

Guideline on extra contributions in addition to tuition fees

laid down by the Executive Board on 5 July 2016

a. Starting points of UU

Following his or her registration, a student is entitled to certain provisions such as participation in a course of study, sitting examinations and the use of student facilities and study supervision. In addition, students must finance a number of things themselves, such as books and course materials. With regard to the students' own contributions in addition to tuition fees, Utrecht University adopts the following starting points:

1. A student's own contribution should not form a barrier to following a course of study;
2. Courses should make clear what provisions form part of the course and are provided free of charge, and what provisions students are required to finance themselves;
3. UU offers a range of options in the courses it provides. It is reasonable to expect students to contribute towards the costs of extra-curricular activities they have chosen themselves;
4. The course information must be transparent about the level of the contribution that students will have to make themselves;
5. One of the cornerstones of the UU educational model is commitment: UU expects students to participate actively in their course of study, demonstrate sufficient commitment to the courses and fulfil their obligations of effort. This also means that students must ensure that they have available to them the study materials they need for active participation in the educational activities.

When charging extra costs, the following three questions must be asked concerning the course:

1. May extra costs be charged, and/or is it reasonable to do so?
A clarification is given under c. concerning the rules that apply for the various cost types.
2. Is the amount of the student's contribution reasonable, and is it sufficiently justified: is the contribution asked for in proportion to the provision delivered and the associated costs?
This question is important if the university itself charges costs for items such as readers. If the student himself/herself chooses where to buy a laptop, for example, this is not so important. However, question 3 must then be taken into account, namely:
3. Is the total of the extra contributions for the course still affordable for a student relying on student finance?
Student finance includes a component for books and course materials (most recently around 700 euros a year). The standard amount that Nibud uses for course books is between 700 and 1,000 euros a year. The total of extra contributions should therefore preferably not exceed 1,000 euros a year.

b. Statutory framework

Who pays for the books and course materials: government, institution or student?

The ambition of Utrecht University is to enable students to get the very best out of themselves during their time at university. An important key word in this is commitment. Courses offer personal, activating and, where possible, small-scale education and good supervision. On the other

hand, students are called on to demonstrate commitment to their studies. They are expected to fulfil their obligations of effort and participate actively in the educational activities. This means that students must study the prescribed books, and where necessary have the required course materials available to them. This gives rise to the question as to who pays for these books and course materials: the government, the university or the student?

Secondary schools provide school books and course materials free of charge: the government provides funding to the schools for this purpose. In higher education, the situation is different. Research universities and universities of applied sciences do not receive any extra funding to provide books and course materials free of charge. Students are expected to pay for these themselves. That is why student finance takes account of various items of expenditure in the standard budget, such as living expenses, books and course materials, tuition fees and travel. Since 2007 the various items of expenditure have no longer been broken down when granting student finance: the standard amounts for living expenses and the costs of books and course materials have been merged into a single standard amount for living expenses.

This means that the student himself/herself must invest in the books and course materials.

Access to education and examinations must not depend on the financial contributions to be paid in addition to tuition fees

According to the Higher Education and Research Act (*Wet op het hoger onderwijs en wetenschappelijk onderzoek - WHW*), a student who has registered for a course is entitled to the following:

- participation in a course of study
- sitting interim and final examinations
- access to the resources and collections belonging to the institution (library)
- use of student facilities, and
- student counselling.

Section 7.50 (1) of the Higher Education and Research Act also states that registration must not be made dependent on contributions other than tuition fees. There is one statutory exception to this rule that the registration may not be made dependent on contributions other than tuition fees. A General Order in Council may stipulate that an institution, with a view to registration for bachelor programmes with restricted admission (*numerus fixus*) and courses or programmes which have received permission from the Minister for selection 'at the gate' may ask for a contribution towards the costs directly relating to the course of study. The General Order in Council may stipulate what types of costs such a contribution may be for, and the maximum that may be asked for. In such a case, an institution may indeed charge costs for the admissions procedure. If permission is granted to charge costs, the executive board of the institution must take measures to provide financial support to those for whom the contribution is an unsurmountable obstacle to their registration. At present (March 2016) no General Order in Council has been issued. Utrecht University does not wish to create an extra financial barrier to registering for a bachelor's degree programme: for this reason it will not ask for a financial contribution towards the selection procedure in 2017-2018, even though this will be legally allowed.

In response to Parliamentary questions, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science explained that the rule that the registration may not be made dependent on contributions other than tuition fees means that access to a course of study and the examinations cannot be made dependent on payment of financial contributions in addition to tuition fees; however in certain cases it is permitted to charge extra costs. The Minister did not, however, give any exhaustive list of what contributions are or are not permitted. It is for the institutions to provide greater clarity on this point.

