

Domestic Student Withdrawal & Refund Fees Policy and Procedure



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1 PRELIMINARIES

Commencement

This policy and procedure commence on 20 January 2025.

Purpose

This policy and procedure outline how the Polytechnic Institute Australia (“PIA”) will provide refunds to **domestic students** in accordance with the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*.

Application

This policy and procedures apply to new and continuing *domestic students* who are enrolled in a higher education course of study at PIA and the staff who assess and process fee refund requests.

2 DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply in this document:

Census Date: The final day for withdrawal from a course or unit of study without incurring an academic penalty and/or a financial liability.

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Domestic Student: A student who is not an overseas student as defined by the National Code

FEE-HELP Student: Domestic students who are receiving a FEE-HELP loan.

3 POLICY

3.1 Domestic students who wish to withdraw from a Course must do so by completing a Course Withdrawal Form available on the PIA website

3.1.1 Where a student gives notice that they wish to withdraw from a Course or cancel their request for Commonwealth assistance, PIA will ensure that the withdrawal or cancellation is effective from the time of notification.

3.1.2 PIA will not charge any fees for a student to withdraw or impose any barriers on a student who seeks to withdraw from a Course.

3.2 Domestic students who wish to withdraw from a Unit must do so by completing a Unit Withdrawal Form available on the PIA website

3.2.1 Where a student gives notice that they wish to withdraw from a unit or cancel their request for Commonwealth assistance, PIA will ensure that the withdrawal or cancellation is effective from the time of notification.

3.2.2 PIA will not charge any fees for a student to withdraw or impose any barriers on a student who seeks to withdraw from a unit.

3.3 FEE-HELP students will be repaid any tuition fees paid upfront if the student withdraws on or before the census date.

3.4 FEE-HELP students will not incur a FEE-HELP debt if the student withdraws on or before the census date.

3.5 Students who withdraw after the census date and wish a refund or recrediting of a HELP loan will need to request this in writing.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Domestic Students

Domestic students are responsible for the following:

- Withdraw from a course using the appropriate form.
- Withdraw from a unit using the appropriate form.
- Request a refund or recrediting of a HELP loan using the appropriate form if they withdraw from a course or unit after census data and wish a refund or recrediting of the HELP loan.

4.2 The Registrar

The Registrar is responsible to:

- Ensure no FEE-HELP debts are incurred by students for withdrawals on or before the Census Date.

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- Tuition Fees paid upfront are refunded if a student withdraws on or before the Census Date.
- Determining if a HELP debt should be recredited.

4.3 The CEO

The CEO is responsible for acting as a review officer to review decisions made.

5 PROCEDURES

5.1 Withdrawal from a Unit

5.1.1 A FEE-HELP student who withdraws from a unit on or before the census date does not have to request a refund. The action of withdrawal is sufficient. In the event of a student withdrawing from a unit on or before the Census Date for that unit:

- **100% of tuition fees** paid for that unit will be refunded to the student, or if applicable,
- the student will not incur a FEE-HELP debt.

5.1.2 Refunds of upfront tuition fees when withdrawing from a unit on or before the Census Date will be processed **within 21 days** of the Census Date for the Unit to which the withdrawal applies.

5.1.3 Unless special circumstances apply, in the event of a student withdrawing from a Unit of Study after the Census Date for that Unit of Study:

- no refund is applicable, and/or
- the student will incur a FEE-HELP debt.

5.2 Special Circumstances

5.2.1 PIA will only consider applications for tuition fee refunds after the relevant Census Date where there are special circumstances that make it impracticable for the person to complete the requirements for the unit of study, such as:

- Medical circumstances
- Family circumstances
- Personal circumstances
- Employment-related circumstances
- Course-related circumstances

5.2.2 Special circumstances must:

- a) Be beyond a person's control; and
- b) Not make their full impact known until after the Census Date for the unit of study in question; and
- c) Make it impracticable for a student to complete the requirements for the unit of study.

5.2.3 For circumstances to be considered beyond a person's control, the situation should be one that a reasonable person would consider is not due to the person's action or inaction,

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either direct or indirect, and for which the person is not responsible. The situation must be unusual, uncommon, or abnormal to be considered special circumstances. PIA must be satisfied that a person's circumstances did not make their full impact on the person until after the Census Date for a unit of study if the person's circumstances occur:

- a) Before the Census Date but worsened after that day; or
- b) Before the Census Date, but the effect or magnitude does not become apparent until after that day; or
- c) After the Census Date

For further information, see <https://www.studyassist.gov.au/paying-back-your-loan/cancel-your-help-debt-under-special-circumstances>).

