

Act 69 of 2024

Higher Education Fee and Cost Transparency Q&A

Section 2004-H Student Fee Transparency

1. Which institutions must comply with [section 2004-H](#) (relating to student fee transparency)?

[Section 2004-H of the School Code](#) applies to the following institutions:

- Community colleges
- Universities in the State System of Higher Education
- Lincoln University, Penn State University, Temple University and the University of Pittsburgh
- Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology
- Northern Pennsylvania Rural Regional College
- All private colleges and universities
- Institutions licensed by the Board of Private Licensed Schools
- Out-of-state institutions of higher education authorized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to operate in Pennsylvania

2. What student fee information is an institution required to post?

An institution must prominently display on its public website and online student portal descriptions of every mandatory fee charged by the institution. Institutions must publish the amount of every fee along with a description of:

- The general purpose of the mandatory fee;
- How the mandatory fee is expected to be allocated and used; and
- How the mandatory fee will be collected and the academic year or semester for which the fee will be assessed.

Descriptions must be posted prior to the semester for which the fee will be charged and before it is included in any tuition bill.

3. What is considered to be a “mandatory fee”?

Section 2001-H for the School Code defines a “mandatory fee” as a charge imposed to all of the institution’s students, irrespective of their course or admission status, for enrollment or attendance for items not covered by tuition, room or board fees. Mandatory fees for undergraduate students should be addressed separately from mandatory fees for graduate students.

4. If an institution charges a fee for books for a particular course, does this qualify as a mandatory fee that requires disclosure?

A mandatory fee is defined as a charge imposed on all of the institution’s students. If all the students are required to take a course, then the fees for any books for that course would be a mandatory fee that requires disclosure.

5. Does Section 2004-H apply to undergraduate and graduate students?

Yes. Section 2004-H applies to both undergraduate and graduate students.

6. When does the law take effect?

The law took effect July 17, 2024. Commencing as of the effective date, mandatory fee amounts and descriptions must be posted prior to the semester for which the fee is charged and before it is included in any tuition bill.

7. Are there any statutory reporting requirements and deadlines?

By November 15, 2025, and by November 15 every year thereafter, institutions must publish on the institution's website the following information from the prior academic year:

- Total amount of mandatory fees collected; and
- The amount of mandatory fees allocated to each use.

By June 30, 2026, and by June 30 of each year thereafter, institutions must provide the PA Department of Education with a link to their mandatory fee information. Institutions will submit the link as part of the annual higher education reporting process beginning January 2026.

Section 2005-H Higher Education Cost Transparency

1. Which institutions must comply with [section 2005-H](#) (relating to higher education cost transparency)?

[Section 2005-H of the School Code](#) applies to the following institutions:

- Community colleges
- Universities in the State System of Higher Education
- Lincoln University, Penn State University, Temple University and the University of Pittsburgh
- Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology
- Northern Pennsylvania Regional College
- All private colleges and universities
- Postsecondary institutions licensed by the Board of Private Licensed Schools
- Out-of-state institutions of higher education authorized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to operate in Pennsylvania

2. When must institutions provide cost information to the student?

Section 2005-H of the School Code requires institutions to provide cost information to each prospective student (undergraduate and graduate) as part of the student's offer of enrollment at the institution or as part of the student's financial aid offer.

3. What cost information must be provided?

In order for students to make fully informed decisions when selecting an institution of higher education, they need to be aware of the costs associated with attending that institution for the duration of their program.

To that end, Section 2005-H requires each institution of higher education to provide the following information to prospective students:

- Estimate of total Cost of Attendance (COA), including the following:
 - Tuition for the student's first academic year
 - A list of each fee charged to a student in the student's first academic year. Fees must include both mandatory and optional fees.
 - Breakdown of all room and board options and costs associated with each option for the student's first academic year.
 - Books and supplies.
- Estimate of financial aid offered by the institution, including, but not limited to the following:
 - All grants and scholarships that do not require repayment;
 - Student loans that require repayment; and
 - Student employment options, such as federal or state work study.
- Estimate of the net cost that subtracts scholarships or grants being offered from the estimated total COA, so as to show an estimated annual cost before loans are applied.
- Estimate of the total Cost of Attendance (COA) for subsequent years to include the following:
 - Information regarding whether or not the financial aid is being offered only for the upcoming academic year or if it is renewable for subsequent academic years. If financial aid is renewable for subsequent academic years, the information must include any requirements that must be met for renewal;
 - A history of the previous academic year's tuition;
 - An estimate of the total tuition that the student will be charged in each academic year necessary for the student to receive a degree in the student's major; and
 - An estimate of the total amount of fees charged to a student in each academic year necessary for the student to receive a degree in the student's major.

