PR_MGT_005 Refunds for domestic students in HELP /VET Student Loan-enabled courses

Scope

These procedures apply to domestic students enrolled in a Fee-HELP or VET Fee-HELP/VSL enabled course, including those choosing to pay their tuition fees upfront.

These procedures do not apply to:
- International students
- Domestic students enrolled in a fee-paying course that is not Fee-HELP or VET Fee-HELP/VSL enabled (Certificate III or Certificate IV).

Processes for accessing a refund

There are three ways for a domestic student enrolled in a Fee-HELP or VET Fee-HELP/VSL enabled course to access a refund of their tuition fees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avenue for refund</th>
<th>Automatic refund/re-credit?</th>
<th>Relevant process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. By withdrawing or deferring from subject enrolments prior to the relevant census date</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Students choosing to defer their tuition fees to Fee-HELP, VET Fee-HELP or VSL will automatically have their HELP/VSL debt adjusted when submitting an Application for Withdrawal or Application for Leave of Absence form, and do not need to fill in an Application for Refund form.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. By withdrawing from subject enrolments after the census date due to special circumstances</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Students affected by serious illness or special circumstances that affected their study after the census date may be eligible for a refund. Criteria are specified on the government’s Study Assist website, and students must complete an Application for Withdrawal and an Application for Refund form. If a student does not complete the Application for Refund form, the refund will be held as credit towards future enrolment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. By lodging a grievance</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Occasionally a student’s tuition fees will be refunded in part or in total as the resolution of a formal complaint or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Avenue for refund | Automatic refund/re-credit? | Relevant process
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under the Student Complaints Policy | grievance under the Student Complaints Policy. Students must complete a Formal Complaint form and provide relevant documentary evidence.

1. **Withdrawing or deferring from subject enrolments prior to the relevant census date**

Refunds prior to census date are automatic for students enrolled in a Fee-HELP or VET Fee-HELP/VSL enabled course, as long as students complete and submit their Application for Withdrawal or Application for Leave of Absence form, and lodge it with Student Services prior to the relevant Census Date.

- Students who defer their tuition fees through VET Fee-HELP/VSL or Fee-HELP only need to complete an Application for Withdrawal or Application for Leave of Absence form, and lodge it with Student Services prior to the relevant Census Date for their VET-Fee-HELP/VSL or Fee-HELP balance to be automatically adjusted.
- Students who pay some or all of their tuition fees up front and who have already paid for the subject will have to complete both an Application for Withdrawal or Application for Leave of Absence form and an Application for Refund in order to receive a refund of the amount paid.
  - If a student does not complete the Application for a Refund, the refund will be held on their account as credit towards a future enrolment.
  - Refunds will be repaid to the person who originally paid the fees, including employers or third parties.
  - Refunds will be made within 20 working days from the date of request or the date of clearance of the original payment, whichever is the later, provided all documentation has been received.
- Student Services will record the outcome of the application in the Student Records Management System.
- Late forms for pre-census withdrawal will not be accepted.

*When is census date?*

The census date will be listed for each of your study periods on the Student Portal.

*What is a Fee-HELP or VET Fee-HELP/VSL enabled course?*

Some Torrens University Australia courses can be funded using Fee-HELP or VET Fee-HELP/VSL, including:

- some VET Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas
- all HE Diplomas, Associate degrees, Bachelor degrees, Graduate Certificates, Graduate Diplomas and Master courses.

NOTE: Certificate III and Certificate IV courses are not Fee-HELP or VET Fee-HELP/VSL enabled (see Refunds for domestic students in non-HELP/VSL enabled courses).

*What's the difference between subject withdrawal and course deferral?*

An Application for Withdrawal can be used when a student intends to keep studying some subjects in the upcoming term, but wishes to change their subject choice by withdrawing from one or more subjects.

An Application for Leave of Absence form is used to request a period of leave form the course, with up to 12 months off prior to recommencing the course at a later date.

2. **Withdrawing from subject enrolments after the census date with evidence of special circumstances**

A student seeking a refund under special circumstances must complete an Application for Special Circumstances Refund form and return it, including supporting documents, to Student Services. The application must be submitted within 12 months of their withdrawal from the subject or, if the student continues to attend the course.
did not withdraw from the course, within 12 months from the end of the study period during which the subject(s) were undertaken. By filling out this form a student is declaring that serious illness or special circumstances affected their study after the census date. If proven, they will be eligible for a refund of tuition fees paid or a remission of the Fee-HELP or VET Fee-HELP/VSL debt incurred for the subjects affected by the circumstances.

To access a refund, a student needs to demonstrate that the circumstances were:

- beyond their control, and
- did not make their full impact until on or after the relevant census date, and
- were such that they made it impracticable for the student to complete the requirements for the subject

The Head of Student Financial Services (or delegate) will review special circumstances application and determine whether or not the circumstances meet the criteria for a refund, and whether sufficient documentation has been provided to evidence the circumstances.

Students will be notified in writing of the outcome of their request within 10 working days of receipt of the application.

