

Fees charged to Part-Time Adult Students 2000-2001



“The NIACE Annual Fees Survey 2000-01 shows that wide variations in fee policies continue to exist between different Local Education Authorities. Where learners live is a key factor affecting both the range of learning opportunities available to them and the price of that learning. Variations in concessionary policies further affect people’s opportunities to learn, especially for those who are disadvantaged.”

Fees Survey 2000-2001, NIACE, 2001

Fees Survey 2000-01, NIACE, 2001

Since 1979, NIACE has published an annual fees survey report to provide a reference point for those involved in setting fee levels, and to provide information to governors and elected members involved in decision making. In November 2001, NIACE asked colleges and local education authority adult education providers about the fees that they charged to adult learners for part-time courses of around two hours per week. This year’s full report, **NIACE Fees Survey 2000-01** is available from NIACE, price £8.

This Fees Survey reflects the fee policies operating in colleges and LEAs during the academic year 2000/01. The terms Schedule 2 (S2) and Non Schedule 2 (NS2) derive from the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) which divided the curriculum offer for adults between vocational and non-vocational provision and established different funding arrangements for each. The different funding arrangements shaped the way in which the different sectors – colleges and LEAs – set their fees and also the extent to which they offered fee concessions to different groups.

2000/01 is also the year during which the Learning and Skills Act (2000) was enacted. The Act created the Learning and Skills Council to fund all post-16 provision other than higher education. It removed the legal basis for the S2/NS2 divide in the further education curriculum and it heralded a more coherent approach to funding education and training across the sectors. Terminologies will no doubt shift and change as a result of the new Act and as the Learning and Skills Council develops over the academic year 2001/02.

The outline of a new funding system has been announced in consultation circulars during Autumn 2001. This funding system will apply to most accredited adult learning provision from September 2002. The new funding system makes more explicit the assumption about fees which have

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been built into the formula, and it does seem now that fees will not be nationally set. There will be a little more time to explore the implications of the fee assumptions within the funding formula for non-accredited LEA controlled adult and community learning (former LEA NS2 provision) as the new funding system does not come into this provision until September 2003.

At the time of writing, one distinction being made by the Learning and Skills Council for 2001/02 in place of Schedule 2/Non-Schedule 2 is between qualifications (as listed in a Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) approved list – referred to as Section 96) and ‘other’ provision. ‘Other’ provision includes a whole range of programmes which were included within different parts of Schedule 2, and some of which will now be incorporated within a second list (Section 97) of approved qualifications for adults which is currently in preparation at the QCA.

Further research and development work will be undertaken by the LSC over the coming year on the best arrangements for including within the new main funding system the vast range of non accredited provision in the LEA and voluntary and community sectors. The willingness and ability of many adults to pay for their learning, the range of fees charged and the availability of fee concessions and free provision for the socially and financially disadvantaged will no doubt all figure large in these discussions.

The findings

The average fee for examination courses was £1.28 per hour in colleges and £1.30 per hour in LEAs. The average fee for non-vocational courses was £2.22 per hour in colleges and £1.72 per hour in LEAs. Since 1999-2000 the average fee charged by LEAs for examination courses has risen by 6.6% and fallen by 2.2% for non-vocational courses. The average fees charged by colleges for examination courses has risen by 9.4% and by 2% for non-vocational courses.

Higher fees are usually charged where there are high equipment costs, additional overheads, additional staffing or smaller class sizes. Additional charges for materials were made in around four-fifths of LEAs. Fees are waived for students on means tested benefits doing examination courses. Some providers also waive fees for such students,

and other low-income groups, on other courses. Some courses aimed at learners from disadvantaged groups are free.

Concessions may be given on those fees to people on various means tested benefits, or other groups such as people who are unemployed, people with disabilities or young people. The exact category of students eligible for concessionary fees varies between providers. So too does the extent of the concession: some providers will charge 50% of the full fee, others 25% or 33%. The most generous concessions tend to be given to unemployed people, those on means tested benefits and adults with learning difficulties.

In addition to the hourly tuition fee, 66% of LEAs and 17% of colleges charged a registration fee for both examination courses and 35% of LEAs charged a registration fee for non-vocational courses. The most common registration fee was £5. Many providers charge a registration fee, even to concessionary students, as it is believed that charging a minimum fee of some kind increases student commitment and helps with retention rates.

In order to increase and widen participation many LEAs made special offers: 21% of responding LEAs offered a reduced rate for second and subsequent part-time courses; 12% offered a minimum fee for multiple enrolments; 84% offered tasters for free or at a reduced rate.

Fiona Aldridge, NIACE

References

Fees survey 2000-2001. Fiona Aldridge, Leicester, NIACE, 2001. ISBN 186201 123 0. £8.00

Funding : Post-16 funding arrangements for 2002/3. Learning and Skills Council, September 2001. Circular 01/13. Web Site: www.lsc.gov.uk/news_docs/Post16F.pdf

NIACE, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, has a broad remit to promote lifelong learning opportunities for adults. NIACE works to develop increased participation in education and training. It aims to do this for those who do not have easy access because of barriers of class, gender, age, race, language and culture, learning difficulties or disabilities, or insufficient resources.
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