This guideline is designed to do just this: it offers the faculties a point of reference for the question as to when students may be asked to pay a contribution and specifies which starting points Utrecht University takes in this respect. Deviations from this are possible in highly specific situations, following permission by the Executive Board, in so far as this is permitted by law.

c. For what provisions may the student be asked to pay a contribution?

Utrecht University adheres to the following principles when deciding if the student may be asked for a contribution towards certain provisions:

1. Contribution permitted for extra-curricular activities

Costs may be charged for extra-curricular activities (that do not form part of the course): the starting point being that participation in these activities and payment for them is on a voluntary basis.

Example: Young Innovators. Students pay a contribution of EUR 500 for participation in the YI programme. The YI is not part of a course, but a selective extra-curricular part that can be taken in addition to a regular master's degree programme. No student is required to participate in the YI, and not every student may take part. As regards the amount of the contribution: Within the context of the YI programme, students participate in a Summer School at a university abroad. For this the students receive a grant of up to EUR 1000, which is more than their own contribution. On balance, therefore, students do not pay YI, but YI pays the student. Occasionally a highly motivated student has been selected for the programme, for whom the contribution towards participation was prohibitive. The YI has always succeeded in resolving this on an individual basis.

2. Offering a free alternative to educational activities that do cost money

If costs are charged for activities that do form part of a course, an alternative must be offered to students who cannot or do not wish to pay.

Example: part of a course is an excursion abroad, for which students are asked to pay a contribution. The question here is whether this is a compulsory or optional course. If it is an optional course, this is not a problem: the student who cannot or does not wish to pay the contribution does not need to choose that particular course, but can choose a different optional course which does not involve an excursion with an additional contribution. If it is a compulsory course, a free alternative to the excursion must be offered, for example in the form of a written paper.

3. If an alternative is not possible for a compulsory component: safety-net provision

As already mentioned, the student must be offered an alternative to activities that form part of the course programme and which involve costs. In a few exceptional cases, however, an alternative is not possible. In that case the course may request a contribution from the student, but the amount must be reasonable and fair, and students should be offered financial support if requested. Imposing a charge may not prevent a student from participating in the course. This point can be resolved by means of a hardship clause: a financial safety-net provision for the student.

4. No student contribution towards an honours programme within a course

(This is for an honours programme that is not extra-curricular, in addition to a programme, such as the Young Innovators, but is part of the course. Section 7.9b (1) of the Higher Education and Research Act describes this as: 'a special component within a course, by which students will reach a higher level of knowledge').

In secondary education, the Inspectorate of Education states that charging extra costs for bilingual courses (which can be compared to an honours programme) is permitted if a regular component is offered at the same location which pupils can participate in at no extra cost. See:

[http://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/binaries/content/assets/Documents+algemeen/2012/vee lgestelde-vragen-over-ouderbijdragen.pdf](http://www.onderwijsinspectie.nl/binaries/content/assets/Documents+algemeen/2012/vee%20lgestelde-vragen-over-ouderbijdragen.pdf), (p.4). This should also be possible in higher education: similar rules should apply on this point for the various sectors of education. However, this route has been blocked for higher education since it has been chosen to introduce differentiation in tuition fees, making it possible to charge up to twice the statutory tuition fees for honours tracks. A draft experimental law was drafted for this purpose. During the debate on the student loan system in December 2013, however, the Minister stated that this experimental law would be deferred for the time being and not enter into force.

The consequence of this decision is that as long as the law does not make it possible, higher tuition fees may not be asked for an honours programme; it is not permitted to ask students to pay a contribution since this matter will be dealt with by means of a legislative amendment.

NB: courses/programmes offering small-scale and intensive education that have received permission from the Minister to charge higher tuition fees are permitted to charge a higher amount than the statutory fees (e.g. University College Utrecht).

5. Required educational resources (books and course materials): on a voluntary basis

Students themselves must bear the costs of a number of educational materials, such as books, readers etc. These costs may only be charged to students on a voluntary basis. It may be that the course itself provides the materials, such as with readers. In that case the cost price may be charged. This also includes charging for copyright. Students must not be obliged to buy course and study materials; it is permitted to recommend or expect students to buy them. Students who do not buy these materials may not be excluded from the course or the examinations.

This statutory rule is at odds with a cornerstone of the UU educational model:

commitment. UU expects students to take an active part in their education, demonstrate sufficient commitment to the courses and fulfil their obligations of effort.

This also means that students should ensure that they have the study materials they need for active participation in educational activities.

In these cases it is recommended that students be informed that they are not required to buy the study materials, but that they are required to have them available to them if this is necessary. The University Course Catalogue must also describe what is expected of students in this respect. If a student does not participate adequately in a course, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the course coordinator may exclude the student from further participation in all or part of the course. This is laid down in the Education and Examinations Regulations.