- If the special circumstances application is approved, tuition fees will be refunded or FEE-HELP/VSL debt will be re-credited.
  - Refunds of any upfront fees will be repaid to the person who originally paid the fees, including employers or third parties. Refunds will be made within 20 working days from the date student was notified of approval in writing or the date of clearance of the original payment, whichever is the later.
  - Re-crediting of a HELP/VSL balance will be processed within 10 working days, but may take up to 12 months or longer to show on a HELP/VSL statement as it will be processed by the Department of Education and then the Australian Taxation Office.
  - If the special circumstances application is rejected then the student will have an option to appeal the decision within 20 working days of receiving the notification, under the Student Complaints Policy.

- Student Services will record the outcome of the application in the Student Records Management System.
- The Financial Controller (or delegate) will follow up unclaimed refunds within four weeks.

**What is a serious illness?**
A serious illness is an unexpected illness of a serious nature, a recurrence of a chronic illness or an accident with a serious impact on a student’s health.

- Illnesses, disabilities or medical conditions that existed prior to the census date will not qualify as grounds for a refund unless the condition or disability has been compounded by an unexpected change, or an additional condition

**What supporting documentation is needed for a serious illness?**
Supporting documentation must be an original letter or report on letterhead that:

- is from a registered treating medical practitioner, registered health practitioner or approved specialist (depending on the nature of the condition); and
- specifies that the illness is serious; and
- specifies the date that the illness took effect
What are special circumstances?
Special circumstances include compassionate circumstances such as hardship or trauma including the death or serious illness of a close family member, severe disruption to domestic arrangements, being a victim of crime or an accident.

What supporting documentation is needed for special circumstances?
Supporting documentation must be an original letter or report on letterhead that is from:
- a University counsellor who has prior knowledge of the student’s circumstances; or
- a registered treating medical practitioner, registered health practitioner or approved specialist (depending on the nature of the condition); or
- a person qualified to assess and support the application (e.g. clergy providing grief counselling); or
- a funeral director (or death notice)

Supporting documentation will not be accepted from a student’s relatives or personal friends, or friends of the family.

What does not qualify as special circumstances?
Special circumstances such as religious observance or obligations, formal legal commitments, military service, service with a recognised emergency management service, representing your state or home nation at a significant sporting or cultural event or unforeseen and significant employment-related circumstances such as a move interstate at short notice will usually be managed through assessment modification rather than as special circumstances application for refund.

What does not qualify as a serious illness?
Pregnancy will not qualify as a serious illness unless accompanied by confirmation from a registered treating medical practitioner that indicates that additional pregnancy-related or unrelated conditions were present that were considered serious in nature.

Can the 12-month deadline be waived?
The deadline may be waived if the student submits documentary evidence of the special circumstances that prevented them from applying within the 12-month period.

3. Refunds following a complaint under the Student Complaints Policy
Occasionally a student’s tuition fees will be refunded in part or in total as the resolution of a formal complaint under the Student Complaints Policy. Students must complete a Formal Complaint form and provide relevant documentary evidence.
- If a student is awarded a refund as part of the resolution of a complaint or appeal:
  - Refunds of any upfront fees will be paid to the person who originally paid the fees, including employers or third parties. Refunds will be made within 20 working days from the date of the finding in their favour.
  - Re-crediting of a HELP/VSL balance will be processed at the University within 20 working days, but may take up to 12 months or longer to show on a HELP/VSL statement as it will be processed by the Department of Education and then the Australian Taxation Office.
- Student Services will record the outcome of the application in the Student Records Management System.
Summary of Refund Rules for domestic students in HELP/VSL-enabled courses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refund Table</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student submits an Application for Withdrawal or Application for Leave of Absence form on or before the study period’s census date.</td>
<td>Full refund of tuition fees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student submits an Application for Withdrawal or Application for Leave of Absence form after the study period’s census date.</td>
<td>No refund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic student submits an Application for Withdrawal and Application for Special Circumstances Refund form after census date due to special circumstances.</td>
<td>A refund may be granted if the student meets the published Special Circumstances criteria (Student Fees Policy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other circumstances</td>
<td>No refund</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Additional information for domestic VET students accessing VET Student Loan

The Secretary of the Department of Education and Training may re-credit a student’s VSL balance on the following grounds:

- if the University engaged in unacceptable conduct (as defined under section 148 of the VSL Rules 2016) in relation to the student’s application for the VSL
- if the Secretary is satisfied that:
  - the student is not an eligible student
  - the student is not a genuine student
  - the student does not have a tax file number
  - the student does not have a student identifier
- if the University failed to comply with the VSL Act and as a result, the student has been adversely affected.

Applications for re-credit on the basis of the above could be made within five years after the census day for the course, or the relevant part of the course, or within that period as extended by the Secretary.

Requests for re-crediting VSL balance is free except where the student lodges the request with the Administrative Appeals Tribunal.

Review (Appeals)

Students who wish to appeal a decision on their Special Circumstances application or formal complaint (in relation to a refund request) may do so under the Student Complaints Policy. The following documents provide information on the process for lodging appeals:

- Internal Review (Appeals) Procedure
- External Review Procedure