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Guidance

# Tuition fee limits in the Lifelong Learning Entitlement

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## Applies to England

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Launching in 2025, the [Lifelong Learning Entitlement \(LLE\)](#) will transform the post-18 student finance system in England.

This guidance explains how the tuition fee limits at colleges and universities will change once LLE launches.

## How tuition fees will work

When LLE launches, it will change the way tuition fee limits are set at colleges and universities. The government sets limits on the amount of money institutions can charge students for tuition. The limits depend on:

- the institution's status
- the type of study it offers

The most common fee limit is £9,250 per year.

In the current system, all fee limits are set per academic year. If we kept this system, it would mean:

- programmes of study that are shorter than one year, and many modules, would have disproportionate fee limits
- students could pay fees for a full year of study, even if their course was only a few months long

In the LLE system, we'll set fee limits per credit. Credits are a measurement used by colleges and universities to identify how much learning is in a period of study. One credit generally equals 10 hours of learning by the student. This includes all tuition, assessment and any self-guided study in the student's own time.

The credit-based system means that providers will only be able to charge for as much learning as they offer. A course containing 60 credits will have half the fee limit of a course containing 120 credits at the same provider. This is regardless of whether the learner is studying part-time or full-time. This system will support people to study at whatever pace is right for them, alongside their work, family and personal lives.

Fee limits will apply to all courses and modules offered by providers in the Office for Students approved (fee cap) category.

## Fee limit calculation

Under the LLE system, we'll calculate fee limits according to the number of credits in a course year, multiplied by a limit-per-credit. For example, if a year of a course contained 120 credits, and its limit-per-credit was £50, its fee limit would be £6,000.

## Fee limit rates

The LLE system will have different fee limit rates. The limit-per-credit will depend on the type of study. There will be different limits for work placement, study abroad, and foundation years in certain subjects. Each of these limits may be lower if the provider does not have:

- a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award
- an approved access and participation plan (APP)

There will no longer be different limits for part-time study. Instead, each course or module will have a fee limit based on the number of credits it contains. This is subject to a course year maximum and a course maximum. This means that if a course contains 360 credits, its overall fee limit will be the same regardless of how many years it takes to complete.

Some courses will be non-credit-bearing. For these courses, we'll allocate a default number of credits. For example, we'll allocate a PGCE course 120 default credits. This is because currently providers do not always allocate the same number of credits to these courses, but the amount of content is always very similar.

## Accelerated degrees

Accelerated degrees have the same content as full-time degrees but take less time to complete. Accelerated degrees are typically undertaken in 2 years, instead of the traditional 3 years.

The LLE system will no longer have different fee limits for accelerated study. Instead, the overall fee limit for an accelerated degree will be the same as the overall fee limit for the same degree (full-time or part-time).

## Modules

The fee limit for all modules will be the limit-per-credit multiplied by the number of credits in the course year. Limits-per-credit for modules will not be different to those for full courses.

There are no restrictions on the number of chargeable credits in a module. However, a module must have the same number of credits as it does when it is offered as part of the full course.

Modules offered separately from full courses must contain at least 30 credits. This can include multiple smaller modules bundled together.

## Work placements and study abroad

Different fee limits per credit will apply to work placement and study abroad. These rates will apply to both full years of work placement and study abroad, and also to shorter periods.

The rates will apply to all credits associated with the work placement when all of the following apply:

- it is a full-time course year - this means a year lasting:
  - more than 15 weeks and containing more than 900 notional hours of learning
  - below 15 weeks and containing more than 450 notional hours of learning
- there are 13 weeks or more of work placement or study abroad within the course year
- the period does not contribute towards a minimum amount of placement that the course needs to include, as set out by either:
  - the Department for Education (for initial teacher training courses)
  - any member bodies of the Professional Standards Authority

The rates will apply to all credits associated with study abroad when all of the following apply:

- it is a full-time course year - this means a year lasting:
  - more than 15 weeks and containing more than 900 notional hours of learning
  - below 15 weeks and containing more than 450 notional hours of learning
- there are 13 weeks or more of work placement or study abroad within the course year
- the period does not meet all of the following criteria:
  - the study abroad occurs in the same year as at least 10 weeks of study at the UK provider
  - the study abroad does not extend the overall duration of the course beyond its standard full-time equivalent
  - the course has a total full-time course duration of 3 years or less

Work placements and study abroad that do not meet these criteria are subject to the standard fee limit-per-credit rates.

