

NIACE Research and Development



Key Findings



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NIACE Annual Fees Survey 1999 / 2000

Abstract

To research and provide an annual fees survey report as a reference point for those involved in setting fee levels whether for a whole authority or for an individual centre, and to provide contextual information to governors and elected members involved in decision making around these issues. Produced annually since 1979.

Research methodology:

The report is prepared from responses to a postal questionnaire which was sent to all local education authorities (LEAs) and FEFC sector college in England and Wales in January 2000, asking for information on the fees charged during the autumn term commencing September 1999.

Key Findings

The main conclusions of the project are:

- ❖ Wide variations in fee policies continue to exist between different LEAs, such that 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 peoples opportunities to learn, especially for those who are disadvantaged through age, disability or income.
- ❖ On average, colleges charge less than LEAs for Schedule 2 provision and more than LEAs for non-Schedule 2 provision.
- ❖ The average fee charged by LEAs has risen by 2.5% for Schedule 2 provision and by nearly 5% for non-Schedule 2 provision since 1998/99.
- ❖ Variation exists in the level of fees charged by different types of authority with the lowest fees being charged in Wales and the Metropolitan Boroughs.

- ❖ Higher fees are usually charged where there are high equipment costs, additional overheads, additional staffing or smaller class sizes. Additional charges for materials are made in 82% of responding LEAs.
- ❖ 61% of responding LEAs make no distinction between residents and non-residents in their fees policy.
- ❖ In order to increase and widen participation many LEAs offer special offers: 20% of responding LEAs offer a reduced rate for second and subsequent part-time courses; 6% offer a maximum fee for multiple enrolments; and 74% offer tasters for free or at a reduced rate.
- ❖ Providers often have different concessionary rates for different categories of learners. The most generous concessions tend to be given to the unemployed, those on means tested benefits and people with learning difficulties. However, there is a general trend away from giving concessions to particular groups of people, and towards using low income, usually judged by the receipt of means-tested benefits, as a criterion for concessions.
- ❖ Payment in instalments or per class meeting is popular with students on low incomes and supports widening participation but generates an additional administrative burden and can create uncertainty about the financial viability of running a course.
- ❖ The popularity of payment by postal enrolment varies between LEAs, and raises the issue of how effective information, advice and guidance can be given to potential students prior to starting the course.

Recommendation

For NIACE to continue to review the frame in which the fees survey is constructed.

Output

- ❖ Aldridge, F. (2000) *Fees Survey 1999 -2000*. NIACE: Leicester.

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Requests for 'Key Findings' in other formats, such as large print, are welcome. We would be pleased to consider your request.

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