

WITHDRAWING FROM STUDY (VET FEE-HELP) POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1 Statement

As a Registered Training Organisation approved as a provider of VET FEE-HELP, Study Group Australia Pty Limited is required to publish withdrawal procedures on its websites.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to ensure Study Group Australia Pty Limited (Registered Training Organisation: 5806, trading as Martin College, the Australian Institute of Applied Sciences, and ACPE Academy), and its Licensed Partner Organisations (all of the above from here on collectively referred to as 'the College'), communicates to Students the administrative processes in place which allow Students to withdraw from a VET Unit of Study.

3 Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all eligible Students enrolled within vocational education and training programmes which are offered by the College and are approved for VET FEE-HELP.

4 Background and Need

The VET FEE-HELP loan scheme provides eligible VET students with loans to cover the cost of their higher level VET qualifications. During 2015, the Australian Government has implemented a series of VET FEE-HELP Reforms to strengthen the scheme's design, to ensure it protects vulnerable students, taxpayers and the reputation of Australia's high quality VET system. This policy and procedure are components of that Reform.

5 Definitions

Census Date – the closing date for Students to apply for a VET FEE-HELP loan, pay for tuition fees or formally withdraw their enrolment in order to not incur a debt for that VET Unit of Study. This date is clearly shown within each Schedule of Fees published on the College's websites.

Licensed Partner Organisation - any organisation that provides services on behalf of Study Group Australia Pty Limited, including training, assessment, related educational and support services, and/or any activities related to the recruitment of prospective Students. As the Registered Training Organisation (RTO), Study Group Australia Pty Limited is responsible for ensuring all such services provided are in accordance with statutory obligations.

Official Withdrawal - where a Student completes the *Request to Withdraw* and submits it to the College.

Special Circumstances - one or more circumstances that are unusual, uncommon or abnormal and which have impacted on a Student's ability to complete a VET Unit of Study. (Refer Appendix 1)

Student/s – eligible local student/s enrolled in vocational education and training course/s that are offered by the College and are approved for VET FEE-HELP.

Training Team Leader – the staff member who is responsible for managing the provision of the training and assessment services throughout the Student's enrolment, and/or is the main contact for administrative and support purposes. Depending on the division of the College, this role is also known as the *Student Progress Advisor, National Discipline Leader, Program Manager, Academic Team Leader* or *Director of Studies*.

VET Course – a vocational education and training course that is offered by the College and is approved for VET FEE-HELP.

VET Unit of Study - a component of a VET Course to which fees and a Census Date are applied.

VET FEE-HELP Liability - occurs on a VET Unit of Study basis. Under *the Higher Education Support Act 2003* (HESA), Students do not incur a liability for the tuition fees for a VET Unit of Study until after the published Census Date. This applies to all Students who are or would be entitled to VET FEE-HELP assistance.

6 Withdrawal Policy

It is important that the Student correctly withdraws from the VET Unit of Study or VET Course. If they do not submit the completed *Request to Withdraw* before close of business on the relevant Census Date, they will incur a HELP debt, unless Special Circumstances apply.

No withdrawal fee will apply.

The College will not enrol that Student into subsequent VET Unit/s of Study without written instructions from the Student.

6.1 Official Withdrawal Prior to the End of the Census Date

A Student who enrolls in a VET Unit of Study, but Officially Withdraws on or before its Census Date, is not liable for the tuition fee for that unit. If, on or before the Census Date, the Student submits a completed *Request to Withdraw* to the College, advising that he or she wishes to:

- a) withdraw from a VET Unit of Study; and/or
- b) cancel his or her enrolment in that Unit of Study; and/or
- c) cancel his or her enrolment in the VET Course, and/or
- d) cancel his or her previous request for Commonwealth assistance,

the College will ensure that the Student is not enrolled in that VET Unit of Study or VET Course from the time of the receipt of that written notification.

Where an eligible Student has requested a VET FEE-HELP loan for all or part of those tuition fees, the Student's FEE-HELP balance will be re-credited by that amount without the Student being required to apply for that repayment to occur.

If the Student has chosen to pay part or all of the tuition fees upfront, the College will repay to the Student any VET tuition fees for that VET Unit of Study that were paid on or before that Census Date. The Student will not be required to apply for that repayment to occur.

The Student's records within the College database/s will be adjusted to reflect the withdrawal.

6.2 Withdrawal after the Census Date

If once the Census Date has passed, the Student is still enrolled in the VET Unit of Study, the Student becomes liable for the debt for that VET Unit of Study. This applies to all Students, irrespective of whether they have chosen to pay all or part of the tuition fees of the VET Unit of Study upfront, or to access the VET FEE-HELP deferred payment loan option.

However, for withdrawals after the Census Date, a Student may apply to have their FEE-HELP balance re-credited if they have been unable to complete the requirements of a VET Unit of Study and the Student believes that this was due to Special Circumstances. (Refer Appendix 1 for further information.)

If after due consideration of the supporting evidence provided, the College decides that Special Circumstances do apply, the Student is not required to apply for the repayment. Where the Student has requested a VET FEE-HELP loan for all or part of those tuition fees, the Student's FEE-HELP balance will be re-credited by that amount.