Example: active participation in a Law tutorial will be impossible if the student does not have legislative texts and case law available to him/her. Similarly, in many cases it will not be possible for a Law student to sit an examination successfully if he/she does not possess the legislative texts and case law. Effective fraud control is only possible if the prescribed bundles with legislative texts and case law are used. The use of online sources and/or self-compiled bundles is therefore not permitted. A student who decides not to bring any sources to the examinations will not be denied admission. A student who brings the materials on other data carriers (digital/laptop or folders with documents printed by the student) will not be permitted to use these materials.

6. Online learning and testing: free access to summative tests

Various courses make use of online study materials from commercial publishers. Students must bear the costs of these materials themselves.

The costs of using an online access code or other online tool for taking summative tests may not be charged to students: Access to the tests may not be made dependent on payment of financial contributions in addition to tuition fees. This applies to the summative tests and not for the formative tests: if online exercises form part of the online study materials, students must buy these themselves. If they do not do so, they may not be denied access to the course of study and the examinations.

7. Lesson materials and resources / costs relating to practicals: on a voluntary basis

On the question whether the costs of lesson materials and resources for practicals such as breakage money and microscopes may be charged to students, the Minister of Education, Culture and Science takes the view that it cannot be made unequivocally clear whether costs in connection with educational provisions can be charged. The Minister states that the nature of the course determines whether costs arise direct from a statutory task of an institution or come under costs that can be charged. An institution cannot request payment if government funding is given for the provision concerned. The problem with this explanation is that it is not specified for which educational provisions this funding applies. There is a general system of three levels of educational funding: low, high and top, roughly

equivalent to arts/humanities/social and behavioural sciences, sciences and medical. In a letter of 25 August 1994 the Minister of Education, Culture and Science stated that the costs of microscopes, protective clothing and breakage money may be charged to the students, but only on a voluntary basis. Students should not be required to buy these materials or obtain (hire/buy) them through the university; recommending or expecting students to do so is permitted. The same applies as that set out under point 5: students must ensure that they have lesson/practical materials available to them if these are necessary to take an active part in educational activities.

8. Protective equipment for practicals: free of charge

If a student carries out procedures in a practical training room or laboratory that are comparable with work in professional practice and personal protective equipment is required for such procedures, such as lab coats, safety goggles or protective clothing, Utrecht University adopts the principle that this protective equipment will be provided to students free of charge. No hire, cleaning or other costs will be charged.

9. Laptop ('bring your own device'): on a voluntary basis

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science states that students may not be required to buy a laptop with the correct software or a tablet; recommending or expecting students to buy these is permitted.

At Utrecht University, in more and more courses 'bring your own device' is being introduced in the educational concept. The university expects students to buy a laptop with the associated software. If the course information states that a laptop is 'required', it must also state that the student will not be excluded from the course of study or the examinations if he or she does not have a laptop:

- the student who comes to a lecture or practical without a laptop will not be excluded; in that case, the student may watch alongside a fellow student, for example;
- the student who wishes to take a test and does not have a laptop with him/her will not be excluded from the test: a replacement device will be provided (must also be available as backup if the laptop does not work, crashes, etc.).

10. Library: free of charge

Students may make use of the university library free of charge.

11. Student counselling: free of charge

Students are entitled to receive student counselling from lecturers, tutors and Study Advisers free of charge.

12. Student facilities

A number of student facilities are offered free of charge, such as the services of a Student Counsellor. Other facilities may incur costs. These costs are not directly related to the course of study. The student is free to decide whether or not to make use of these services.

13. Selection procedure: no contribution

a. Bachelor

With effect from the 2017-2018 academic year, it will be possible by law to charge costs for the admissions procedure to bachelor's degree programmes with restricted admission and courses/programmes that have been granted permission by the Minister for selection 'at the gate'. Utrecht University does not want to create an extra financial barrier to registering for a bachelor's degree programme. For this reason it will not request a financial contribution towards the costs of the selection procedure for 2017-2018.

b. Master

The statutory starting point is that in principle students will not pay any other contribution towards admission to a master's degree programme than tuition fees. Utrecht University will not require a financial contribution towards the costs of the selection procedure for the master's degree programme.

14. Application fee for students with foreign educational qualifications

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science has stated that for students who do not have a Dutch (bachelor's) degree, it is reasonable for an institution to charge all or some of the costs it incurs to check that a student has sufficient knowledge and meets the set requirements in order to start a course.

Utrecht University does this in the form of an application fee of EUR 100 (2015 rate) for bachelor's and master's degree programmes.

15. Matching: free of charge

Utrecht University does not charge for matching (course selection activity) for a bachelor's degree programme. This is also not permitted by law.