unless there is a specific reason to vary the fees. For example, where local providers are charging a reduced fee, it may be sensible to reduce the fee to remain competitive. This policy acknowledges that Northumberland Skills will adopt this approach in order to maximise recruitment, generate tuition fee income in line with funding regulations, and remain responsive to market conditions and Council priorities as set out in the Corporate priorities, vision and values statements.

For the purposes of this policy, ages of learners are calculated as of 31st August in the academic year in which they commence learning. The policy includes the following learners for the 2021-22 academic year:

- Full time and part time tuition fees for learners eligible for public funding,
- Fees for overseas learners or those not eligible for public funding.
- Concessionary policies for all UK and EU learners.
- Apprenticeships

These funding rules apply to all learners starting new learning aims on or after 1 August 2021. The only exception is for individuals continuing their learning from the 2020 to 2021 funding year.

## 2. Funding sources for 2021/22

In 2020/21, Northumberland Skills is funded in the following way

Type of Provision	Funding Source
16–18-year-old learners entitled to public funding	Education and Skills Funding Agency
Adult learners of any age, entitled to public funding, and undertaking funded courses up to level 2 and adults aged 19-23, entitled to public funding, and undertaking their first full level 3 course with legal entitlement	Education and Skills Funding Agency North of Tyne Combined Authority
Adult learners aged 19 and over undertaking eligible additional level 3 or higher courses, and adults aged 24 and over undertaking any eligible level 3 or higher courses	Education and Skills Funding Agency North of Tyne Combined Authority Learners are liable for all the course fees, but may be eligible to apply for an <b>Advanced Learning Loan</b>

16–18-year-old learners and adult learners 19+ undertaking courses not entitled to public funding	No funding available. Learners liable for all course, registration and assessment fees.
Overseas learners from non-EU countries	No funding available. Learners liable for all course, registration and assessment fees.
Apprentices of all ages	ESFA and employers for non-levy paying employers Levy Digital Account for levy paying employers

### 3. Tuition Fees and Government Contribution for UK and EU Learners (Aged 16-18)

Free tuition is available to all full and part time eligible learners aged 16-18 on 31 August 2021, who are eligible for funding by the ESFA. The full guidance can be read at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-education-funding-guidance>

All compulsory costs of learning including tuition, registration and examination, mandatory equipment, materials, personal protective equipment, visits and residentials are met by the service. In addition, Northumberland Skills may charge for non-compulsory costs of learning e.g., fees for industry recognised qualifications that do not form part of their study programmes that the learner wishes to pursue, or to attend a non-compulsory visit.

Northumberland Skills reserves the right to charge fees to learners aged 16–18 where no ESFA funding is available for the course, or they are enrolled at another institution for more than 2 weeks and therefore the service cannot claim ESFA funding for the learner. Learners will be made aware of any fees prior to the start of any course or learning programme.

Learners under 16 years old on the 31 August 2021 will not be eligible for funding. The tuition costs for such learners are those in section 5 and are charged as per un-funded and overseas learners. We are pleased to support the tuition of 14–16-year-old home educated learners, and these learners will be charged under section 5. They do not need to be accompanied in class, but for safeguarding reasons should be accompanied to and from classes. Younger learners may be considered for enrolment but may need to be accompanied by an adult.

Learners will be made aware of any fees prior to the start of any course or learning programme, will be expected to have paid in full for courses or have an agreed payment plan in place, before their place is secured, and they start in learning. Any learner entering a course without paying in full or having produced valid evidence of fee remission before the course starts, will be asked to leave the provision.

### 4. Tuition Fees and Government Contribution for Learners learning (Adults 19+)

Tuition fees will be charged for adult learners aged 19 and over who study on full time or part time programmes up to Level 2. This includes course fees and first examination fees. NoT/ESFA funded courses are subsidised for most learners not entitled to fee remission: learners are asked to pay fees to contribute to the course. In summary the fee remission categories are set out below:

- 16-18 at the start of the course and not enrolled at another institution for more than 2 weeks.
- 19-23 and undertaking a Traineeship
- 19-23 studying up to and including level 1 and have not yet achieved above level 1
- 19-23 studying first full level 2 qualification (and the qualification must be part of the legal entitlement)
- 19-23 studying first full level 3 qualification (and the qualification must be part of the legal entitlement)
- 19+ studying English or maths up to level 2, including studying GCSE, where you do not currently have grades A\* to C or grades 4 – 9 passes.
- 19+ Unemployed and studying up to and including Level 2 and one of the following applies:
  - You receive Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), including those receiving National Insurance credits only.
  - You receive Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).
  - You receive Universal Credit and earned income from employment is less than £345 a month (sole adult in your claim) or £552 a month (joint claim with partner).
- Low Wage Flexibility: You may qualify for full fee remission if you are employed but earning an annual gross salary of less than £18535. You will need to provide a recent wage slip, Universal Credit statement, or current employment contract that states your gross monthly / annual wages. You can be learning up to and including level 2 qualifications that demonstrate progression to improved employment outcomes.