4. When does this law take effect?

The law took effect July 17, 2024. Institutions are expected to implement the law as soon as possible, and no later than the incoming class for the 2025-26 school year.

5. What information is an institution required to post online?

Each institution must make available on its publicly accessible Internet website an estimate of all tuition, fees and room and board that may be charged in an academic year. Institutions must use easily understood terms and clearly identify each piece of financial aid that a student must repay.

6. How should institutions determine subsequent year costs?

The law does not provide a methodology for institutions to determine future costs. Future costs should be estimated based on prior increases to give students an idea of what charges look like in future years and as a whole. You must list the dollar amount of the estimate, not just as a percentage change.

7. Can institutions use the word “estimated” on the cost disclosure?

Yes. Institutions should clearly indicate when costs are estimated. Institutions also might want to consider indicating how any estimates are calculated (i.e., estimates are based on a percentage increase per year, etc.).

8. Can an institution indicate a percentage change in tuition, room and board from the prior year or must it publish a dollar amount?

An institution is expected to show the actual dollar amount of tuition, room, and board charged last year by the institution. A statement only indicating the percentage change does not meet the statutory requirement and would not be easy for a student to understand.

Tuition and all mandatory and optional fees charged to a student in the first academic year, as well as a breakdown of all room and board options for the first academic year, must be provided to a student as part of the student’s offer of enrollment or financial aid offer. The institution must also provide the prospective student with an estimate of the total COA of each subsequent year.

9. Is there a template or format that institutions are expected to use when providing this cost information to students?

Institutions may use any format as long as the information is clear and easy to understand by students

10. Does the law include state reporting requirements?

No. There are no statutory reporting requirements. Institutions of higher education are responsible for ensuring they are compliant with the law.

Section 2006-H Exit Counseling

1. Which institutions must comply with [section 2006-H](#) (relating to exit counseling)?

[Section 2006-H of the School Code](#) applies to the following institutions:

- Community colleges
- Universities in the State System of Higher Education
- Lincoln University, Penn State University, Temple University and the University of Pittsburgh
- Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology
- Northern Pennsylvania Rural Regional College
- All private colleges and universities
- Institutions licensed by the Board of Private Licensed Schools
- All institutions of higher education authorized by the Pennsylvania Department of Education to operate in Pennsylvania

2. What does section 2006-H require?

Section 2006-H requires each institution of higher education to make financial aid counseling available to each student at the end of the student's final academic term, unless an individual student elects not to participate.

3. What must the exit counseling include?

Section 2006-H provides that financial aid counseling must include, at a minimum:

1. A list of all available Federal and State programs, including, if available, related websites and contact information, that may assist with payments, reductions or forgiveness of the individual's student loans;
2. All available repayment options on student loans known to the institution of higher education and, if available, a link to an online student loan payment calculator;
3. Information on when a student's loan payments will begin and information on assistance with delaying repayment of loans; and
4. Any other information that the institution of higher education deems necessary to help an exiting (graduating or withdrawing) student understand options relating to repaying student loans.

4. Which students must be offered exit counseling?

Section 2006-H requires institutions to make exit counseling available to each student at the end of the student's final academic term. This includes undergraduate and graduate students who are graduating or leaving the institution permanently or temporarily. Exit counseling must be offered to each student regardless of whether the student has a student loan balance.

5. Can exit counseling be provided virtually?

An institution of higher education may offer exit counseling required under section 2006-H in-person or virtually and may partner with the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) or a similar entity to provide the required counseling.

6. Will a video link suffice for the exit counseling requirement?

No. Institutions must provide students with the ability to discuss their specific situation with a financial aid advisor.

7. How does an institution offer exit counseling to students who transfer or withdraw?

Institutions must attempt to make financial aid counseling available to students, even when a student leaves an institution of higher education without the institution's knowledge or transfers to another institution. If the institution is unable to get in contact with the student, the institution must mail the information to the student's last known address on file.

8. How does a student "opt out" of exit counseling?

Institutions may determine the process for which students may elect not to participate in exit counseling.

9. Does the law include state reporting requirements?

No. There are no statutory reporting requirements. Institutions of higher education are responsible for ensuring they are compliant with the law.