

Fee Waiver and Refund Policy

Academic Year 22/23

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Introduction

The University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE, Bristol) is committed to a fair and transparent policy in respect of what we charge you for fees. We recognise that you may occasionally be unable to meet your financial obligations to the University.

This policy sets out the general principles for how and when UWE will consider varying, reducing, or cancelling any fees owed.

All such variations, reductions, and cancellations are at UWE's discretion.

Basic principles

UWE has the discretion to manage fee collection flexibly and in recognition of individual circumstances. We therefore reserve the right to refuse a waiver where alternative actions are more appropriate.

By registering with the University, you are committing to making the required payments for tuition, accommodation, and other services related to your course of study. You must arrange to pay the University in accordance with our terms and conditions, the Tuition Fee policy, and the Debt policy. Failure to meet these obligations will result in the imposition of appropriate sanctions (as laid out in the University's Debt Policy).

If you are registering for the first time with UWE, you are entitled to a 14-day 'cooling off' period. During this time, you do not accrue any liability and may cancel your registration without penalty.

The Fee Policy lays out a clearly defined liability schedule:

You withdraw during:		You pay:
'Term' 1	From the first day of term 1 but before the first day of term 2	25% of full fees
'Term' 2	From the first day of term 2 but before the first day of term 3	50% of full fees
'Term' 3	From the first day of term 3	Full fees

When considering requests for a reduction in fees, this model will be used in all but the most exceptional circumstances. We will take into account the date of application and any preceding circumstances.

Other academic support options are available to you including resits, suspensions, and withdrawals.

While the University will make every effort to support you, to progress through and complete your course you must expect to pay all fees due. We will consider the implications of the debt you owe, or the potential for you to accrue more debt, when making decisions and may take reasonable steps to prevent this.

General conditions

All applications will be considered on their individual circumstances.

No application will be considered without appropriate evidence.

In making an application for a waiver of fees, you declare that you have no alternative source of funding available to you.

You will normally receive a fee waiver only once and for only one year. It is your responsibility to stabilise your financial position to ensure that you can meet your financial obligations.

You may make a second and **exceptional** application only on grounds different to those of the first application.

Burden of proof

The burden of proof is on you as the student, and the inability to pay must be evidenced. Your inability to pay is not by itself sufficient grounds for a fee waiver.

Evidence

No application will be considered without evidence. If you submit an application without evidence, it will be pended for six weeks and evidence requested. If the evidence is not supplied within this time, the application will be closed.

Applications will only be reopened if it is shown that you could not supply the evidence requested due to incapacity or personal circumstances beyond your control.

Personal circumstances

Personal Circumstances, as accepted by an award board, are not in themselves enough for the granting of a fee waiver. However, the circumstances themselves may be considered separately in regard to a fee waiver application.

Postgraduate fee waivers

This fee waiver is offered to you if you are a postgraduate student in receipt of government means-tested benefits. Details of the application process are available on the UWE website.

Debt

If you are in debt to the University, you should contact Credit Control or our appointed debt agent in the first instance to discuss payment options.

You may have the option to arrange a payment plan to clear the debt and, where necessary, this may be passed to the University's debt collection agent.

If you are a current student with debt, you will be prevented from re-registering until the debt is cleared.

Debt may be sent for legal action and in the following cases:

- You are a former student who has withdrawn from the University with outstanding debt.
- You are a former student who has completed your course at the University with outstanding debt.
- You are a current student who wishes to re-register with outstanding debt.

Financial Services and its appointed agents are responsible for pursuing debts to the University.

Fee waiver

You should expect to pay for the learning, teaching, and assessment activities that you have undertaken. By completing the registration process, you are agreeing to pay the fees required for your course.

As such, you must have exhausted all other funding options before applying for a waiver.

Except in cases of 'business as usual' where a fee reduction can be automatically applied for withdrawal and suspension, the reduction of all fee liability and/or the waiver of debt are entirely at UWE's discretion.

In general, UWE will not consider fee waivers during the cooling off period as you already have the right to suspend or cancel your registration without liability.

