

# **Once off Government contribution of €1,000 towards the Student Contribution payable by eligible Free Fee Schemes students in the academic year 2023/24**

## **Guidance for students**

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

Under the Free Fees Initiative, the State provides funding toward the tuition fee costs of eligible undergraduate Higher Education 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 2024 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 the academic year 2023/24 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 the academic year 2023/24.

### **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 Free Fees Initiative in academic year 2023/24.

Higher Education Institutions will revise the amount of the student contribution payable by Free Fees eligible students in 2023/24 as soon as practicable. The institution will contact students that are due a refund of any amounts already paid.

### **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 Free Fees Initiative in the academic year 2023/24 only. Students not eligible for free fees; post graduate, part-time, non-EU fees or repeat year fees are not included in this measure.

To avail of the funding, students must meet the Free Fees [eligibility criteria](#), as determined by the institution attended in academic year 2023/24.

### **4. Question: How do I get a refund if I have already paid my Student Contribution in full?**

Your HEI will contact you shortly to seek the necessary account details to process a refund.

Where a student has not provided the required details by the required date, the HEI may apply a credit to the student's account against any outstanding or future fees due.

**5. Question: I am a Free Fees eligible student but I have not yet paid my student contribution, can I pay the revised amount in full?**

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

**6. Question: I am a free fees eligible student and I pay my student contribution fees in two instalments, how do I allow for the reduced contribution?**

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 as follows:

- a) €1,000 for students paying a full student contribution; or
- b) €750 for students eligible for a €500 student contribution grant through SUSI; or
- c) €500 for students eligible for a 50% student contribution grant from SUSI

with the balance of the student contribution due in semester two.

Free Fees eligible students may still opt to pay the revised student contribution in full during semester one.

**7. Question: I am a Free Fees eligible student who usually pays the €3,000 student contribution fees in two instalments. I have already paid the first instalment of €1,500, which is now 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 your outstanding semester two student contribution payment. If you have paid €1,500 in semester one the payment due in semester two will be reduced down from €1,500 to €500.

**8. Question: I am eligible for SUSI fee grant supports. How will I be impacted by this measure?**

The impact on students eligible for SUSI fee grant support will be as follows:

- **€500 student contribution grant:** Students will receive a €1,000 reduction in the value of the student contribution they are due to pay in 2023/24 (reduced from €2,500 to €1,500).
- **50% student contribution grant:** Students will benefit proportionately and receive a €500 reduction in the value of the student contribution they are due to pay in 2023/24 (reduced from €1,500 to €1,000).
- **100% Student Contribution Grant:** Students are not directly impacted by this measure.

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

Your HEI/Access Officer can advise you on the wide range of services, which are available to support you on your journey through higher education. Students considering withdrawing from a course are encouraged to contact their institution or Access Officer prior to withdrawing.

Where a student formally withdraws from a course they may, in some instances, be eligible for a refund of student contribution fees paid. Students are advised to contact their HEI who will advise them of any refunds that may be due.

#### **10. Question: What other supports are available to students?**

Students may be eligible for fee and maintenance grant supports via the statutory based Student Grant Scheme administered by SUSI. The Student Grant Scheme 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.

From September 2023, a new €500 student contribution grant support is available through SUSI for students whose families have reckonable earnings between €62,000 and €100,000. In addition, the threshold for the student contribution 50% grant has been increased from €55,240 to €62,000.

Students can determine their eligibility for the range of SUSI supports on [SUSI.ie](https://www.susi.ie)

The Student Assistance Fund (SAF) is available for students experiencing financial difficulty who are attending publicly funded HEIs. 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.

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