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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION,
E.S.F. SECTION,
APOLLO HOUSE,
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DUBLIN 2.

To Post-Primary Schools
and VECs

Circular 36/95

Scheme for payment of grants to enable PLC charges to be abolished.

1. An additional £2m has been provided this year to facilitate the abolition of PLC charges with effect from 1995/96. The funds will be used to pay additional grants to VECs/schools to enable the charges on VPT-2/Post Leaving Cert courses to be discontinued.

The practice of making charges in recent years has arisen in some institutions mainly for equipment and materials, books, field trips, examination fees and registration charges of professional bodies and other overheads where the non-pay costs of providing courses in the discipline are very high e.g. equestrian studies.

2. The amount of grant paid will be determined on the basis of student enrolment on PLC/VPT-2 courses on 30 September each year (i.e. enrolment 30/9/95 in the case of the current year)
3. The new scheme will ensure equality of treatment across institutions in the vocational, secondary and community and comprehensive sectors, where different levels of equipment and materials funding have applied to date. With effect from the 1996 calendar year, the equipment and materials grant and the grant for abolition of fees will be integrated. It is envisaged that an advance payment of approx 50% will be made in March followed by the final instalment in October or as soon as the enrolment of 30 September has been confirmed by schools/VECs.
4. For 1995, there will be an interim arrangement, as the annual equipment and materials grant has already been issued in some instances.
5. **Existing rates of funding for equipment and materials**

	Secondary	C & C	Vocational	Total
Enrolment 94/95	627	906	16422	17955
Existing Grant per Pupil	£125	£101	£38	

6. Proposed additional grant for abolition of fees (using VEC sector as a base and assuming grant of £38 already paid).

Equestrian courses £580 per pupil per annum (on top of £38)

All other courses £108 per pupil per annum (on top of £38)

7. **Grant per pupil adjusted to ensure equity of treatment across school sectors.**

	Existing Grant	Additional Grant	Total
Secondary Schools			
Equestrian Courses	£125	£493	£618
All other Courses	£125	£21	£146
C & C Schools			
Equestrian Courses	£101	£517	£618
All other Courses	£101	£45	£146
Vocational Schools			
Equestrian Courses	£38	£580	£618
All other Courses	£38	£108	£146

(This approach ensures that, between the existing equipment grant and the additional grant for fee relief, all school sectors will be treated equally.)

8. **Rates of composite grant from 1996 onwards**

Equestrian courses - all schools - £618 per pupil p.a.

All other courses - all schools - £146 per pupil p.a.

9. The grants paid to VECs will be in accordance with the criteria set out above, but the Committees will have discretion within the PLC equipment budgets to allocate differing amount to institutions on the basis of identified needs.

10. The Minister directs that all charges levied on students for PLC courses be discontinued with effect from 1995/96 for equipment and materials and general overheads for the running costs of programmes. In line with provision in the third level sector, the following costs may continue to be borne by students:-

Books
Uniforms/clothing and equipment (e.g. chef's uniform, knives etc) where the items purchased become the personal property of the trainee
Student Services
Registration charges by professional bodies
Examination fees

11. Schools may require students to pay a deposit (maximum £30) to secure a place on a course. This will not be refunded if the student subsequently does not avail of the course.

Where the student enrolls on the programme, the deposit should either

(a) be refunded in full by the school/VEC,

or

(b) be withheld as a down-payment, on behalf of the student, for the charges set out in paragraph 10, where book purchases/examination payments are organised/collected centrally by the school/VEC.

12. This is a pilot scheme. It will be reviewed by the Department in consultation with the relevant partners in education at the beginning of the 1996 calendar year. Every effort will be made to adapt the scheme as required in the light of the overall actual costs across the various disciplines. However, all schools and VECs are required to ensure that courses run within the constraints of overall budgets provided. No additional funds are available to cover deficits.
13. An information leaflet for students and parents is being prepared and will issue shortly. Queries should be addressed to ESF Section at the above address – Telephone (01) 8734700 ext 2427, 2428 and 2432.

M Kelly
ESF Section