- If you complete registration in advance of the course start date, and a deterioration of financial circumstances occurs prior to the start of the course, you can suspend or cancel your registration without liability not later than 14 days after the start of your course. In these cases, a fee waiver will not be considered.

Minimum reasonable provision (MRP)

You are expected to have made minimum reasonable provision for your studies. This includes ensuring that you have sufficient funds to cover tuition fees and living costs in full.

- **Home undergraduates** – you should have applied for the full tuition fee and maintenance loan or made equivalent alternative provision.
- **Postgraduate students** – you must demonstrate sufficient funds to cover the costs of your course either through work, savings, or access to the PGL. **Please be**

aware that a PGL alone is often insufficient to cover all costs, and additional provisions need to be made as well.

- **International students** – you are required to demonstrate sufficient funds to secure your visa.

Any application for a fee waiver must demonstrate that the inability to pay is not due to a failure to make necessary provisions, but rather due to circumstances that could not have been reasonably foreseen (as detailed in this policy).

Access to further funding

- If you have access to government funding either in the form of an undergraduate tuition fee loan or a postgraduate loan, you should apply for additional fee support from Student Finance. You can do this by providing them with evidence of your compelling personal reasons.
- If alternative funding is not available, you have the right to suspend your studies to prevent the accrual of further debt and to stabilise your financial circumstances.

Consideration of applications

Only applications that have been evidenced as fitting the criteria of ill health, bereavement and caring and care responsibilities will be considered by the Student Money Service

When making an application based on any of the eligible criteria, you must explain and evidence the financial impact that has been had. Failure to do so will result in your application being rejected.

The University policy is that fees are neither waived nor refundable except in the following exceptional circumstances (and only where no reasonable alternative option exists, e.g. suspension or academic compensation):

General time limits

Where fee waivers are considered, they will be for events that occur **after** the start date of the current year of your course. Events that occur either prior to the start of the course or after the end of the academic year will not be considered.

Exception for International Students – In addition to consideration under the International Refund policy, events that occur after you have arrived in the UK but prior to the start of your course may also be considered.

Please note: The expected outcome time is based on a number of factors i.e. when evidence is provided, the volume of applications received, frequency of Fee Record Operation Group meetings. Meetings are scheduled around staff availability and with staff in different

departments across the university, frequency of meetings may vary. If applications have not been filled out completely this will also prolong your response time.

A course/class is cancelled by the university

Where a course is cancelled, you will be offered a place on a suitable alternative course in the first instance.

Ill health

You are expected to account for any health conditions when committing to a year of study at the University. However, if you have a long-term or chronic health condition, you should not face additional financial obstacles in accessing education. Therefore:

- Where it can be shown that, due to ill health, you have been completely unable to engage with your studies, fees for the year will be reduced to zero.
- Where it can be shown that, due to a deterioration in health, you have been required to disengage with your studies partway through the year, your fees will be reduced in line with the standard fee reduction policy based on the date of disengagement.
 - In these cases, where you have paid for modules that you have not been able to complete, a retake may be available without further charge.

The University will use data gathered through learner analytics to help determine engagement.

Bereavement

We recognise that bereavement, especially of close family members, is a major life event. The impact of a bereavement will affect people differently, and you should seek appropriate academic advice and guidance as well as psychological support.

- Where it can be shown that, due to bereavement, you have been completely unable to engage with your studies, fees for the year will be reduced to zero.
- Where it can be shown that, due to bereavement, you have been required to disengage with your studies partway through the year, your fees will be reduced in line with the standard fee reduction policy based on the date of disengagement.
 - In these cases, where you have paid for modules that you have not been able to complete, a retake may be available without further charge.

The University will use data gathered through learner analytics to help determine engagement.

Caring and care responsibilities

You are expected to account for your caring responsibilities when committing to a year of study at UWE. However, if you have long-term responsibilities, you should not face additional financial obstacles in accessing education. You should seek advice before registering and be confident, as far as possible, that you can undertake your studies and that appropriate support is in place.

- Where it can be shown that, due to an escalation in your caring responsibilities (e.g. loss or withdrawal of third-party support), you have been required to disengaged with your studies partway through the year, your fees will be reduced in line with the standard fee reduction policy based on the date of disengagement.
 - In these cases, where you have paid for modules that you have not been able to complete, a retake may be available without further charge.

