



WEST THAMES COLLEGE

FEES POLICY 2026-27

Lead	Approved By:	Date Approved:	Next Review Date:	Where Published:
Executive Director of Finance, HR & Development	Finance, Resources & Capital Projects Committee	March 2026	March 2027	Staff Intranet and College Website

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to give details of the tuition and associated fees charged for courses offered by West Thames College. In addition to the tuition fee most courses will have an examination fee. Some students will also have to pay materials fees or other fees incurred. These charges will be made clear prior to enrolment.

Tuition fees and remission arrangements are generally determined with reference to the student age and/or the course characteristics. Broadly, students may be divided by age into the following categories:

- Under 16s
- 16 to 18-year-olds
- 19 to 23-year-olds
- Students aged 24 or over

Courses are classified as:

- Further Education (FE) funded by the Department for Education (DfE) or, in the case of the devolved Adult Skills Fund, by the Greater London Authority (GLA);
- Advanced Learner Loan provision;
- Higher Education (HE) funded by the Office for Students (OfS) either directly or through a partner University; or
- Full-cost (commercial/self-financing).

Throughout the Policy reference is made to “home” students. A “home” student is defined as being ordinarily resident in England. Documentation will be checked at enrolment to ensure home status is met for funding purposes as outlined in the ‘Who we fund’ and ‘Residency eligibility’ paragraphs of the funding guidance. Those without the eligible residency or immigration status permitting them to be treated as “home” students will be classified as international students, and are not entitled to funding.

All fees are listed in ProSolution, the College’s student MIS, and are set annually with reference to:

- Funding rates for qualifications as published on the [Find a learning aim \(FaLA\) web-based search facility](#) and in the DfE’s [funding rates and formula](#)
- Fees charged by competitors and other institutions, i.e. with consideration to fee levels that the market will bear
- Prevailing price inflation
- Fees charged by the College in previous years

Tuition fees are not necessarily linked directly to the funding rates for qualifications as published by the DfE as this would lead to multiple fees for same-level courses when consistency of fees charged to students is to be preferred. Instead, DfE funding rates are used to gauge average funding levels around which more stable and consistent pricing can be established for full-time courses at each level of study and for part-time courses.

Tuition fees for 2026-27 are shown in Appendix A to this policy.

1. Further Education students – Young People

- **Students aged under 16**
 - **Students aged 16-18**
 - **Students aged 19-25 with an EHCP**
- a. FE students who are aged 16, 17 or 18 years on 31 August in the teaching year that they commence a study programme and are “home” students do not pay tuition fees and do not normally pay examination fees. They may be required to pay for specialist course materials which they wish to retain for use outside the course, or trips or visits which are not an integral part of their study programme. The same rule applies to under-16 students directly funded by DfE with exceptions (see 1d below).
 - b. Students aged 19 to 25 with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will not be charged tuition or examination fees.
 - c. The College is unable to receive funding for any students who are enrolled full time with another DfE-funded provider and who may wish to follow part of their programme at the College during school hours. In these cases, the school is expected to meet the costs of this provision.
 - d. The College enrolls some students aged under 16 on programmes for which a school or local authority (LA) pays directly. In such cases, the school or LA will be invoiced for the tuition fee.
 - e. Students who are 18 on 31 August 2026 when they commence a qualification with a duration of 2 years will not be charged tuition or examination fees in the 2nd year of the programme. However, if the student moves to a different qualification after the first year they will be treated as an adult and will be liable for fees.

2. Further Education students – Adults

Depending on employment status and prior attainment, adult FE students (aged 19 or older on 31 August 2026) who are “home” students may be charged tuition fees and examination fees; they may also be charged for materials or educational trips and visits.

FE students aged 19 or older are exempt from tuition/examination fees if they fall into one of the following remission categories.

- a. Students on Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA), including those receiving National Insurance credits only, or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) (please note this does not apply to dependents of claimants) and enrolling on level 2 courses or below
- b. Students receiving Universal Credit because they are unemployed, and their take-home pay recorded on the UC statement (disregarding UC payments and other benefits) is less than £952 a month (where the student is the sole adult in their benefit claim) or £1,534 a month (where the student has a joint benefit claim with their partner) and enrolling on level 2 courses or below
- c. Students who are employed or self-employed, are London residents eligible to receive adult skills funding from the Greater London Authority (GLA) and earn below the London Living Wage (£28,860 at the time of publication) and enrolling on level 2 courses or below. For non-London residents, the earnings threshold is £25,750.

- d. Students studying Functional Skills, adult basic skills, or GCSE English or maths who have not previously attained GCSE grade 4 (formerly grade C) or above in these subjects
- e. Students studying Essential Digital Skills qualifications up to and including Level 1
- f. Students aged 19 to 23 on 31 August 2026 studying their first full Level 2 or Level 3 qualification eligible for funding as part of the legal entitlements.
- g. We may also use our discretion to fully fund learners who are unemployed, not in receipt of benefits, want to be employed and where the learning is directly relevant to their employment prospects and the local labour market needs. This must be approved by the Head of MIS or Executive Director of Finance, HR and Development.

FE students aged 19 or older on 31 August 2026 may also be fully funded on courses at level 3 and above if the course studied is part of the Free Courses for Jobs offer or the GLA Level 4 Flexibilities offer. The Free Courses for Jobs offer for London residents may allow for more fee remission categories than those for non-London residents.

Evidence of benefits or meeting the low wage threshold must be provided at the time of enrolment. If a student's circumstances change prior to the start date of the course such that they are no longer eligible for fee remission, they must inform the College and will be liable to pay fees.

