

Frequently Asked Questions – Tuition and non-tuition fees



Department of
Education and Training

Tuition and non-tuition fees

ESOS legislation requires providers to differentiate between **tuition** and **non-tuition** fees.

For each registered course, the PRISMS database includes fields in which **estimated tuition fees** and **estimated non-tuition fees** need to be recorded. These two fields combine to calculate the **estimated total course cost**.

Please refer to page 4 for specific examples of 'tuition' and 'non-tuition' fees.

The fee schedule

Correct categorisation and communication of tuition and non-tuition fees begins with the school's fee schedule. Time and effort invested to ensure that this document is correct *first* will make the subsequent processes of creating written agreements and CoEs much easier for school administrators. It also makes it easier to process a refund should one be required down the track.

Many schools start their fee schedules by creating a spreadsheet of all the relevant costs for each year of a registered course. The spreadsheet divides the costs into their correct tuition and non-tuition categories. Note that when identifying the costs for each year of study in a course, providers should *not* try to account for the school's future annual fee increases. The costs identified only need to reflect the *current*, known \$ values - and these can be applied across each year for the relevant course that is being costed. Because the fees quoted are only based on the current and known figures, providers need to specify that course costs are only 'estimated' and 'subject to change'.

Once complete, the costing spreadsheet will make it easier for administrators to nominate for each course:

- estimated tuition fees (sub-total)
- estimated non-tuition fees (sub-total), and
- estimated course cost (total).

The spreadsheet can then be used to create a published version of your fee schedule. The spreadsheet should then be updated each year when the schools fees are reviewed.

Letter of Offer and Written Agreement

The letter of offer and written agreement issued to a student, and the subsequent CoE that is generated, must include both the **compulsory tuition fees** and **compulsory non-tuition fees** payable by the student for the entire course they intend to undertake.

Example: if a student is enrolling in only 3 years of a 4 year registered course (e.g. Years 7-9), the estimated total course costs itemised in the written agreement must include 3 years of any applicable compulsory tuition fees + 3 years of any compulsory non-tuition fees. These should be added together to give the estimated total course cost.

Collection of tuition fees before commencement

For more information about the rules associated with upfront payment of tuition fees, visit the Commonwealth's DET website [here](#).

For any overseas student enrolment over 25 weeks in length, a school cannot require families to pay more than 50% of their **total tuition fees** for a course before the child commences studies in that course. However students, or the person responsible for paying the tuition fees, can choose to pay more than 50% of the course if they wish.

Example: a student enrolled in a 3 year course (i.e. 6 semesters) cannot be required by the school to pay upfront more than 3 semesters worth of tuition fees before commencement. However, if the parent offers to pay the school more, the school can accept the parent's advance payment.

Most CRICOS-registered schools in Queensland choose to only accept payment one term or semester in advance. However, occasionally there may be circumstances where a parent might make an offer to pay more in order to take advantage of lower fee rates at the time of enrolment and avoid the school's future increases in the annual fee charged. Also, there have been occasions where some employers (who are paying the child's tuition as part of the overseas parent's employment contract) ask to pay school fees in a lump sum - rather than in multiple small amounts.

Schools may notify parents of their option to pay more upfront during the application phase via their website, application form, or written agreement. The wording should clearly distinguish between the pre-paid amount that is required by the provider, and the option for the parent to pay more if they choose.

Where parents exercise their choice to pay more than 50% of the tuition fee upfront, providers must retain evidence of this choice for their records e.g. copies of email correspondence; a ticked checkbox on the enrolment application form; or a copy of the signed written agreement which has a clear statement distinguishing between the payment required by the school, and the amount the parent may choose to pay.

What if the overseas student will only be enrolled 25 weeks or less?

Where a student will be enrolled for 25 weeks or less, there are no restrictions on the amount of tuition fees paid by the parent upfront.

Collection of tuition fees after commencement

Once a student has commenced a course, there are no further restrictions on collecting tuition fees.

Recording of fees collected

Schools must keep accurate records of all **tuition** and **non-tuition fees** collected from a student.

Schools are required to report the collection of these fees through PRISMS at various times:

- the estimated totals of tuition and non-tuition fees for the entire course;
- the total amount of tuition and non-tuition fees received before a CoE was created in PRISMS;
- the start and end date for the period covered by the **tuition fees**;
- details of any tuition fees received within 14 days of the end of any calendar month in which tuition fees were received;

For example, if the fees were collected on the 20 January, then amount collected must be reported in PRISMS no later than 14 February.

- whether OSHC has been paid for the student before the course commenced.
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Below are examples of the types of fees that are considered 'tuition fees' or 'non-tuition fees'.

Note -not all fees will apply to all schools.

