

# Combined Fees Policy – Level 5 & 6 (PLC) Courses

Updated February 2025



**Cork College of FET**

Cork's Further Education & Training Service



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## 1. Introduction

This document outlines Cork Education and Training Boards approach to setting of appropriate course fees, publication of information relating to fees and the collection of same. It sets out the principles which underlie the setting of fees, the elements that make up a course fee, and the mechanisms for the collection of course fees. It clearly sets out the responsibilities of the learners in the process.

It further sets out the parameters and considerations that apply in the refunding of any fees paid and the mechanisms associated with any such refunds, Furthermore, in recognising that learners may at a point on their course experience financial difficulties, it sets out the procedures to be applied at campus level in considering fee alleviation for any learner in difficulty.

In addition, this policy provides campuses with advice and guidance on the management of debts arising from uncollected fees

### 1.1 Policy

Cork Education and Training Board is committed to implementing a fair, equitable and transparent system for determining, collecting and refunding of course fees across all campuses and centres delivering Post leaving Certificate courses.

### 1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline for Campus Management, potential learners, and enrolled learners in a clear and transparent manner the principles and procedures that Cork ETB adopts in relation to the setting, collection and refunding of course fees, dealing with learners experiencing financial difficulty and handling unpaid fee's (debts).

### 1.3 Scope

This policy applies to all level 5 and 6 Post Leaving Certificate Campuses and Centres under the remit of Cork Education and Training Board, applicants to, and learners enrolled on, full-time Post Leaving Certificate Courses.



## 2. PLC Fees

The Government announced in Budget 2024 that fees would not apply to learners attending PLC courses. While EU/EEA nationals had not been required to pay tuition fees prior to the announcement, many learners were required to pay a Course Fee for elements such as additional materials, learner services and examinations.

For courses commencing academic year 2025-2026, learners on level 5 and 6 PLC courses will be required to pay the following elements only:

1. **Learner Registration fee**
2. **Uniform or personal kit charge**
3. **Optional/Additional Elements**

**Eligible international learners (non-EU/EEA), must in addition to the Registration fee, (and any uniform/kit charges) pay a full economic tuition fee of €3,653.**

Learners in the Direct Provision system who are entitled to avail of PLC courses under the EU Receptions Conditions Directive (2013/22/EU), do not have to pay the non-EU/EEA fee, but must have a letter confirming permission to enter the labour market from the Minister of Justice.

### 2.1 Learner Registration Fee

The Learner Registration fee for 2025-2026 is €50. Payment of the fee is required when an applicant is offered a place on a course to confirm their acceptance of the offer.

**The Learner Registration fee is non-refundable.**

- 2.1.1 **For offers of places made before the 1<sup>st</sup> September of the course year:**  
In the event that an applicant has not paid the Learner Registration fee within 10 working days of the offer being made, Cork College of FET will determine that the learner has declined the place, and they will no longer be considered for that course. A final reminder will issue to the applicant 5 working days before the offer expiry date. If the Learner Registration fee has not been paid within the timeline set out here, the offer will be deemed to be withdrawn, and the place may be offered to another eligible applicant.
- 2.1.2 **For offers of places made after the 1<sup>st</sup> September of the course year:**  
In the event that an applicant has not paid the Learner Registration fee within 5 working days of the offer being made, Cork College of FET will determine that the learner has declined the place, and they will no longer



be considered for that course. No additional reminder will issue to the applicant. If the Learner Registration fee has not been paid within the timeline set out here, the offer will be deemed to be withdrawn, and the place may be offered to another eligible applicant.

## 2.2 Uniform/Kit fees

Some courses require learners to purchase specialist uniforms or kits. These uniforms/kits are retained by learners on completion of the course.

The cost of these uniforms and/or kits is clearly set out in the course descriptions and must be obtained by the learner as advised by the Campus prior to commencement of the course. A learner who has not purchased any required uniform/kit before the commencement of their course may be prevented from starting on the course until the required items have been procured.

As uniforms/kits are considered requisite or essential items for learners to participate fully in their course of study, learners who fail to obtain the necessary uniforms/kits within 10 days of commencement of their course the following actions may apply:

- **Removal of campus identity card until fees are paid in full or an agreed arrangement is put in place to provide for payment**
- **Refuse to sign attendance forms (BTEA, social welfare, third party or learner card request forms)**
- **Suspension from involvement in campus activities, including availing of classes, tutorials, study and library facilities**
- **Removal from the course**

Cork College of FET and its campuses do not subsidise or contribute to the cost of uniforms/kits that will remain the property of learners on completion of their studies.

## 2.3 Optional/Additional Elements

Some courses may provide learners with the opportunity to participate in optional additional activities that may enhance their experience and add to their learning. Charges for these elements, including any additional certification options are set out clearly in course descriptions and participation is at the discretion of the learner.

## 2.4 Setting out Individual course fees for learners

Campuses are required to be cognisant of the financial pressures experienced by learners and their families and to ensure that learners have clear visibility of the fees/charges (compulsory and optional) that apply to each and every course.