Learners claiming remission are required to complete a self-declaration of their status and to provide appropriate evidence. Learners who started their programmes when they were 16-18 and turn 19 during their full-time study with Northumberland Skills will not have to pay fees for the remainder of their study programme.

For all other learners studying at Level 3 or higher, you can either choose to self-finance tuition fees, or apply for an Advanced Learning Loan from the Learner Loan Company. Whichever the method of settling tuition fees, it is the learner's responsibility to demonstrate full payment, or a loan agreement is approved and in place before learning commences.

Under the Advanced Learning Loan scheme, Northumberland Skills receives monthly payments from the Learner Loan Company (SLC) for agreed learners throughout the duration of the programme. It should be noted that SLC payments stop being paid for a learner if they withdraw from the programme, in which case the learner becomes responsible for paying the remaining fees owed to the service and will commence repaying the loan made to them from SLC.

You can see the full terms and conditions and make an application for an Advanced Learning Loan at <https://www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan>

In 2021/22 the Northumberland Skills set the tuition fees for learners in this category at a level no greater than the maximum loan fee for each course as specified by the funding regulations for eligible loans provision. Courses where learners are eligible to apply for an Advanced Learning Loan are clearly stated in the prospectus.

Additional fees in relation to materials and photocopying / printing, residential trips, educational visits, uniform or other such fees may be chargeable above the tuition fee stated at the discretion of the service.

Learners will be made aware of any fees prior to the start of any course or learning programme, will be expected to have paid in full for courses or have an agreed payment plan in place, before their place is secured, and they start in learning. Any learner entering a course without paying in full or having produced valid evidence of fee remission before the course starts, will be asked to leave the provision.

## 5. Tuition Fees for Un-funded Learners

There is no public funding to support the cost of delivery for learners from overseas non-EU countries and learners will therefore be responsible in full for all costs associated with their learning including tuition, registration, assessment and examinations, materials and equipment and other costs. Fees are calculated at the equivalent of the public funding rate for the course for a fully funded learner + awarding body fees + any mandatory costs of learning.

Specific fees for learners can be requested from your chosen campus.

## 6. Tuition Fees for Non-Funded Programmes (Full Cost Recovery)

Northumberland Skills will charge a tuition fee for Full Cost Recovery (FCR) courses. These are courses for which there is no public subsidy.

In setting tuition fees, Northumberland Skills takes the following elements into consideration:

- Fixed and variable costs of delivery
- Achievement of a minimum group size to ensure classes are viable and sustainable

Learners will be made aware of any fees prior to the start of any course or learning programme, will be expected to have paid in full for courses. Any learner entering a course without paying in full, before the course starts, will be asked to leave the provision.

## 7. Charges for apprenticeship provision

The funding method for an apprenticeship is determined at the start of each apprentice's programme. Where the employer does not pay the apprenticeship levy at the start of the apprenticeship, it will be funded through government-employer co-investment for its duration unless the apprentice changes employer. Even if the employer subsequently becomes a levy-payer, the apprenticeship will not be funded from the employer's apprenticeship service account.

### The price of an apprenticeship

Employers and main providers must negotiate a price for the total cost of each apprenticeship, including the training costs and any subcontracted training. The price must also include the cost of the end-point assessment which the employer must negotiate with the end-point assessment organisation.

Further information for Apprenticeship Funding Rules and guidance for employers

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1007542/2122\\_Employer\\_Rules\\_Version\\_1.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1007542/2122_Employer_Rules_Version_1.pdf)

The funding band of the apprenticeship is based on an apprentice requiring the full content of the apprenticeship, and in the case of standards this means all the listed knowledge, skills and behaviours.

ESFA funding rules state that the apprenticeship content, duration and price must be reduced where the individual has relevant prior learning. Prior learning must be factored into the price that is negotiated between the provider and the employer: apprenticeship funding must not be used to pay for, or certify, the delivery of existing knowledge, skills and behaviours as this represents poor value for money.

There are audit checks to ensure a price reduction has been made to account for prior learning and the reduced training content required. To meet the ESFA funding rules, the training element within the apprenticeship must have a minimum duration of 12 months with at least 20% off-the-job training.