Fee Schedule	
Compulsory 'Tuition'	Compulsory 'Non-Tuition'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition Fees • Enrolment Confirmation Fee • Annual administration fees • Compulsory course materials (e.g. specific equipment/protective clothing/ specialist uniforms) • Textbook Levy / Textbook Hire (including E-Readers) • Compulsory Levies – including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student Levy - Subject Levy - Technology / IT Levy - Building or Capital Levy - Futures Levy - Working Bee Levy - Parish Support Levy - P&F Family contribution • Vocational Education & Training Levy (Cert 1, Cert 2 & Cert 3) • Subject specific camps or excursions e.g. geography camp 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation Fees (such as homestay or boarding fees, including a homestay placement fee if applicable)* • Welfare Arrangement Fee • Book fees (where books are not supplied by the school) • Stationery • Uniform Fees • Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) • Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) fees • English Language Support (ELS) • Extra Learning Support • Year Level Camps or Personal Development Camps • Excursions (if not a compulsory part of the course) • Music/Dance/Drama Extra-curricular activities • Social events (e.g. senior formals or dinners)

** must be included unless a school does not accept unaccompanied students under the age of 18 Years (i.e. the school does not sign a CAAW Letter)*

- Any voluntary contributions a school requests from parents should not be included among the compulsory fees. Rather these should be flagged on the school's fee schedule for parent's information.
- Optional extras – Other one-off payments for particular events (e.g. an excursion to a concert or performance, or an opportunity to participate in a non-compulsory study-tour) fall outside the scope of ESOS-defined fee categories, and should not be included in either the tuition or non-tuition fees.

Additional Frequently Asked Questions –

Does labelling a fee ‘non-tuition’ mean that it is not compulsory?

Categorising a fee as ‘non-tuition’, does not therefore assume that the fee is not compulsory (or optional). To the contrary, schools are entirely within their rights to expect students to meet prescribed conditions of enrolment – such as wearing a uniform or meeting English language benchmarks through additional tutoring. Non-tuition fees are only labelled as such because they are not specifically associated with the school’s delivery or provision of a course – it is not a determination that they are ‘not compulsory’.

Apart from compulsory tuition fees, which non-tuition fees need to be included in the provider’s overseas fee schedule?

Along with applicable compulsory tuition fees, the provider’s fee schedule must outline all of the compulsory non-tuition fees that could apply to overseas students while undertaking a course/s at the school. These fees must be declared even if they are not collected (or invoiced) directly through the school e.g. parents often pay OSHC directly to the health care provider; uniforms are usually paid to a uniform shop; homestay may be paid to the chosen commercial homestay provider.

How do I cater for the many variables when calculating the cost of non-tuition fees for a course?

Providers will find that there are significant variables to be considered when calculating the cost of non-tuition fees for a course. Total non-tuition fees should be based on the most costly (but also realistic) combination of expenses that an overseas student could pay when undertaking the full duration of a course. Below are some examples of what this might mean:

- An allowance for 2-3 sets of uniforms if the course is over several years (this may be especially relevant to younger students where significant physical growth is to be expected during the period of enrolment)
- Including the cost of any compulsory expenses such as boarding/homestay, year level camps, English language tuition etc. for each year of the course (again, aim to cater for worst case scenario – whilst still being realistic)
- Including the cost of overseas student health cover for each year of study (even though parents may make their own arrangements for OSHC).

Compared to tuition costs, the value of non-tuition fees looks enormous! How do schools explain to parents what the real cost of a course is for them?

At the end of the fee calculation process, the resulting dollar figure for non-tuition fees will no doubt look very large – especially when compared to the tuition fee component. However, this will be the case for many schools - particularly those with compulsory non-tuition expenses such as boarding/homestay or English language tuition. Schools may also be concerned about the potential negative impact that these large figures could have on their prospective enrolments. It is important to remember, however, that the fee recording requirement applies to *all* registered providers.

Schools should therefore use their websites and other marketing materials (particularly the fee schedule) to make clear the good/fair value being offered for the tuition and non-tuition fees being charged.

Schools might also wish to highlight in their marketing that the dollar figure represented on the Commonwealth's public CRICOS Register (<http://cricos.education.gov.au/>) is the *maximum value* a parent could expect to pay for compulsory course costs. Schools are encouraged to be as detailed and as explicit as possible in their explanations about how fees are applied – even to the point of offering specific fee schedules, enrolment examples, fee calculators or individual estimates, if desired.

However, it is the written agreement that will ultimately be the document that offers families the most realistic estimate of the amount to be paid by a parent, on a case-by-case basis for the duration of their child's intended course of study.

How do providers ensure that they do not breach the PRISMS 'Course Cost' requirements?

In light of the requirement to include both compulsory tuition and compulsory non-tuition fees in the 'Total Course Cost', providers should ensure that:

- At the time of issuing a CoE to a student, the tuition and non-tuition fees are no higher than the current registered costs on PRISMS;
- Any subsequent fees collected over the duration of the full course don't exceed the registered course cost on PRISMS.

It is therefore recommended that the final estimate of fees be based on the highest possible dollar value that could realistically be paid by a student (rather than simply an average figure). So long as CoE's and ongoing student payments remain below the stated value on PRISMS, providers should remain compliant with ESOS course cost requirements.

But our fee schedule states that school fees go up each year. If we raise our annual fees, won't this result in breaches of course cost on PRISMS?

As students' progress through their course, it is often the case that costs will increase annually (Note: providers cannot pass on annual fee increases unless the schedule/written agreement clearly indicate that fees are subject to change). To ensure that there are no problems with PRISMS down the track, schools need to review their tuition and non-tuition fees every year. A *Course Amendment Form* needs to be submitted if the fees on PRISMS need to be raised. In this way, schools can safely accept any increased fees from students throughout the entire duration of their course, without fear of breaching the ESOS Act.

You will find the *Course Amendment Form*, and all other relevant CRICOS forms, on our website - <https://www.qld.gov.au/education/international/pages/cricos.html>

**For questions regarding this advice, please contact the International Quality (Schools) Unit
at**

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