Each course fee/charge must be illustrated by a breakdown as below, setting out the elements of the proposed fee as follows:

Fee Element	Cost
Learner Registration fee	€50
Uniform/Kit charges	Itemised
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€XX</b>
Optional Additional elements and charges	Itemised

## 2.5 Approval for proposed cost and charges

Course costs and learner charges proposals must be submitted to the Director of Further Education and Training as part of the PLC course proposal/approval process, to be discussed with the PLC management group for consideration by the end of December in the year preceding the commencement of courses.

The course costs and learner charges include **ALL** elements that contribute to the cost of delivering the course (excluding staff and accommodation costs), i.e. materials, certification, seminars/workshops, etc. These will contribute to the development of a course budget and incorporation of same into the campus budgetary allocation.

The Director of Further Education and Training will make a recommendation regarding course cost and fees to the FET Steering Group for its consideration.

## 2.6 Publishing Fees and Charges

All PLC campuses and centres will be required to publish the fee schedule on their website, EduPortal, and PLSS/Fetch Courses providing a breakdown of the learner for each course, under the following headings:

1. **Learner Registration fee**
2. **Uniform or personal kit charge**
3. **Optional/Additional Elements**



## 2.7 Payment of Fees and Charges

In line with Government policy to move away from cash transactions, Cork ETB encourages all applicants to use the online payment facility available through each campus.

In exceptional circumstances Campuses may accept payments directly to the main office. **Payment by cash is not provided for.** Cork ETB and its campuses can only accept payment by:

- Cheque
- Bank draft
- Postal order
- Debit/credit card

All fees/charges must be paid in full by a date to be confirmed on year-by-year basis.

## 2.8 Payment of Fees and Charges by a Third Party

In some instances, learners may receive support from other bodies/third parties (e.g. Tusla), including financial supports or payment of fees by the third party. In such cases, the Campus is responsible for confirming with the applicant and the third party that they (the third party) are committing to paying the learner registration fee and any additional charges accruing to the campus before accepting the learner as registered.

The Campus is responsible for ensuring that all third-party fees are collected.

## 2.9 Payment of Fees and Charges – VTOS applicants

Applicants who are applying for funding support under the VTOS scheme if successful, will have any course fees/charges paid through VTOS. If an individual is successful in their application for a VTOS place, the Learner registration charge may be refunded.

## 2.10 Non-Payment of Fees and Charges

The range of charges and fees applying to learners has been significantly reduced over previous years. Payment of the Learner Registration fee is required when an applicant is offered a place on a course to confirm their acceptance of the offer.



In the event that an applicant has not paid the Learner Registration fee within 10 days of the offer being made, Cork College of FET will determine that the learner has declined the place, and they will no longer be considered for that course. The offer will be deemed to be withdrawn, and the place may be offered to another eligible applicant.

**The Learner Registration fee is non-refundable.**

If a learner is required to purchase a uniform/kit for their course and the required items are supplied through the Campus, uniforms/kits will only be supplied when the learner has paid in full for same.

In many instances, uniforms/kits are supplied through/by nominated suppliers and learners purchase directly from these suppliers. Cork College of FET and its Campuses have no role or responsibility with regards to learners' engagement with these suppliers.

As uniforms/kits are considered requisite or essential items for learners to participate fully in their course of study, learners who fail to obtain the necessary uniforms/kits within 10 days of commencement of their course the following actions may apply:

- **Removal of campus identity card until fees are paid in full or an agreed arrangement is put in place to provide for payment**
- **Refuse to sign attendance forms (BTEA, social welfare, third party or learner card request forms)**
- **Suspension from involvement in campus activities, including availing of classes, tutorials, study and library facilities**
- **Removal from the course**

Where a course provides a learner with optional additional elements with an associated charge, any charges or fees for these optional elements must be collected by the Campus in advance.

**No learner will be allowed to participate on or in an optional element if they have not paid the required charge for same.**

## **2.11 Applicant/Learner Responsibility**

It is the responsibility of the applicant/learner to:

- Ensure that they read and understand the fee policy and the procedures relating to each





- Pay all fees due within the specified timeframe.
- Ensure that they keep all receipts and documentation as evidence in the case of a dispute.
- Engage with the campus immediately if they are experiencing difficulties in relation to paying fees.

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### 3. Refunds Policy

#### The Learner Registration fee is non-refundable.

The purpose of this policy is that all learners receive similar service and responses in all Campus when requesting refunds. The decision to approve the issuing of a refund will have to be authorised by the Campus Principal or Deputy Principal.

In general, it is Cork Education and Training Boards policy not to make any refunds to a learner who has commenced on a course. With the elimination of several elements that would have previously been included in course fees/charges, and where these fees/charges are now significantly less as a consequence, the number and type of case where a refund request may arise are significantly reduced.

However, a number of instances or scenarios where refunds may legitimately be requested and approved are described below. Additional instances may arise which are not covered by the scenarios described, in such instances the principles of reasonableness and fairness should be applied in making decisions.