5.2.4 Students may make an application to have their FEE-HELP balance re-credited within 12 months of the withdrawal date for a unit or, if the student has not withdrawn, within 12 months of the end of the period in which the unit was to be undertaken. The 12-month period may be extended on the grounds that it was not possible to apply within the 12 months period.

5.2.5 Application to re-credit the FEE-HELP amount under special circumstances will be considered within 14 days of receiving the application with valid supporting documents. The student will be notified in writing within 14 days of the decision.

5.2.6 If a student is dissatisfied with the initial decision, the student may request a review in writing **within 28 days** of the receipt of the initial decision. The CEO (as delegated FEE-HELP review officer) will review the written request **within 14 days** and notify the student in writing the review outcome setting out the reasons for the decision. The student will also be informed of his or her right to apply to the Administrative Review Tribunal (ART) if the student remains dissatisfied with the subsequent review decision. For further information, students should refer to the Student Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure.

The ART website <https://www.art.gov.au/> states the contact details for, and approximate costs of lodging, an appeal with the ART.

5.2.7 If PIA is satisfied that special circumstances do apply

5.2.7.1 A FEE-HELP student's FEE-HELP balance would be re-credited. Where a FEE-HELP student's FEE-HELP balance is re-credited for a unit, the debt the student incurred for that unit is remitted.

5.2.7.1 An upfront student's upfront tuition would be refunded.

5.3 Processing Refunds

5.3.1 For upfront students granted a refund of Upfront Fees, the refund is made by the same method in which the Upfront Fee was originally paid. Where the original payment was made by credit card, the refund must be re-credited to the same credit card. Alternatively, it can be paid by EFT but in accordance with banking regulations, it cannot be paid to a different credit card. Refunds will not be paid in cash.

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- 5.3.2 For FEE-HELP students granted a re-credit of FEE-HELP, the refund is re-credited to their FEE-HELP balance to remove or reduce the FEE-HELP debt. PIA makes payment to the Commonwealth Government in the amount equal to the FEE-HELP paid to PIA on behalf of the student at the time of enrolment for the unit(s) of study approved for refund. PIA notifies the Department of Education of the variation. The Department of Education notifies the Australian Taxation Office that the debt has been removed or reduced.
- 5.3.3 For FEE-HELP students granted a recredit of FEE-HELP where tuition fees were partially paid as upfront fees and the balance via a FEE-HELP loan, the upfront fee component is refunded, and the FEE-HELP loan amount is re-credited to their FEE-HELP balance to remove or reduce the FEE-HELP debt.
- 5.4 Leave of Absence or Withdrawal
- 5.4.1 Students who want to take a leave of absence or withdraw their enrolment must do so on or before the relevant Census Date to be eligible for a refund. For more information on how to withdraw or take a leave of absence, please refer to the Student Deferment, Suspension and Cancellation of Study Policy and Procedure.
- 5.5 Other Circumstances
- 5.5.1 No refund is given if a student has their enrolment cancelled by PIA as a result of academic or non-academic misconduct.
- 5.6 Non-Refundable Fees
- 5.6.1 Non-tuition or incidental fees as per the letter of offer are non-refundable (where applicable).
- 5.7 Course Default
- 5.7.1 Tuition Protection is in place to support FEE-HELP students in the event PIA stops delivering the student's course or closes entirely. For upfront students, tuition fees are incurred in arrears, at the end of the unit of study. In the event PIA stops delivering the student's course or closes entirely during the study period, no fees are payable. More information can be found at <https://www.employment.gov.au/tuition-protection-and-provider-default>.
- 5.8 Australian Consumer Law applies.
- 5.8.1 This policy and the availability of PIA's complaints and appeals processes do not remove the right of the student to take action under Australia's consumer protection laws.
- 5.9 Administration
- 5.9.1 Records of refunds and withdrawals will be kept on student files.

6 RELATED LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

Institute Documents

- Student Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure

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- Student Deferment, Suspension and Cancellation of Study Policy and Procedure

Applicable External Standards and Codes

This policy and procedures support compliance with the following

Standards/Code	Standards/Clauses
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021	1.1 7.2
Higher Education Support Act 2003 (Commonwealth)	Subdivision 104-B Part 5-1A Division 1

7 FEEDBACK

PIA staff and students may provide feedback about this document by emailing policy@pia.edu.au for such feedback to be incorporated into a future review.

8 POLICY MANAGEMENT

Approval and Review	Details
Approval Authority / Owner (Role)	CEO
Administrator / Responsible for Implementing	Registrar
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Document History

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