Standards funding table - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding-bands>

## Levy Employers

Once the Total Negotiated Price has been agreed with the employer, the Service will charge to the Employers Digital Account for Apprenticeship, the agreed fees as set out in the Apprenticeship Agreement for each apprentice.

## Non-Levy Employers (Co-funded)

Once the Total Negotiated Price has been agreed with the employer, the Service will charge 5% to the non-levy employer. An official purchase order will be supplied to the employer, and the employer will raise an invoice to the Council. In some circumstances a payment plan may be agreed.

## 8. Collection of Fees

Fees are payable on enrolment and before classes start. Fees will be collected by debit or credit card or by cash to a local campus. Card payments can be taken over the telephone using our secure payment system at the time of enrolment. Preferred method of payment of fees is by credit or debit card.

Depending on the value of the fee and the length of the course, learners can apply to pay fees in instalments at enrolment. One third of the fees listed in the course information are payable at enrolment and the remainder payable on consecutive months as stipulated in the agreement. Interest will not be charged to the learner, provided the fees are paid in accordance with the instalment plan. Northumberland Skills reserves the right to charge interest where the instalments are not paid within the agreed instalment plan at the rates set in the Late Payment of Commercial Debt 1998. The full instalments plan must be met, even in the circumstances that the learner withdraws from the course early.

Where learner tuition fees are being sponsored by an organisation, the learner must provide a valid purchase order from their sponsoring organisation before their enrolment can be completed or in exceptional circumstances, a letter of sponsorship (on headed paper) may be accepted. Should the learner's sponsor fail to pay all or part of the fees due, these will become the responsibility of the individual learner. All fees and debts are collectable by Northumberland Skills and will issue reminders to pay periodically. Northumberland Skills will engage debt collection agencies to collect fees outstanding where all other recovery options have been exhausted.

Northumberland Skills reserves the right to take legal action where all other attempts to collect outstanding debts have failed.

## 9. Financial Fee Support

This policy complies with the Service's Equality and Diversity Policy. For learners facing financial hardship various forms of support may be available to fund tuition and other fees.

Currently these are:

- 19+ Discretionary Learner Support Grants and Loans
- 16-19 Discretionary Bursary Scheme
- 16-19 Vulnerable Bursary Scheme

The Council also provides a Post 16 Transport Scheme, details of which can be found at <http://bit.ly/Post16Transport>

Further information on these schemes is available by:

- Contacting staff in any service delivery campus
- Calling our finance office 01670 622105
- [www.northumberland.gov.uk/Education/Learning.aspx](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Education/Learning.aspx)

## 10. Refunds Policy

This policy applies to all courses provided by Northumberland County Council, Northumberland Skills.

### Course Cancellations

Tuition fee refunds will normally only be made where a course is cancelled or where the times or location of the course are significantly changed by Northumberland Skills and the learner is no longer able to attend. In the case of a course cancellation, we will make every effort to offer an alternative that is comparable provision but where this is not possible tuition fees will be refunded as follows:

- Cancellation of the course prior to published start date – full refund of tuition fees
- Closure of the course within the first two weeks – full refund of tuition fees
- Closure of the course beyond the first two weeks – pro rata refund of tuition fees for remaining weeks not provided minus an administration fee of £5.00 per course

### Learner Withdrawals

No refunds can be made where a learner decides to leave a course of their own volition, as a result of changes in the learner's personal circumstances, as a result of weather conditions preventing learner attendance when our campus is open, or in the unusual case of them being asked to leave the course due to a breach of the Code of Conduct. The only exception to the above is where a learner must leave a course on medical grounds. Only the learner's own medical circumstances can be considered; this cannot be extended to include the medical circumstances of family and friends. Consideration will only be given to tuition fee refund requests where the learner is supported by evidence from the learner's GP or medical specialist that they are unfit to continue. Evidence will normally be in the form of a fit note or letter on official headed paper from the GP or specialist. If granted, the refund will be pro-rata depending on the classes attended minus an administration fee of £5.00 per course.

### Customer Complaints

A part or full refund may be offered where a learner has made an official complaint through the Complaints Procedure and this been having upheld as a result of investigation. The refund is at the absolute discretion of the Council.

### Payment Arrangements for Refunds

Once a refund has been approved a refund will be made to the card on which the payment was initially made or, in the case of cheque or cash payments, a refund via cheque will be issued. Refunds will be processed as soon as possible but this may be up to 30 days during peak periods. For further information about the progress of your refund, please contact the finance team on 01670 622105.