#### 3.1 Situation 1

Learner accepts an offer of a place and pays fees (fully or partially) and then informs the Campus **before** the commencement of classes that s/he is not going to take up their place.

<b>Refund:</b>	<b>Registration Fee (€50) – non-refundable</b>
	<b>Cost of any uniforms/kits – refundable if uniforms kits purchased through campus and these are unused and can be used by another learner</b>
	<b>Optional charges – refundable in full</b>

#### 3.2 Situation 2

Learner accepts an offer of a place and pays fees (fully or partially) and having commenced the course, informs the Campus **before** 01 October that s/he is not proceeding with their participation on the course.

<b>Refund:</b>	<b>Registration Fee (€50) – non-refundable</b>
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	<b>Cost of any uniforms/kits</b> – refundable if uniforms kits purchased through campus and these are unused and can be used by another learner
	<b>Optional charges</b> – refundable in full for elements that have not occurred Where the optional charges include registration/certification fees for an external body and these charges/fees have <b>NOT</b> been remitted to that body, refundable.

### 3.3 Situation 3

Learner, having completed a place and commenced on course, decides to leave **after** 01 October.

<b>Refund:</b>	<b>Registration Fee (€50)</b> – non-refundable
	<b>Cost of any uniforms/kits</b> – refundable if uniforms kits purchased through campus and these are unused and can be used by another learner
	<b>Optional charges</b> – refundable in full for elements that have not occurred Where the optional charges include registration/certification fees for an external body and these charges/fees have <b>NOT</b> been remitted to that body, refundable.

### 3.4 Situation 4

Where a decision is made by CCFET that a course must be cancelled or does not run after offers are made:.

<b>Refund:</b>	<b>Registration Fee (€50)</b> – is refundable
	<b>Cost of any uniforms/kits</b> – refundable if uniforms kits purchased through campus and these are unused and can be used by another learner
	<b>Optional charges</b> – refundable in full for elements that have not occurred



	Where the optional charges include registration/certification fees for an external body and these charges/fees have <b>NOT</b> been remitted to that body, refundable.
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### 3.5 Processing Refunds

- Refund requests may take up to two weeks to process.
- Online payments made by credit/debit card will be refunded to credit/debit card used to pay the original fee.
- Cheque or postal order payments will be refunded by cheque
- No cash refunds will be provided.

### 3.6 Recording Refunds

Campuses in applying the above policy and procedures, should reference their decisions on refunds not only to the date the refund was requested but also to the date of last attendance. A clear record of refunds made and the reasons for applying them must be kept. The Principals authorisation of the refund must be recorded

The Campus Principal must verify and sign off on all fee refund decisions with the rationale for the decision clearly set out.



## 4. Dealing with Learner Debts

### 4.1 General

Cork Education and Training Board has, through the mechanisms and procedures in the fee alleviation and waivers sections of this policy, provided for learners who are experiencing financial difficulties to put in place agreements for fee payment. However, there will likely be a proportion of learners who fail to pay (in full) the fees owed or to engage with the Campus/centre.

It is Cork ETB's policy that unpaid fees are considered a debt and will be dealt with as set out here.

### 4.2 Non-Payment of Fees

In an instance where a learner has not paid his/her fees in full, and has not engaged with the campus regarding any difficulties they are experiencing with the payment of fees, the following remedies are available to the campus:

- Removal of campus identity card until fees are paid in full or an agreed arrangement is put in place to provide for payment
- Refuse to sign attendance forms (BTEA, social welfare, third party or learner card request forms)
- Suspension from involvement in campus activities, including availing of classes, tutorials, study and library facilities
- Removal from the course

A learner who has not paid their fees in full will not be permitted to sit examinations, and no results shall be provided to that learner until payment in full is made.

#### **No learner who has outstanding fees will be allowed to graduate**

Any unpaid fees are considered to be a debt to the campus by the learner.

### 4.3 Pursuing Debts

The campus is required to keep an up-to-date record of fees paid and monies owed, and to review this on a regular basis.



Each campus is advised to review the fee record monthly, and, commencing in October, communicate with all learners who have fees outstanding and who have not engaged with the campus to agree alleviation measures if they are experiencing difficulties, seeking payment of outstanding fees. A record of all communications should be kept, as well as a record of any actions taken on foot of responses/non-responses.

Prior to the end of April every year, all learners with outstanding fees must be written to, advising them of the amount outstanding and that if payment or arrangements for payment are not agreed before the 1<sup>st</sup> May, any learner so affected will not be permitted to sit end of year examinations, nor will certification requests be made on their behalf to the awarding body.

In July following the end of the academic year, the campus will write to all learners with outstanding fees, advising them of the amount owed and requesting payment.

At the first Board of Management meeting after the commencement of the new academic year, the Principal will present a report to the Board identifying learner debtors and the amount owed by each debtor and seek approval from the Board to have these amounts declared unrecoverable. The Principal will advise Cork ETB of the Boards decision.