Loss of or disruption to third-party sponsorship by an employer or other commercial entity

You remain ultimately liable for your fees even if your method of payment is through a third-party sponsor, employer or commercial entity. Failure of the third party to pay on your behalf does not automatically guarantee a fee waiver.

Where you become liable for your fees due to the failure of a third party to pay, the University will work with you on a suitable payment plan.

Loss of or disruption to tuition fee support from a family member

You remain ultimately liable for your fees even if your fees are being paid for by a family member. Failure of the family member to pay on your behalf does not automatically guarantee a fee waiver.

In cases where you become liable for your fees due to the failure of a family member to pay, the University will work with you on a suitable payment plan.

Registering without sufficient funds to pay

By registering with the University, you are agreeing to pay the fees due. If you register without making minimum reasonable provisions, you are ineligible for a fee waiver and will be referred to Credit Control to arrange a payment plan. You may also have your registration suspended to prevent the accrual of further debt.

Where funding has been awarded by Student Finance and then revoked by reassessment, you cannot apply for a waiver on the basis that this funding was removed. However, you may apply based on the reason underpinning the reassessment, providing there are

sufficient grounds as per the terms of this policy to support an application. The reassessment in and of itself is not sufficient.

Academic failure

Academic failure, in and of itself, is not sufficient grounds for a fee waiver.

- **Quality of provision** – In cases where you believe there is an issue with the quality of the teaching, learning, and assessment activity on your course, you must use the complaints process in the first instance.

Re-registration

You should seek advice before re-registration if there is potential for financial hardship to occur or continue into a future academic year. If you are re-registering and it is then shown that you knew that financial hardship was expected in advance of the academic year, you will not be eligible for a fee waiver and will be referred to Credit Control to arrange a payment plan.

The exception to this will be where a serious deterioration of personal circumstances, (including bereavement, ill health, or caring responsibilities) occurs post-registration that is deemed to be unpredictable regardless of any link to existing circumstances. For this to apply, you must be deemed to otherwise be in good financial standing with the University.

Re-registration with debt

Re-registration with an outstanding debt comes solely at the discretion of the University and is not normally permitted.

Fee waivers - international students

At the discretion of the International Office, the following applies in cases where the International Refund policy does not.

If you are a student in the UK on a student visa, you have demonstrated an ability to access sufficient funds to pay your fees and living costs as part of your visa process. As such, you are expected to be able to meet your obligations for the year and are ineligible for a fee waiver. By registering each academic year, you are declaring that you can afford to pay fees for the year.

If you are an international student studying on a student visa, your application will be considered with reference to the requirements of UKVI. This is to ensure that any such decision does not breach the terms of your visa or the responsibilities of UWE's UKVI licence.

Bereavement

In cases of bereavement causing an interruption of study (for example the need to return home) where there is a formal suspension, your fees will be reduced in line with standard reduction policy.

If you are able to continue with your studies while away or can make up study upon your return with no break in study, no fee waiver will be offered. You should seek academic advice from your programme team and a Student Support Adviser.

Caring

In cases of caring responsibilities causing an interruption of study (for example the need to return home to care for a sick family member) where there is a formal suspension, your fees will be reduced in line with standard reduction policy determined by the date of suspension.

If you are able to continue with your studies while away or can make up study upon your return with no break in study, we will not offer a fee waiver. You should seek academic advice from your programme team and a Student Support Adviser.

Ill health

You are expected to take in to account health conditions when committing to a year of study at the University. However, if you have a long-term or chronic health condition, you should not face additional financial obstacles in accessing education.

- Where it can be shown that, due to ill health, you have been completely unable to engage with your studies, fees for the year will be reduced to zero (for example if you fall ill and are hospitalised after arrival in the UK).
- Where it can be shown that, due to a deterioration in health, you have been required to disengage with your studies partway through the year, your fees will be reduced in line with the standard fee reduction policy based on the date of disengagement.
- In these cases, where you have paid for modules that you have not been able to complete, a retake may be available without further charge.

The University will use data gathered through learner analytics to help determine engagement.

