



Circular 0015/2021

To: Managerial Authorities, Principals and Teachers of Recognised Primary, Secondary, Community and Comprehensive Schools, the Chief Executives of Education and Training Boards.

Update to the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme – Prioritisation of Funding

Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this circular is to advise school managerial authorities, principal teachers and teachers in relation to the decision to prioritise funding for teachers under the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme.

The Teacher Fee Refund Scheme is funded by the Department of Education. Its purpose is to provide funding towards the cost of course participation and examination fees on successful completion of professional development courses/course year. The funding is available for courses that are directly relevant and of benefit to both teachers and schools and that are subject to an award by an appropriate accreditation authority recognised by the Department of Education.

The changes outlined in this circular will come into effect initially for refunds claimed in 2023 relating to successful completion of courses/course year during the period from 01 September 2021 to the 31 August 2022. The terms of this circular will apply to all claims thereafter. The notification of the prioritisation of funding is being provided in advance of teachers deciding to undertake courses from 01 September 2021.

Refunds for courses/course year completed up to the 31st of August 2021 will operate as normal as outlined in the relevant annual circular.

The Teacher Fee Refund Scheme will continue to be subject to review and changes may be implemented periodically to improve the effectiveness of the scheme.



Review of Teacher Fee Refund Scheme

The Teacher Fee Refund Scheme has been operated by the Department of Education since 1997 and is administered through Marino Institute of Education (MIE). In response to significant policy developments in education and curricular changes, the Teacher Education Section (ITE and Professional Development) (TES) of the Department commissioned a review of the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme. The aim of this review was to ensure that the resources available are targeted at areas which are aligned with curricular developments and Department policies and strategies aimed at school improvement and system reform.

Having accepted the recommendations of the review, the Department now proposes to implement those recommendations.

The main recommendation of the review is that the funding available to the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme should be used to prioritise teachers' professional learning in areas clearly linked to learning, teaching and assessment.

With effect from the beginning of the 2021/22 school year, i.e. for all courses/course year completed from 1 September 2021 onwards, 80% of the funding for the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme will be allocated to provide a refund of fees to registered teachers undertaking relevant programmes in line with policy priorities in the following key areas:

- a) Upskilling for post primary teachers leading to registration with the Teaching Council in an additional subject, to support teacher supply at post-primary level
- b) Inclusion and tackling disadvantage
- c) Promoting well-being
- d) Digital technologies in teaching, learning and assessment
- e) Improving students' literacy and numeracy
- f) Curricular initiatives including pre-identified areas of systemic need endorsed by school management (identified in the annual circular relating to the period in which course/year of course is completed).

The remaining 20% of funding will be allocated to provide a refund of fees for courses which are not directly linked to the areas outlined above but still fulfil the eligibility criteria set out in the annual circular.

Further adopted recommendations are:



- Courses already funded, in part or whole, by the Department are not eligible for funding under the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme.
- Only courses which are subject to award by an appropriate accrediting authority recognised by the Department are eligible for funding under the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme.
- Only courses linked directly to teaching, learning and assessment and endorsed by school management are eligible for funding under the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme.

Operation of the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme

Details on how to claim a refund of fees under the Teacher Fee Refund Scheme are set out in an annual circular letter which is published on MIE's website and the Department of Education's website. The scheme provides funding towards the cost of course participation and examination fees on successful completion of professional development courses/course year. The annual circular outlines the eligibility criteria, deadlines and application process and should be read in conjunction with this circular.

Claims in respect of courses/course year completed in the periods 1 September 2019 to 31 August 2020 and 1 September 2020 to 31 August 2021 are not affected by any changes outlined in this circular. Please refer to the relevant annual circular in relation to claims for courses/years of courses completed in these years.

Circulation and Queries

Please bring this Circular letter to the attention of all teaching staff.

A copy of this circular will be available at www.gov.ie/education

Any queries in relation to this circular and operation of the scheme should be emailed to the Teacher Education Section of the Department of Education at tes@education.gov.ie

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