The LLE system allows different fee limits to apply within one year. This means we can cap credits of work placement, study abroad and ordinary study at the appropriate rate, even when a year contains several different types of study.

### Example: course with a work placement

A year of a course contains 60 credits of work placement, alongside 60 credits of ordinary study. The provider has fee limits of £75 for ordinary study and £15 for work placement, based on its TEF and APP status.

Assuming these credits do not exceed the course cap, the fee limit for the year is 60 x £75, plus £60 x £15, so £5,400 overall.

We'll treat [non-credit-bearing placements](#) differently.

## Classroom-based foundation years

The government announced on 17 July 2023 that it would reduce the maximum tuition fees and loans for foundation years in classroom-based subjects from £9,250 to £5,760. Maximum fees for foundation years in all other subjects will remain at £9,250. We expect this change to start in the 2025 to 2026 academic year.

The LLE system will include separate limit-per-credits for these foundation years. This will also depend on whether the provider has a TEF rating or APP. We'll publish further guidance on this new fee limit in spring 2024.

## Course cap

There will be a cap on the number of credits for which providers can charge in each type of course. This ensures that credits are not added on to courses simply to increase tuition fees. Providers may offer additional credits beyond the maximum, but are not allowed to charge for them.

If a course contains a period of study that is subject to the work placement or study abroad fee limit rate, the provider will be able to charge for an additional 120 credits above the course cap. For example, a 360-credit bachelor's degree with honours, with a qualifying period abroad, can charge for 360 credits at the ordinary limit-per-credit plus 120 credits at the study abroad limit-per-credit.

If a student repeats part of their course, the repeat study is not counted towards the course cap. For example, if a student on a 360-credit degree fails a 30-credit module and repeats it, the provider can charge them for 390 credits overall.

For courses on the Ofqual register, the cap is the number of credits recorded for that qualification when we designate it for funding. We'll publish these values online.

Course type	Credits
Architecture course leading to RIBA parts 1 and 2, as accredited by the Architects Registration Board (ARB)	600
Bachelor's Degree	300
Bachelor's Degree with Honours (course has a standard full-time equivalent duration of at least 4 full-time years or has no full-time equivalent, but has a minimum of 480 credits)	480

Bachelor's Degree with Honours (course does not meet the criteria to have core amounts of 480 but has a standard full-time equivalent duration of 3 full-time years plus an additional short year, or has no full-time equivalent but has a minimum of 420 credits)	420
Bachelor's Degree with Honours where the course does not meet the criteria to have core amounts of 480 or 420	360
Certificate of Higher Education	120
Diploma of Higher Education	240
First degree in medicine, surgery, dentistry, veterinary medicine, veterinary surgery or veterinary science	600
Foundation Degree	240
Graduate Certificate	120
Graduate Diploma	120
Graduate-entry medical, dentistry, and veterinary courses	480
Higher National Certificate	120
Higher National Diploma	240
Initial teacher education programme (one-year full-time equivalent)	120
Integrated Masters Degree	480
Postgraduate course in architecture (ARB approved, RIBA Part 2 only)	240
Postgraduate healthcare (3 years full-time equivalent)	360
Postgraduate healthcare (2 years full-time equivalent, plus additional short year)	300
Postgraduate healthcare (2 years full-time equivalent)	240
SQA Advanced Certificate	96
SQA Advanced Diploma	240

For any designated course that is not listed, the cap will be 120 credits, multiplied by the number of years of full-time equivalent study.

## Credit-bearing years

We'll treat the majority of course years as credit-bearing course years for fee limit purposes. However, we'll treat a small number of course years as [non-credit-bearing](#).

For credit-bearing course years, in addition to the course cap, providers may also not charge for more than 180 credits in a course year. This means that, in each year, the number of chargeable credits is the lowest of:

- the actual number of provider-assigned credits in that year
- the cap for the course type, minus credits already charged in previous years of that course
- 180 credits

### Example: calculating fees using course credits

A provider has a limit-per-credit of £75 per credit, based on its TEF and APP status. It offers a foundation degree, which has a course cap of 240 credits. The first year contains 120 credits and the second year contains 140 credits.