Fee waivers as reasonable adjustments

The University has other policies in place to support individuals with protected characteristics who may require us to make reasonable adjustments to facilitate learning.

Although flexibility may be required to properly support you, the following core options are available to services making recommendations for reasonable adjustments:

- Waive the requirement for you to pay further fees
- Return fees that you have already paid
- Waive the requirement for you to pay further fees that might otherwise be due (e.g. for retakes)

The other policies and procedures that exist within UWE that can recommend fee waivers include:

- Maternity Policy
- Fitness to Study Policy
- Stage 1 Complaints
- Postgraduate Part-Time Fee Waiver

Recommendations under these other policies are subject to the rules and conditions applicable to each policy. The Student Money Service will automatically action decisions on a student record upon notification from the team responsible for that policy.

Applications and recommendations will be made directly through the Fee Record Operations Group who are responsible for reviewing applications and notifying faculties.

‘Business as usual’ processes

‘Business as usual’ processes are processes where one of the intended outcomes is a fee recalculation. This is usually related to another action you take in accordance with other university policies such as withdrawing or suspending.

- Fee liability is accrued from the first day of term. However, no fees will be charged if you withdraw within the cooling off period.
- Fee liability is automatically reduced on suspension or withdrawal on the following scale:

You withdraw during:		You pay:
‘Term’ 1	(from the first day of term 1 but before the first day of term 2)	25% of full fees
‘Term’ 2	(from the first day of term 2 but before the first day of term 3)	50% of full fees
‘Term’ 3	(from the first day of term 3)	Full fees

- Where there has been an error in the fees calculated, we will adjust these and return to you with no further processing required.
- Where you require the return of fees in line with policy (e.g. suspension and withdrawal) they will be adjusted and returned to you. There is no need to apply separately for the return of fees.
- Long modules, such as masters dissertations, may be attached to your student record up to a year before you begin the learning, teaching, and assessment

Backdated suspensions, withdrawals and requests for fee waivers

The University will consider applications for a reduction in fee liability where it is shown that it was not possible for you to notify us earlier or where there is evidence of non-engagement. For example, in cases of hospitalisation these rules would apply.

From time away to suspension

There are cases where you may, on advice, remain registered but take a break (for example to return home for a funeral) but then decide not to return for the year and formally request a suspension. The fee reduction will be backdated to the start of the study break rather than the date of suspension where:

- the suspension request is in a different liability period,
- it is before the end of the year,
and
- engagement following the break in study is minimal.

If you cannot complete the award for which you originally registered, you are usually eligible for an interim award. Otherwise, you may use the academic credit you have gained towards an award in the future. There are normally no academic or financial penalties attached to taking a pause in study.

If you fail a module due to unexpected circumstances, and therefore require extra time to complete your award, you may need to access additional funding from the SLC (where applicable) or pause your studies until your financial circumstances stabilise.

Completion

To aid completion, the Student Money Service may consider waiving your final year programme fees. This applies where you are repeating a year or module due to exceptional circumstances that impacted your ability to finish and:

- Where there is no statutory funding to cover the charge,
- You are otherwise in good financial standing with the University,
and
- The year or modules being repeated were paid for in full at the time they were originally taken.

If you are repeating due to academic failure without other circumstances and/or where lack of funds is the only reason for the inability to pay, you will be ineligible for a waiver on the grounds of minimum reasonable provision.

Other grounds for fee waivers

The Fee Record Operations Group or Student Money Service may consider other fee waiver applications only in exceptional circumstances.

Such consideration does not guarantee the approval of a fee waiver, and the Group may instead recommend that you are:

- suspended
- withdrawn
- referred to our debt collection agency
- offered a retake in specified modules without further charge

When we will not consider requests for fee waivers

Other processes

There are other processes at the University that can result in a reduction in fee liability or student compensation. A standalone application for a fee waiver will not be considered while these other processes are ongoing. These include:

- Exam board decisions
- Appeals
- Complaints
- Disciplinary proceedings
- Fitness to study

This is to:

- Ensure the integrity of the processes involved.
- Ensure the outcomes of a particular process in unambiguous terms.
- Avoid the awarding of a fee waiver being seen as acceptance of liability regarding a separate process, where the outcome of that process might be different.