If a student who paid fees for an ESOL course divided into semesters becomes eligible for full funding before the second or third semester starts, they may request a refund for the fees for that semester or semesters.

Students studying a designated loans-funded qualification at Level 3 and above who are not otherwise eligible for funding may be able to apply for an Advanced Learner Loan from the Student Loans Company (SLC) to cover the costs of tuition and examination fees. For these loan-funded students, the tuition fee will be set at the maximum loan amount for the qualification being undertaken, in accordance with qualification funding rates published by DfE on the [Find a learning aim \(FaLA\) web-based search facility](#).

If an FE student is not eligible for an Advanced Learner Loan or chooses not to take up a loan then they will be liable for the full value of tuition and examination fees.

3. International students

For international (non “home”) students the tuition fee will be set at double the tuition fee payable by “home” students for the qualification being undertaken. Examination and material fees are also payable in addition to the tuition fee.

4. Higher Education courses

For West Thames College Higher Education funded students, the course fee is set by the College each year and only applies to HE students in respect of whom the College receives grant funding direct from OfS. Where the HE course is franchised by or delivered in partnership with an HE institution, that institution is responsible for setting and collecting fees from students.

5. Full-cost courses

These are courses run with no external funding. Fees are set using the College's curriculum planning software to identify the appropriate fee considering all direct costs and a contribution to College overheads. Students (or their sponsoring organisation) on non-fundable, full-cost courses will have to pay the course fee set and there is no fee remission on these courses.

6. Payment

Full payment of course fees is due at the time of enrolment, except where an invoice is being raised, and can be made in person, by post or phone.

The College accepts payment of fees by individuals through the following means:

- a. Cash (sterling)
- b. Debit card
- c. Credit card (excluding American Express)

Where an employer or other third party has agreed to pay a student's fees on their behalf, payment will be by invoice on condition that satisfactory evidence course fees are to be paid by the third party is provided at the time of enrolment. This may take the form of a purchase order, a letter on company letterhead or email from a company email address. In the absence of such confirmation, the student remains liable for the full cost of the course.

In the event of non-payment of course fees, students may be withdrawn from the course and the College may pursue the individual for full payment of the fees. Students with outstanding fees due to the College will not be allowed to enrol onto a new course until the debt has been paid in full.

Payment by instalments is available on FE, HE and full-cost courses that meet the following criteria.

- a. The course duration is 20 weeks or more
- b. The tuition fee (excluding examination and material fees) is £300 or more

There is a non-refundable administration charge of £20 for payment by instalments, payable at the time of setting up the instalment plan.

Students wishing to pay in instalments will be required to sign an Instalment Agreement. The second and third instalment payments are payable by direct debit from a UK bank account or by debit/credit card and will be due on the dates shown below.

For courses starting in the autumn term and finishing in the summer term:

- 40% payable on enrolment
- 30% payable on 1 December 2026
- 30% payable on 1 March 2027

For courses starting in the spring term and finishing in the summer term

- 60% payable on enrolment
- 40% payable on 1 March 2027

For courses that start in the summer term payment by instalments is not available.

7. Refund Policy

- a. Fees are refundable in full if the College should close a class.
- b. No refunds will be made in the event of a student withdrawing from the course for personal reasons.
- c. Where an instalment agreement is in place for payment of fees, students who withdraw from a course remain liable for any fee instalments outstanding.
- d. At the discretion of the College and where the student can demonstrate that extenuating circumstances exist to prevent them from continuing with their course, the College *may* authorise a refund or credit note for a proportionate amount of the tuition fee.
- e. Unless a refund is payable for a course cancelled by the College, a charge of £20 will be made for processing the refund.

Any request for a partial or full refund must be made in writing to the College Information Centre (info@west-thames.ac.uk), who will liaise with the relevant Director to investigate any mitigating circumstances.

8. Specific tuition fees for each course

The definitive list of fees is entered into ProSolution each year by MIS as part of the College's curriculum planning process.

Fees are charged annually on courses of 2 years in duration.

The correct fee must be assessed and charged for each course at the point of enrolment. Staff must refer to the latest data available when enrolling students to ensure the correct fee is charged.

Appendix A: 2026-27 Tuition Fees

Tuition fees for 2026-27 are summarised in the table below¹.

Programme	2026-27	2025-26
Full-time courses at:		
Level 1	£1,245	£1,210
Level 2	£1,665	£1,615
Level 3 (Year 1)	Various ²	Various ²
Level 3 (Year 2 returners only)	£3,565	£3,460
Part-time/Evening courses (Level 2 and below)	£6.05 per hour	£5.85 per hour
Part-time/Evening courses (Level 3 and above)	Various ²	Various ²
ESOL adult courses	£4.05 per hour	£3.95 per hour
HE courses (HNC/HND)	£5,000	£5,000
Full-cost courses	Various ³	Various ³

Notes

- 1) Tuition fees for HE courses are unchanged at 2025-26 levels. Fees for all other courses have been increased by 3% in line with the prevailing rate of inflation then rounded as appropriate.
- 2) Tuition fees for Level 3 and 4 courses will be set at the lower of the full weighted value or the Advanced Learner Loan amount for the qualification being undertaken, in accordance with qualification funding rates published by DfE on the [Find a learning aim \(FaLA\) web-based search facility](#).
- 3) Tuition fees specific to each full-cost course are published on the College's website. These vary but are set with reference to:
 - a) expected enrolment numbers, costs and a target contribution to overheads;
 - b) competitor prices; and
 - c) fees charged in prior years and for similar courses – to ensure consistency.