In year 1, the:

- actual credits are 120
- course cap minus credits charged for in previous years of that course is  $240 - 0 = 240$
- per-year limit is 180

The lowest value is 120, so the provider may charge  $120 \times £75 = £9,000$

In year 2, the:

- actual credits are 140
- course cap minus credits charged for in previous years of that course is  $240 - 120 = 120$
- per-year limit is 180

The lowest value is 120, so the provider may charge  $120 \times £75 = £9,000$

The provider would have been able to charge for 140 credits in the second year if it only charged for 100 credits or less in the first year.

## Default credits for non-credit-bearing study

We'll assign default credit values for non-credit-bearing study. This includes placements where the provider does not assign academic credits.

We'll treat a course year from any course as non-credit-bearing if either:

the year contains study for which the provider is charging the student for, but has not allocated credits to

- the allocated credits do not represent 10 learning hours per credit

Some credit-bearing courses will also need to use default credits. These are courses where the existing use of credits is not consistent, for example, because of how placements are integrated.

The following course types will always use default credits in their fee limit calculation:

- first or graduate-entry degree in medicine
- first or graduate-entry degree in dentistry
- first degree in nursing
- first or graduate-entry degree in veterinary science
- pre-registration healthcare courses (undergraduate or postgraduate)
- one year full-time-equivalent teacher training courses (such as PGCEs and ProfGCEs)

## Default credits fee limit calculation

Fee limits for non-credit-bearing course years will be the number of default credits, multiplied by the per-credit fee limit. Per-credit fee limits will be the same as for credit-bearing course years.

The default credits will be the lower of:

- the per-year amount
- the course cap minus credits charged in previous years of the course

## Default credits per-year amount

The per-year amount for non-credit-bearing course years is as follows.

For a year that contains at least 15 weeks of study:

- full-time (containing more than 900 hours of notional learning): 120 credits
- part-time: 90 credits
- accelerated: 180 credits

For a year that contains less than 15 weeks of study:

- full-time (containing more than 450 hours of notional learning): 60 credits
- part-time: 45 credits

Courses can contain a mix of part-time and full-time course years. They can also contain a mix of credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing course years.



**Example: a part-time PGCE**

The provider is fee-limited at £75 per credit, based on its TEF and APP status. We cap the course at 120 chargeable credits. The provider wants to spread the cost of the course evenly across the 2 years.

In year 1 the:

- per-year amount for a part-time year is 90
- course cap minus credits charged for in previous years of that course is  $120 - 0 = 120$

The lowest value is 90, so that is the default credits. The provider may charge  $90 \times £75 = £6,750$ . The provider chooses to only charge for £4,500, the equivalent of 60 credits.

In year 2 the:

- per-year amount for a part-time year is 90
- course cap minus credits charged for in previous years of that course is  $120 - 60 = 60$

The lowest value is 60, so that is the default credits. The provider may charge  $60 \times £75 = £4,500$ .

**Example: a degree contains a non-credit-bearing year abroad**

The course cap is 360, plus 120 for the year abroad. The provider offers 120 credits per year of normal study, with the third year of the course containing the year abroad.

The provider is fee-limited at £50 for ordinary study and £7.50 for study abroad, because of its TEF and APP status.

Year 1 is a credit-bearing year. The:

- actual credits are 120
- course cap minus credits charged for in previous years of that course is  $360 - 0 = 360$
- per-year limit is 180

The lowest value is 120, so that is the default credits. The provider may charge  $120 \times £50 = £6,000$ .

Year 2 is a credit-bearing year. The:

- actual credits are 120
- course cap minus credits charged for in previous years of that course is  $360 - 120 = 240$
- per-year limit is 180

The lowest value is 120, so that is the default credits. The provider may charge  $120 \times £50 = £6,000$ .

Year 3 is a non-credit-bearing full-time year. The:

- per-year amount for a full-time year is 120

- placement cap minus placement credits charged for in previous years of that course is  $120 - 0 = 120$

The lowest value is 120, so that is the default credits. The provider may charge  $120 \times £7.50 = £900$ .