This means that the consideration of applications will be delayed until the other processes have been concluded.

Fee waivers will not be awarded where appropriate academic compensation has been made.

Fee waivers will not be awarded for modules or years of study that you have completed regardless of the outcome.

Financial hardship

Applications for fee waivers will only be considered on the grounds laid out in this policy, and under the International Refund Policy if you are an international student. Requests for

waivers solely on the grounds of financial hardship will not be granted, even where minimum reasonable provision can be demonstrated. In these cases, you will be directed to Credit Control to discuss payment options.

By registering each academic year, you are declaring that you can afford to pay fees for the year. Applications made based on the inability to pay for fees during the academic year due to loss of work, will fall under financial hardship and you will be ineligible for a fee waiver.

Victims of fraud

In the unfortunate case that you become a victim of fraud, we will be unable to offer you a fee waiver. You should contact the credit control team in the first instance to discuss payment options. You may also wish to speak to a money adviser for further advice.

Access to statutory support

Statutory funding includes both undergraduate funding and courses eligible for the postgraduate loan where you also meet personal eligibility criteria.

- A waiver of fees will be considered **only** where statutory funding is not available.
- Applications will not be considered on the grounds of unwillingness to access statutory support from Student Finance.
- Applications will not be considered solely on the grounds that statutory support has been exhausted.

Degree apprenticeships and contract-funded courses

Applications will not be considered if you are funded through the degree apprenticeship programme or through contracted course arrangements.

Partners

If you are at a partner organisation, you should consult their institutional policies.

Policy disputes

It is not the purpose of the Fee Record Operations Group to consider applications from students who disagree with the fee policy of the University. If you want to contest your liability for tuition fees in respect of the fee policy, you should contact the Student Administration Team or Student Money Service under stage 1 of the University complaints policy. Alternatively, you can contact the complaints and appeals team under stage 2 of the UWE's Complaints Policy.

Consideration

The Student Money Service will make a make the decision on all applications and may request information from other University departments in order to reach the decision. If a decision cannot be reached within the Student Money Service, the application will be referred to the Fee Record Operations Group for decision. All evidence will be shared with the Fee Record Operations Group in order for a decision to be made.

Appeals

All applications that meet the appropriate criteria will be considered by the Student Money Service. Appeals can be brought on the following grounds and this will be considered by the Fee Record Operations Group:

- Material irregularity in the process and handling of the application.
- Further significant and relevant evidence has become available which may affect the application.

Appeals on the grounds of new evidence will be reconsidered by the Student Money Service.

Appeals regarding the conduct of the group will be considered by a senior manager from Student and Academic Services (SAS).

Oversight

All recommendations of the Student Money Service will be presented to UWE's Student Funding Group for review at its meetings.

The notes of these meetings are presented to the Directorate.

Complaints

The Fee Record Operations Group will not consider any applications that have arisen from a student complaint until:

- such a complaint has been dealt with through the complaint's procedure
- or**
- the application is referred to the panel by outcome of the complaints procedure
- or**
- we determine through the complaint procedure that it is more appropriate to consider the application as a Fee Waiver rather than a complaint.

We will consider requests for fee waivers made as part of a complaint to be part of the complaints procedure first.

It remains reasonable for the outcome of complaints to include options to waive, reduce, and return fees as appropriate. If such an outcome is justified, the fees can be adjusted and returned to you without further processing.

Approval

Autor: Student Money Service

Updated Date: 4th November

Approved by: University Funding Group

Publication Date: 11th November 2022

Appendices

1. Terms and Conditions
2. Academic Regulations and Procedures
3. Fitness to Study Policy
4. Professional Suitability and Professional Conduct Policy
5. Religion and Belief Policy
6. Student Conduct Policy
7. [Student Pregnancy, Maternity, Adoption and Partner Leave Policy and Procedures](#)
8. Complaints Procedure
11. Data Protection Policy
12. Student Visa
13. Terms and Conditions for Apprentices
14. Student Data Privacy Notice
15. Student Protection Plan
16. Engagement and Attendance Policy
17. International Refund Policy