



**Tertiary
Education
Commission**
Te Amorangi
Mātauranga Matua



Compulsory Student Services Fees

**Compliance guidance for tertiary
education providers**

Updated September 2019

This document explains the **compulsory student services fee (CSSF)** and provides:

- › **information** about how to comply with the CSSF Ministerial Direction, including good practice examples; and
- › an **example** of what to include in a CSSF report.

What is a compulsory student services fee?

Tertiary education intuitions (TEIs) and private training establishments (PTEs) can charge their students a CSSF to support the delivery of student services that support students and enhance their academic experience.

What is the CSSF framework?

The Education Act 1989 was amended in 2011 to allow the Minister to issue directions in relation to CSSFs. The CSSF Ministerial Direction ensures providers are transparent in setting these fees and accountable for their use. It sets a clear framework for providers and their students to work together to set the fee and ensure access to appropriate student services. The CSSF framework applies to both domestic students and international students that pay a fee for student services.

Areas of compliance

Providers that charge a CSSF to help fund the costs of delivering student services must comply with all aspects of the Ministerial Direction.

The Ministerial Direction covers five areas of compliance:

- › student involvement in CSSF decision-making
- › what services the CSSF can fund
- › accounting for the use of CSSFs
- › annual CSSF reporting
- › publishing CSSF information online



Student involvement in CSSFs

Students or their representatives must be involved in making decisions about many aspects of the CSSF. The Ministerial Direction requires providers to either consult or make decisions jointly with their students or their representatives to determine:

- › the maximum fee that students will pay (this includes the amount charged to different categories of students, for example, international students, part-time or distance students)
- › the types of services that will be delivered within the specified categories (see [categories of student services](#))
- › the procurement and method for authorising expenditure on these services.

We recommend you review the decision-making processes you have in place to ensure students are sufficiently involved and that you are complying with the Ministerial Direction.

There are certain expectations to ensure adequate arrangements for student involvement. Providers must:

- › keep an open mind and not have predetermined a course of action before involving students in decision-making.
- › supply and publicise enough information to adequately inform students or their representatives so that they can respond to proposals.
- › ensure that there is sufficient time for students to consider proposals and to provide feedback.
- › listen to what students have to say and give due consideration to alternative proposals.

Engaging students: examples of good processes

- › Publicise how you propose to consult or jointly make decisions with your students and the issues to be considered
- › Establish committees with student representation and advisory or decision-making powers over how CSSFs are set, what services should be delivered, and how these services should be purchased
- › Share information with students about how the fee is being used and how the services are performing
- › Seek regular feedback from students to inform any proposed changes, including surveys on the quality of services offered and what other types of service students may value
- › Publish information on your website that clearly sets out any relevant changes to CSSFs that you must consult or decide jointly with students on, giving students sufficient time to engage with and provide feedback on proposals
- › Providing students a summary of the feedback received through student involvement and that responds to suggestions
- › Holding student forums, where students or their representatives are invited to provide feedback on CSSFs
- › Forming partnerships with student groups to deliver certain student services

Fee setting: examples of good processes

- › Setting a different CSSF rate for different sites to reflect the services students can access, for instance, if you have multiple campuses that offer different services
- › Setting a different CSSF rate for different students, for instance distance students who cannot access all the services offered may be charged a lower CSSF
- › Granting refunds if a student withdraws from their studies (a pro-rata refund for the period of their enrolment, or aligned with your withdrawal and refund policy¹) and publishing your refund policy so students are informed



¹ Providers charging a CSSF have responsibilities around withdrawals and refunds under of the Education Act 1989 (sections 235 and 235A). For more information on the refund requirements, please visit NZQA's website: <https://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers-partners/approval-accreditation-and-registration/student-fee-protection/student-withdrawals-refunds/>

Categories of student services

The Minister determines what categories of student services the CSSF can fund. If a provider does not comply with this aspect of the direction, the Minister can specify the types of services that a provider can make available to students. Delivery of the following service categories can be supported by the CSSF:

Advocacy and legal advice

Advocating on behalf of individual students and groups of students, and providing independent support to resolve problems. This includes advocacy and legal advice relating to accommodation.

Careers information, advice and guidance

Supporting students' transition into post-study employment.

Counselling services

Providing non-academic counselling and pastoral care, such as chaplains.

Employment information

Providing information about employment opportunities for students while they are studying.

Financial support and advice

Providing hardship assistance and advice to students on financial issues.

Health services

Providing health care and related welfare services.

Media

Supporting the production and dissemination of information by students to students, including newspapers, radio, television and internet-based media.

Childcare services

Providing affordable childcare services while parents are studying.

Clubs and societies

Supporting student clubs and societies, including through the provision of administrative support and facilities for clubs and societies.

Sports, recreation and cultural activities

Providing sports, recreation and cultural activities for students.

