

## **Once off Government contribution of €1,000 towards the Student Contribution payable by eligible Free Fee Schemes students in academic year 2022/23**

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) for students**

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

In recognition of the cost of living financial challenges facing third level students, the Minister has announced a range of measures to provide additional supports for students in 2022.

Under the Department's Free Fees schemes, the State provides funding toward the tuition fee costs of eligible undergraduate Higher Education Institute (HEI) students with students paying the student contribution. The student contribution applies annually to all free fee eligible students and the current rate is €3,000 per annum.

In accordance with the Budget 2023 announcement, the Government has decided to make a once off contribution of €1,000 towards the student contribution paid by each free fees eligible student in academic year 2022/23 as a Cost of Living measure.

This will reduce the amount payable by free fees eligible students to their institution from €3,000 to €2,000 in academic year 2022/23. Students eligible for a 50% student contribution support as paid by SUSI will benefit proportionally and will receive a €500 credit (from €1,500 to €1,000) in the value of the student contribution they are due to pay.

#### **2. Question: Who is eligible for funding of €1,000 towards the student contribution under this once off measure?**

Funding through this once off measure is available to full time undergraduate students eligible for the Department's free fees schemes in academic year 22/23.

Higher Education Institutions will revise the amount of the student contribution payable by free fees eligible students in 2022/23 as soon as practicable. The institution will contact students that are due a refund of any amounts already paid.

For students in private colleges the reduction will only apply where students are attending approved free fees courses and where the student is eligible for free fees.

#### **3. Question: does this reduction also apply to undergraduate students not eligible for free fees, post graduate, part-time, Non-EU fees or repeat year fees?**

Funding through this once off measure is available to full time undergraduate students eligible for the Department's free fees schemes in academic year 22/23 only; but does not include students not eligible for free fees; post graduate, part-time, non-EU fees or repeat year fees per criteria on the link below.

To avail of the funding students must meet the criteria of the free fees schemes, as determined by the institution a student is attending, in academic year 2022/23 as set out at <https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/course-fees/> .

**4. Question: if I get half my student contribution fee paid by SUSI, do I still benefit from this reduction?**

If you are a Free Fees eligible student who is also eligible for a 50% student contribution support as paid by SUSI this measure will benefit you proportionally and you will receive a €500 reduction in the value of the student contribution you are due to pay (from €1,500 to €1,000). If you receive full student contribution support through SUSI you are not impacted by this measure.

**5. Question: Do I need to apply to receive the funding? / How is it being administered?**

Students who paid their 2022/23 student contribution in full will receive the appropriate refund from the HEI attended. The HEI will contact eligible students and seek the necessary account details to process a refund.

Individual students who have been contacted by the HEI and asked to provide account details to facilitate a refund, are required to provide the relevant details by the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022. Where a student has not provided the required details by the required date the HEI may apply a credit to the students account against any outstanding or future fees due.

**6. Question: Do I get a refund if I have already paid my Student Contribution in full? How will this be refunded**

Where students have paid the full €3,000 in semester one, a refund of €1,000 will be provided by the institution.

Where students eligible for the 50% student contribution grant (from SUSI) have paid the full €1,500 in semester one a refund of €500 will be provided by the institution.

The HEI will contact eligible students and seek the necessary account details to process a refund.

**7. Question: I am a free fees eligible student I have not yet paid my student contribution but intend to pay in full during semester 1, can I pay the revised amount in full?**

Yes, your institution will be adjusting the amount you will be charged over the coming weeks. Eligible students can proceed with making a payment of the revised amounts due.

**8. Question: I am a free fees eligible student and I pay my student contribution fees in 2 instalments, can I take €1,000 off the first instalment or split it over the two?**

Eligible students should make payments in line with the fee schedule of the institution.

Eligible students should make a minimum payment of the student contribution amounts due for semester one (€1,000 or the lower amount of €500 where students are eligible for a 50% student contribution grant from SUSI) with the balance of the student contribution due in semester two.

Eligible students may still opt to pay the revised student contribution in full due for academic year 22/23 in semester one.

**9. Question: I am a free fees eligible student I pay my student contribution fees in 2 instalments, I have already paid a first instalment in excess of half the revised student contribution value I am due to pay, will I receive any refund at this time?**

No, the extra payment will be offset against semester two student contributions due.

For example, if you have paid €1,500 in semester one the payment due in semester two will be €500. Interim refunds of €500 (offsetting half of the credit for the first instalment of €1,500 to reduce it to €1,000) for the first instalment will not issue.

**10. Question: I am eligible for SUSI, will this impact the grant towards the student contribution?**

For SUSI eligible students SUSI will pay a student contribution of €2,000 (students eligible for 100% support) or €1,000 (students eligible for 50% support) directly to the institution.

The State will pay will pay €1,000 per free fees eligible student separately to your institution in addition to the tuition fees paid on your behalf.

**11. Question: What happens if a student formally withdraws from a course**

Students considering withdrawing form a course are encouraged to contact their institution or access officer to be informed of the wide range of services which are available to them to support them on their journey, prior to making any decisions regarding the cessation of their studies.

Where a student formally withdraws form a course they may be eligible for a refund of student contribution fees paid and general guidance is as follows:

- a. Where a student formally withdraws from a course of study prior to the semester 1 cut-off date (for the institution) they would normally receive a refund of any student contribution paid in line with the normal institution procedures.
- b. Where a student withdraws from their course of study, after the semester 1 cut-off but prior to the semester 2 cut-off, and paid over half of the student contribution due in 22/23 they should receive a refund on any excess paid above the half student contribution rate due.
- c. Where a student formally withdraws after the semester 2 cut-off date (for the institution) a refund would not normally apply.

**12. Question: what other supports are available to students?**

Tuition fee students are available to full time students via the statutory based Student Grant Scheme. The Student Grant Scheme, administered by SUSI, provides grant assistance to students pursuing an approved course in an approved institution who meet the prescribed conditions of funding, including those relating to nationality, residency, previous academic attainment and means. Students can determine their eligibility at <https://susi.ie/eligibility/income/> .

For students experiencing financial difficulty, who are attending publicly funded HEIs, there is a significant allocation to the Student Assistance Fund (SAF) for the 2022/23 academic year. The SAF assists students in a sensitive and compassionate manner who might otherwise be unable to continue their third level

studies due to their financial circumstances. This fund is administered on a confidential, discretionary basis through the access office of the institution attended.