FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Permanent Fee Reduction

1. **Why is this credit being provided by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science?**

   In accordance with the Budget 2027 announcement , the Government has decided to provide a reduction of 21.67 % towards the student contribution charged to each eligible apprentice in the academic year 2026/2027.

2. **Who is eligible for the credit towards the apprentice student contribution and criteria?**

   The Government will provide an amount equivalent to the **21.67%** reduction per eligible apprentice (Craft and Consortia Led) via the HEA to Institutions to compensate them for the reduction in the student contribution.

3. **Processing of Personal Data**

   Institutions shall not process the personal data of an apprentice or other person unless the apprentice or other person has consented to such processing. The consent of an apprentice or other person to the processing of their personal data for the purposes of applying this measure shall be provided in such manner as the institution may determine. The institutions shall process personal data for the purposes of this measure in accordance with the Data Protection Acts and the General Data Protection Regulation.

4. **What is the process to avail of reduced student contribution for eligible apprentices?**

   In the case of consortia-led apprentices, they do not need to contact their institution or apply for the credit as it will be automatically applied by the institution. In respect of craft apprentices (where they are due a refund of an amount paid); institutions will contact the apprentice and seek the necessary bank account details to process a refund. Apprentices should provide these details to their institution by 18 December 2026.

5. **What if apprentices have not yet paid their fee?**

   Apprentices should make payments in line with the revised 2026/2027 fee schedule of the institution. In this case, the fee to be paid by an apprentice should be **21.67%** lower than the original fee.

6. **What if an apprentice has paid the full student contribution?**

   Where craft apprentices have paid the full amount, an appropriate reimbursement (reflecting **21.67 %** of the paid fee) will be paid by the Institution into the bank account the apprentice nominates for the refund. In the case of consortia-led apprentices, a credit will be applied to the apprentice's account as soon as is practicable but no later than 31 January 2027.

7. **What if an employer has paid the full student contribution on behalf of the apprentice?**

   The guiding principle for this initiative is to provide relief to apprentices using the same mechanism (i.e., relief on the student contribution) being applied to eligible higher education students. Any contractual arrangements that may be in place between an apprentice and their employer are not a factor for consideration under this measure and are strictly a matter to be resolved between those parties themselves. On that basis, the refund of fees will be made to the bank account nominated by the registered eligible apprentice.

8. **How do apprentices apply for a refund?**

   Where an apprentice is due a refund of a contribution paid, institutions will contact the apprentice and seek the necessary bank account details to process a refund. Apprentices should provide these details to their institution by 18 December 2026.

   HEIs will process the refunds by 31 December 2026 where possible and any remaining refunds will be processed by 31 January 2027.

   For some apprentices it may be necessary for the HEI to provide a refund at a later date, on a case-by-case basis.

9. **What happens if an apprentice drops out?**

   Where consortia-led apprentices pay up front and then drop out, an appropriate refund will be issued by the HEI to the apprentice. Where craft apprentices pay up front and then drop out, an appropriate refund of the fee paid will be issued later into next year when the HEA receives verification of registration from SOLAS (Q2 2027).

   In Q2 of 2027, the HEA will carry out an annual reconciliation exercise to confirm the number of CLA and Craft apprentices who have benefitted from this measure in 2026/27. For the CLA apprentices, the HEA uses the numbers reported in Q3-Q4 of 2026, which are then confirmed by the HEIs. For the Craft apprentices, the HEA receives verification of

registration from SOLAS (likely Q2 2027), which is then verified against the number confirmed by the HEIs.

If an CLA or Craft apprentices left the programme, but have not paid their fee, no reimbursement from the HEI will apply in such case.

10. Who will pay the difference of the 21.67%?

DFHERIS will compensate the HEIs for the reduction in the student contribution of **21.67%** per eligible apprentice. This will be paid by HEA to HEI's in two instalments in 2027. This will be based on craft block allocations for Phase 4 and Phase 6 in 2026/2027 and consortia-led apprentice registrations as indicated by each consortium to the HEA as per monitoring reports.

The HEA will seek a signed reconciliation report from institutions in Q2 2027 which will detail the number of apprentices registered on both craft and consortia led programmes, who have benefitted from this reduction in 2026/27.

This will be verified with SOLAS registration data in respect of craft apprenticeships and data returned in the relevant monitoring reports in respect of consortia led apprenticeships.

The final balancing payment will be paid in Q3 2027.

Appendix 1:

Institutions (apprenticeship programme providers) to which this measure applies in 2026/27 academic year:

1. Atlantic Technological University
2. Dundalk Institute of Technology
3. Munster Technological University
4. South East Technological University
5. Technological University Dublin
6. Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Mid-West
7. University of Limerick
8. University College Cork
9. Griffith College
10. National College of Ireland
11. Teagasc