If the Student has chosen to pay part or all of the tuition fees upfront, the College will repay to the Student any of the VET tuition fees for that VET Unit of Study that were paid on or before that Census Date.

The Student will not be required to apply for that repayment to occur. The College will make every effort to provide the full refund within 28 days of the receipt of the completed *Request to Withdraw*.

If the Student is dissatisfied with the College's decision in relation to that claim of Special Circumstances, an appeal may be lodged in accordance with the *SGA Student Non-Academic Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure*, published on the College's websites.

The Student's records within the College database/s will be adjusted to reflect the withdrawal.

7 Withdrawal Procedure

- a) The Student speaks with the Training Team Leader and informally requests to withdraw from a VET Unit of Study or VET Course of study.
- b) The Training Team Leader discusses the request with the Student, and advises that Students who wish to withdraw from a VET Unit of Study or VET Course must do so in writing, using the *Request to Withdraw*.

If relevant, information on what constitutes Special Circumstances is provided to the Student (refer Appendix 1). The Student must submit the application within 12 months of the Official Withdrawal. If the Student has not Officially Withdrawn their enrolment, the 'withdrawal day' is taken to be the last day of the period in which the Student was to undertake the unit.

If the Student chooses to proceed, the Training Team Leader commences the formal process.

- c) The Student is required to complete the form in its entirety, including adding the digital signature before electronically submitting the form to the provided email address. Incomplete forms will not be processed, but will be expeditiously followed-up with the Student to ensure finalisation of the Student's intention to withdraw.

The date of receipt by the College of the completed *Request to Withdraw* will be the date of notification.

- d) The Training Team Leader will provide written notification to the Student, confirming the receipt of the completed *Request to Withdraw*. This is by way of returning a digitally signed copy of the submitted Form, stating the date at which the withdrawal has taken effect and advising the Student accordingly.

7.1.1 Special Circumstances

Where the Student has claimed Special Circumstances within the *Request to Withdraw*, supporting documentation must be provided for the consideration of the College in accordance with the criteria identified in Appendix 1.

Within 28 days, the Student will be advised in writing of the College's decision in relation to that claim.

If the Student is dissatisfied with the College's decision in relation to that claim of Special Circumstances, an appeal may be lodged in accordance with the *SGA Student Non-Academic Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure*, published on the College's websites.

8 Document Approval and Review

Withdrawing from Study (VET FEE-HELP) Policy and Procedure	
Document Code	SGA-VET-591/09/15
Policy Owner	Operations Director Australasia
Version Number	1.0
Information Officer	Karen Streeter
Interim Approval Authority	Compliance Manager Australasia
Interim Approval Date	23/09/2015
Next Review Date	1/12/2015

APPENDIX 1: SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

(Excerpt taken from *CSP and HELP Handbook 2015*)

How can a student apply to have their HELP debt removed under 'special circumstances'?

To remove a HELP debt (and re-credit FEE-HELP balance if applicable) or refund an upfront payments (only for students enrolled in Commonwealth supported places), a student must apply to their institution/provider under the 'special circumstances' provisions. The student must state what the 'special circumstances' were and why those particular circumstances prevented the student from successfully completing their unit(s) of study.

The student's institution/provider must be satisfied that special circumstances applied to that student and that the circumstances:

- were beyond the student's control; and
- did not make their full impact on the student until on or after the census date; and
- were such that it made it impracticable for the student to complete their unit(s) of study requirements.

The student's institution/provider will assess the student's application in accordance with the requirements of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* and its associated guidelines. It will be expected that the student is able to supply their institution/provider with independent, supporting documentation that supports the student's claim.

There are no provisions under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* for a student to have their debt removed if they have already successfully completed their unit of study. If a student withdraws from a unit after the census date because they changed their mind about studying, the student is still required to repay their HELP debt for that unit(s).

Note: Special circumstances are not applicable to SA-HELP and OS-HELP debts.

Application process

A student must apply directly to their institution/provider within the requisite timeframe (refer to Application time limit below) and indicate the unit(s) relevant to their application. A student's application must detail what the special circumstances were, and how/why the student believes those circumstances made it impracticable for them to complete those units. A student must contact their institution/provider for more information regarding submitting an application under these circumstances.

Application time limit

The application must be submitted to the student's institution/provider within 12 months of their withdrawal day. The 'withdrawal day' is taken to be the day the student's institution/provider has specified in its notice to students as the day the student's withdrawal takes effect, or if the student has not officially withdrawn their enrolment, the student's 'withdrawal day' is taken to be the last day of the period in which the student was to undertake the unit. Under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*, institutions/providers also have the discretion to extend this time limit if the institution/provider is satisfied that it was not possible for the student to submit an application within the 12 months.

Internal and external appeals

If a student is unhappy with their institution/provider's decision, the student must apply to their institution/provider within 28 days (or the period allowed by the institution/provider) requesting a review of that decision.

Following the internal review, if the student is still unhappy with their institution/provider's decision, the student has 28 days from the date of that reviewed decision (by their institution/provider), to apply to the AAT requesting an independent review of their institution/provider's decision. More information regarding this process is available from the [Administrative Appeals Tribunal website](http://www.aat.gov.au) (<http://www.aat.gov.au>).