

Charging of Incidental Fees and Study Materials Guidelines



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The following Guidelines are provided to assist Faculties in determining when additional costs or fees can be charged to students.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY
Director, Student Administration

In charging incidental fees to students the University is required to comply with the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (HESA) and the associated Higher Education Provider (HEP) guidelines.

Under HESA, the tuition fee charged for a program cannot include fees for goods or services that are incidental to studies. As these guidelines are enforced through the Higher Education Funding Act 1988, a breach may possibly jeopardise the University's funding.

The HESA guidelines state:

The key principle to be applied is that HECS liable or non-fee-paying HECS exempt students must be able to complete their chosen award without facing program related charges imposed by their institutions. This precludes charges for compulsory or essential components of a program or its assessment and award. Higher education institutions may charge students for goods or services, the purchase of which is voluntary and is not a requirement of a program of study for an award of the institution.

Circumstances in which incidental fees may be charged

However, in accordance with Chapter 7 of the HEP Guidelines, USC may charge a student for a good or service related to the provision of their course if one of the following criteria applies:

INCIDENTAL FEES AND CHARGES

EXAMPLES

The goods or services are not essential to the course.

- access to internet and computer facilities, except where these are required as part of a course
- printing of notes from the internet or disc
- graduation ceremonies where students are not required to attend the ceremony to obtain their award

There are alternative forms of access to goods or services which are essential to the course and they are made readily available at no additional cost by USC.

- lecture notes or recordings, provided that lectures are made readily available to students free of charge
- electronic provision of essential information if the information is also made readily available free of charge in another form
- reading material, such as anthologies of required readings, provided these texts are also made readily available free of charge
- additional materials which may be helpful but not critical to the course

Essential goods or services that students have the choice of acquiring from a supplier other than USC and is for:

- protective clothing or footwear
- tool kits
- stethoscopes
- dance shoes
- reference texts
- badged clothing required for placements

equipment or items that become the student's physical property and are not consumed in the course.

OR

food, transport and accommodation costs associated with the provision of field trips that form part of the course. Consideration needs to be given to ensure that there are readily and easily available alternatives for the provision of these charges.

- meals, snacks, beverages
- bus tickets, airfares
- hotels, camping

Goods or services for a course which is not required for the student to complete their program. The course concerned must be an unrestricted elective course for all potential students enrolled and must not restrict their ability to complete their program in any way.

- travel costs to a particular location and any associated accommodation charges

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Fines or penalties imposed principally as a disincentive and not to raise revenue or cover administrative costs.

- particular software packages
 - fines or penalties for late enrolments, late variations to enrolments, late withdrawals from a course, and late payments of charges, student contribution amounts and tuition fees
 - review of grade if a student has already passed the subject, but is seeking to improve their grade
 - a bond for equipment that may be forfeited if the equipment is not returned or damaged
 - a charge for an assessment of prior learning in circumstances where a person has not applied for entry to USC
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Circumstances when incidental fees must not be charged

The following examples are the kinds of goods and services for which USC should not charge separate fees as the costs incurred would be expected to be covered in the standard tuition fee for the course.

- Course materials, such as subject outlines, reading lists, software packages, tutorial or seminar topics and problems, assignment and essay questions and requirements or guidelines for the presentation of work;
- Access to library books, periodicals and guides
- Clinic, laboratory or workshop materials such as anaesthetics, chemicals, filters, fuel, fertilisers, animal feed or crops used in practical sessions or research;
- Access to computers or other online resources;
- Admissions services including application fees or enrolment fees, except for special admissions tests;

General advice

Programs and courses where it is known that an incidental charge will be required should ensure that students are clearly advised of this requirement in all relevant documentation.

If a Faculty is still unsure whether a charge may be applied after reading the above Guidelines then they should seek advice from the Director, Student Administration or Manager, Student Finance.

Administration

Faculties will be responsible for ensuring all governance obligations are met and appropriate records are maintained in the administration of incidental fees.