If you offer these services without charging students for them, you do not need to comply with the CSSF framework. If you charge students for any of these services, you must comply with the CSSF framework, regardless of what the fee is called. If you are unsure whether a type of student service falls within one of the specified categories, please contact us by email at cssf@tec.govt.nz.

Account for how the fees are spent

Providers must either hold CSSF income in a separate bank account, or ensure that all associated income and expenditure is separately accounted for in their accounting system.

This ensures that CSSF income is only spent as intended on permitted student services. It will also help you to easily meet the reporting requirements set out below.



Report on how the fees are spent

TEIs must report on CSSFs in their annual reports.

PTEs must provide a written report to their students and the Tertiary Education Commission (cssf@tec.govt.nz) each year.

The report must:

- › identify the fee charged per equivalent full-time student (EFTS) - this includes the amount charged for each type of student (for example, international students, distance students, part-time students, or students at different campuses)
- › describe each type of student service that the fee supports – note that the ‘types’ of student services are distinct from the ‘categories’ of student services (for example, ‘social sports’ are a type of service that falls within the ‘sports, recreation and cultural activities’ category)
- › include a statement of the CSSF income and expenditure for each type of student service (see [table](#) in appendix)
- › demonstrate how you are complying with the accounting requirements.

We’ve provided an [example of what to include in a CSSF report](#) that can be used as a template.

CSSF information available on provider websites

In addition to written reports, providers must also make certain CSSF information available on their websites so students are informed on the arrangements established to involve students and how to participate in future CSSF related decision-making. This increases the transparency of CSSF processes and student involvement.

The following information must be displayed prominently on a provider's website, in an accessible section specific to CSSFs:

- › the fee charged per EFTS for each type of student (for example, if distance students or different campuses have different fees)
- › a description of each type of student service that the fee supports (not just the categories of student services offered)
- › a description of the arrangements that the provider has established for decisions to be made jointly or in consultation with students or their representatives on matters related to the current year's CSSF, including a response to any feedback received from students, how the provider consulted or jointly made decisions with students, and what was decided
- › a description of how students can engage in and contribute to CSSF decisions for future years
- › how providers propose to consult or jointly make decisions with their students and the issues to be considered.

This content should be updated as and when any changes related to CSSFs occur. Most providers make changes to CSSFs annually and so run a mid-year process to involve students in CSSF-related decisions.

Good practice reporting is clear and transparent and might also include:

- › Links to the different services the CSSF helps fund, so students can easily access these
- › Information on exemptions to the fee, pro-rata rates available, refunds, or rebates
- › CSSF policy documents
- › Sharing CSSF consultation documents, student survey information, or feedback received
- › Providing feedback forums for student services and your CSSF practices
- › Contact details for CSSF queries
- › Key dates and information for upcoming student meetings or consultation opportunities

Contact us

For information and advice on the CSSF framework, please contact: cssf@tec.govt.nz

Appendix: What to include in a CSSF report

- › **What is a CSSF?** Describe what the compulsory student services fee (CSSF) is and why your organisation charges this.
- › **How much is the CSSF?** Identify the CSSF charged per equivalent full time student (EFTS) and, if offered, pro-rata rates for part-time or distance students (some multi-campus TEIs set different fees for different campuses, depending on the services and facilities available at each site). If you charge a different fee for international students, this should also be specified.
- › **Description of student services.** Provide a description of the actual services the CSSF funds under the category of services headings (not just repeating the generic descriptors from the Ministerial Direction).
- › **Reporting income and expenditure.** Provide a breakdown of the fee income and expenditure for each type of student service. The following table provides an example of how you could report this. It must be broken down by service type, not just the specified CSSF category.
- › **How are you complying with the accounting requirements?** Comment on the CSSF accounting practices: related income must either be held in a separate account or ring-fenced within your organisation's existing accounts.
- › **Student involvement in CSSF decision.** While not a requirement in the TEI annual report or a PTE's report for students, including information about how CSSF decisions are made and how students can be involved increases transparency and encourages participation. Good practice would:
 - provide a contact for CSSF related queries
 - specify how students were involved in decisions related to the current CSSF – including setting the CSSF amount, determining the services offered, procuring those services and how expenditure is authorised
 - indicate how students can provide feedback on the services offered and how they can be involved in future decisions.



CSSF income and expenditure must be reported by each type of student service, for example:

CSSF category <i>List the categories of service your provider offers</i>	Type of service <i>The specific types of service funded within each category</i>	Revenue			Expenditure	Surplus / (Deficit)
		CSSF income	Other revenue	Total Revenue	CSSF expenditure	
Advocacy and legal advice						
Careers information, advice and guidance						
Counselling services						
Employment information						
Financial support and advice						
Health services						
Media						
Childcare services						
Clubs and societies						
Sports, recreation and cultural activities	<i>Such as:</i>					
	<i>Orientation</i>					
	<i>International food festival</i>					
	<i>Social sports</i>					
	<i>Competitive sports</i>					
TOTAL	-					



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