

Charges for SMSTC

This document sets out:

1. How we share the running costs of SMSTC between member departments, under the agreement with heads of member departments made in August–September 2016.
2. The charges to participants in SMSTC courses who are not PhD students or staff at member departments.

1 Charges to member departments

The member departments are the mathematics departments at the following universities: Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Heriot–Watt, St Andrews, Stirling and Strathclyde.

Principle The principle is that each department’s fee should be roughly proportional to the number of SMSTC classes taken, with a relatively small minimum fee for all members. However, we want to avoid the situation where an individual student or supervisor feels hesitant about taking a course because it would directly cost their department money. For that reason, two blurring mechanisms are used: (i) banding, so that departments of similar ‘size’ pay identical amounts, (ii) measuring the ‘size’ of a department not by the number of courses taken that specific year, but by a moving average.

Charges For the purposes of this formula, a *student* is a PhD student in an SMSTC member department. A *module* is one of the sixteen SMSTC core modules. In any given academic year in any given department, we count the total over all students of the number of modules enrolled for. Call this the department’s *consumption* for that year. For example, if a department contains two students, one enrolled for 3 modules and one enrolled for 5, then its consumption for that year is 8.

To compute the fees for a department for the next academic year:

1. Take the mean of the department’s consumption over the last three years.
2. Express this as a percentage of the mean consumption of all departments over the last three years.
3. Round up to the next 5%, with 5% as the minimum possible. (E.g. 11% \mapsto 15% and 0% \mapsto 5%.) Call this the department’s *band*.
4. Fees are proportional to bands. For instance, departments in the 15% band pay three times as much as those in the 5% band.

Notes:

- The total amount charged to departments is based on forecast expenditure for the coming academic year. Any surplus will be used to reduce future fees.
- The charges will be calculated, and heads of department advised, during the summer vacation each year.
- For the purposes of measuring consumption, MIGSAA students are divided evenly between Edinburgh and Heriot–Watt.

- Up until 2016, we principally kept statistics for *first-year* PhD students taking core modules, and the moving average is calculated using that data. However, we want to emphasize that higher-year PhD students may benefit from taking SMSTC courses, and indeed, increasing numbers are doing so. For this reason, the definition of ‘student’ above includes all PhD students, and from 2017 we count all of them in fee calculations.

2 Charges to other participants

Principles Participants from outside SMSTC member departments are welcome. However, SMSTC costs money to run, principally for administrative support and website development. Our charges for external participants are roughly cost price, that is, total annual expenditure of SMSTC divided by total number of modules taken.

Member departments are also charged for masters and undergraduate students taking SMSTC courses, since those departments receive tuition fees. This charge is slightly lower than the charge for external participants.

At present, only core modules are charged for. Supplementary modules are free.

All course fees gathered stay within SMSTC and, therefore, contribute to the financial health of the member departments.

Charges In principle, anyone in the world can take an SMSTC course. We group people into the following categories:

1. **Staff at member departments** (including postdocs). We do not charge staff to participate in SMSTC courses.
2. **PhD students at member departments.** More exactly: PhD students with at least one supervisor in a member department. These are charged for indirectly via the formula in Section 1.
3. **Other students at member departments.** This means master’s or undergraduate students whose principal department is a member of SMSTC. (‘Principal department’ means the department that runs the student’s degree programme.) The charge is **£80 per core module**.
4. **Everyone else** (including staff and students at our universities but not in our departments). We charge **£100 per core module**.

We have sometimes included other videoconference sites in the network. For this, we charge an additional **£250 annual administrative fee**.

Tom Leinster
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