Year 4 is a credit-bearing year. The:

- actual credits are 120
- course cap minus ordinary credits charged for in previous years of that course is  $360 - 240 = 120$
- per-year limit is 180

The lowest value is 120, so that is the default credits. The provider may charge  $120 \times £50 = £6,000$ .

## Default credits - work placements and study abroad

If any part of a course year is non-credit-bearing, the entire year will use default credits. For example, if a mostly credit-bearing course contains a qualifying period of non-credit-bearing work placement or study abroad, the whole course year will use default credits.

We'll base the default credit values on the duration of one of the activities – this will be the activity with the lowest fee limit. For example, if the year mixes ordinary study with work placement, we'll base the default credit value on the weeks of study in the work placement. This is because the work placement has a lower fee limit than ordinary study.

The default credit value for the cheaper activity will be the lowest of:

- 120, minus credits charged for that study type in previous years of that course
- a value of duration credits depending on the number of weeks (such as 60 credits for 15 weeks of study).

The default credit value for the more expensive activity will be the lowest of:

- the course cap (or extra cap of 120, if this activity is a work placement, study abroad or foundation year), minus credits charged for that study type in previous years of that course
- the per-year amount minus the duration credits for the cheaper activity

If a non-credit-bearing year contains 3 different types of activity (for example, study abroad, work placement and ordinary study), we'll combine the 2 cheapest activities. We'll treat the combined activities as the more expensive of those 2 activities. For example, we'll treat the work placement and study abroad as one extended period of work placement if a single course year includes:

- a qualifying period of study abroad
- a qualifying period of work placement
- ordinary study

<b>Number of weeks of non-credit-bearing study</b>	<b>Amount of credits</b>
<b>1 to 2 weeks</b>	4 credits
<b>3 to 5 weeks</b>	12 credits
<b>6 to 8 weeks</b>	24 credits
<b>9 to 11 weeks</b>	36 credits
<b>12 to 14 weeks</b>	48 credits
<b>15 to 17 weeks</b>	60 credits
<b>18 to 20 weeks</b>	72 credits
<b>21 to 23 weeks</b>	84 credits
<b>24 to 26 weeks</b>	96 credits
<b>27 to 29 weeks</b>	108 credits
<b>30+ weeks</b>	120 credits

As qualifying placements must be at least 13 weeks in duration, the smaller values of duration credits only apply where a classroom-based foundation year occurs in the same year as other types of study.

### **Example**

A 360-credit full-time non-credit-bearing degree contains 15 weeks of work placement in its first year, and 20 weeks of placement in its second. The rest of the program is ordinary taught study.

The provider is fee-limited at £50 for ordinary study and £10 for sandwich placement, because of its TEF and APP status.

In year 1, the work placement, the:

- duration credits are 60
- placement cap minus placement credits charged for in previous years of that course is  $120 - 0 = 120$

The lowest value is 60, so that is the default credits for the work placement. The provider may charge  $60 \times £10 = £600$ .

In year 1, the ordinary study, the:

- per-year amount minus duration credits are  $120 - 60 = 60$

- course cap minus credits charged for that study type in previous years of the course is  $360 - 0 = 360$

The lowest value is 60, so that is the default credits for the period of ordinary study. The provider may charge  $60 \times \text{£}50 = \text{£}3,000$ . Including the placement credits, the provider may charge  $\text{£}3,600$  overall for this year.

In year 2, the work placement, the:

- duration credits are 72
- placement cap minus placement credits charged for in previous years of that course is  $120 - 60 = 60$

The lowest value is 60, so that is the default credits for the work placement. The provider may charge  $60 \times \text{£}10 = \text{£}600$ .

In year 2, the ordinary study, the:

- per-year amount minus duration credits are  $120 - 72 = 48$
- course cap minus credits charged for that study type in previous years of that course are  $360 - 60 = 300$

The lowest value is 48, so that is the default credits for the ordinary study. The provider may charge  $48 \times \text{£}50 = \text{£}2,400$ . Including the placement credits, the provider may charge  $\text{£}3,000$  overall for this year.

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