

Frequently Asked Questions about the SWRB Fees Consultation

These questions are listed in order of popularity/frequency.

Why are changes to the education fees being proposed?

These proposed fee changes are being driven by the new Prescription and Monitoring framework. The new framework describes individual activities, which can now be charged separately. As a result, there is a proposal to change the fee structure.

The education fees have not been adjusted since 2019. This proposal does not contain a current adjustment for inflation in recognition of the changes being navigated by social work programme providers.

How does the proposal for a new fee structure differ from the current system?

The proposed changes are:

1. A specific fee for each activity, e.g. new prescription assessments, prescription confirmation, annual monitoring, and custom monitoring. This approach will replace the current single fee structure that covers all educational activities.
2. Proposing a flat fee of \$9,000 (GST excl.) per programme. Replacing the current annual support fee based on equivalent full time students (EFTS).

What happens if my TEO has more or fewer graduating students under the new system?

The proposal to move the annual support fee from an EFTS based calculation to a flat fee will result in some annual support fee increase for those programmes with less than 20 graduates per year. Programmes with more than 20 graduates per year will not experience any change in this fee. However, the overall four-year costs for most TEOs are expected to be lower under the new structure.

Why are some education fees increasing when the sector is already under financial pressure?

In the proposal we have endeavoured to minimise fee increases while maintaining our ability to deliver quality regulation. Some smaller TEOs will notice an increase in their annual programme support fee however as shown in Appendix A of the consultation document, most TEOs can expect lower total costs over a four-year period under the proposed model (\$75,722 (GST excl) proposed vs \$89,595 (GST excl) current). Through proportionate regulation we empower TEOs to minimise budgetary impacts through excellence in programme management and delivery.

Will there be additional costs my TEO hasn't budgeted for?

The main change proposed is the introduction of separate fees for specific activities. In a four-year period, most TEOs could expect to pay an annual support fee (\$9,000 GST excl.), annual monitoring

fee (\$3,720 GST excl.), and one prescription confirmation fee (\$27,015-\$40,655 GST excl.). New programmes would pay a prescription assessment fee in the proposal. TEOs performing well are unlikely to incur custom monitoring costs or be charged at the maximum rate for prescription confirmation. Hypothetical scenarios are provided in Appendix A of the consultation document to show the comparison between possible costs over four years under the current and proposed fees models.

[Additional information is provided in the Prescription and Monitoring Framework.](#)

Will a TEO delivering more than one prescribed qualification be charged fees for each qualification?

Yes. Fees relate to qualifications, not to TEOs. Each qualification needs to be assessed individually to ensure it is complying with the Education Standards. When the SWRB do a prescription or monitoring visit, we will assess both qualifications in the same visit. This will maximise efficiency and minimise accommodation and travel costs to the TEO. Once a qualification is established, most TEOs can expect predictable ongoing costs: prescription confirmation every fifth year, plus annual monitoring and support fees each year. Note that mid-cycle reviews have been replaced by annual monitoring and custom monitoring (where necessary).

How do the proposed fees compare to inflation-adjusted current fees?

If current fees had increased with inflation since 2019, TEOs would now pay up to \$32,634 GST excl (vs current \$26,000 GST excl) for programme recognition and \$11,296 GST excl (vs current \$9,000 GST excl) for annual fees. This context helps demonstrate that the proposal also reflects that costs have moved since fees were last set.

How will the SWRB decide on panel numbers and time for prescription confirmation visits?

The desk review of a TEO's submission will generate key lines of enquiry. These will inform the panel make up and time allocated for the prescription confirmation visit. As outlined in the Prescription and Monitoring Framework, the SWRB will agree the panel composition in discussion with the TEO.

What support will SWRB provide during the transition to new Education Standards?

The proposed annual support fee covers ongoing advice on general enquiries, guidance on whether programme changes are significant, support with field education matters, and liaison with key stakeholders. The SWRB is committed to supporting TEOs through this transition with clear guidance and responsive communication. You can contact the team via email:

education@swrb.govt.nz

When might these changes take effect, if agreed on?

The proposed fees would apply from January 2026, subject to decisions by the Board.

What might TEOs be charged in 2026?

All TEOs would pay the annual programme support fee in 2026, subject to final decisions by the Board. Those TEOs scheduled for prescription confirmation in 2026 would be charged the new prescription confirmation fee. We will notify these TEOs as soon as possible so they can prepare to be assessed against the new Education Standards.

While the annual monitoring fee would come into effect in 2026 (subject to the Board decision), the actual activity of annual monitoring would commence in 2027. This means no fee for annual monitoring would be charged in 2026 in order to support a smooth transition to the new framework.

A selection of hypothetical scenarios illustrating what TEOs with a range of variations might expect to pay over four years under the proposed fee model is provided (Education fees consultation scenarios). The scenarios also provide a comparison against what the TEO would pay over the same period under the current fee model (with inflation accounted for as per CPI)

How can I provide feedback?

You can provide feedback via the online feedback form at surveymonkey.com/r/SWRBEdFees2025 or email education@swrb.govt.nz. Online hui sessions are also available for questions and discussion. Consultation closes at 5pm on Friday 17th October 2025.

Will these fee changes affect me as a social worker or someone wanting to become a social worker?

No, these fees are paid by tertiary education organisations (TEOs) - universities, polytechnics, wānanga, private training providers - not by individual students or social workers. Your registration fees and professional obligations remain unchanged. These fees ensure the quality of social work education programmes. The proposed changes are designed to create more efficient and predictable regulation while maintaining quality standards.

Why should I care about education fees if they don't affect me directly?

These fees fund the regulation that ensures social work programmes meet high standards and prepare graduates properly for professional practice. This protects the public, maintains confidence in our profession, and ensures new social workers entering the workforce are well-prepared and competent.

Will this improve the quality of social work education?

Yes. The new Education Standards and monitoring framework provide clearer expectations for social work programmes, more consistent quality across providers, and better preparation of graduates for professional practice. This strengthens public confidence in social workers and enhances the profession's standing.

How does this protect the public and strengthen the profession?

Regular monitoring and clear standards ensure that all social work graduates meet the same high standards regardless of where they studied. This means employers and the public can have confidence that all newly qualified social workers have the knowledge, skills, and attributes needed for safe, competent practice.

Will this affect how long it takes to get new social work programmes approved?

The new framework is designed to provide more predictable and efficient processes. Adequate funding through these fees ensures sustainable, timely processing of applications and assessments.

What if I have queries?

Email education@swrb.govt.nz with any questions.

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