Subject: Student Withdrawals and Refunds

Policy & Procedure

Purpose

This policy and procedure sets out the circumstances under which students withdrawing (i.e. cancelling) from a course may claim for a full or part refund of any fees or charges incurred.

It is divided into the terms and conditions of refunds for both VET Student Loan (VSL) cancellations and non-VSL withdrawals.

VFA Learning Campus Academy Managers:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Location</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Email</th>
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<tbody>
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Policy

VFA Learning maintains a fair and reasonable refund policy to ensure that refunds are made available to clients entitled to receive them. It is the policy of VFA Learning that all applicable refunds for tuition fees are paid to students who pay tuition fees directly to VFA Learning and who cancel their enrolment, withdraw from any VFA Learning program or unit or defer or take Leave of Absence.

VFA Learning does not put in place financial nor administrative barriers for any student wishing to withdraw, regardless of the student’s funding or loan support arrangement.

In instances where VFA Learning ceases to offer a course, it will ensure that the impacted students will receive credit transfer in a replacement course through issuing Statements of Attainment for part of the course successfully completed.

Should a withdrawn student elect to re-enrol in their previous course or an alternative course at VFA Learning, VFA Learning will only accept the student’s application with clear written permission by the student and/or parent/guardian in the event of an under 18 years of age student.

Students are advised about their rights to withdraw and any refund arrangement through both the Student Handbook and on the website, through publishing of this Policy & Procedure

1. NON-VSL Approved Courses

Procedure

1. Applications for Cancellation must be made in writing to the relevant VFA Learning’s campus Academy Managers
2. All enrolments have a 7-day cooling off period (7 days from date of enrolment)
3. Cancelling outside of the 7-day cooling off period but prior to commencement date of course will result in a cancellation fee of $200 (or full course fee if enrolment fee is less than $200)
4. Cancelling within the first 14 calendar days of the course commencing will result in a cancellation fee of $200 (or full course fee if enrolment fee is less than $200).
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5. Books and other learning materials must be returned (in original condition) or student will incur full costs with no refund applicable
6. Any student cancelling outside of the first 14 calendar days of course commencement will result in the student being held liable for the entire course fee
7. Course fees are not transferrable to any other individual
8. All course fees will be refunded if VFA Learning cancels or postpones course commencement by more than four weeks, unless alternative arrangements can be made which are acceptable to the student. Such arrangements may include transfer of enrolment to an alternative course.
9. In the unlikely event of VFA Learning ceasing operations, students will be issued with a Statement of Attainment for all successfully completed units, and will receive a full refund of any incomplete units.

2. VET Student Loan Program

2.1 VFA Learning students who are enrolled into VSL approved qualifications (Diploma and above), who wish to withdraw from a VET Course of Study or VET Unit of Study must provide in writing their request to withdraw to the campus Academy Manager.

Procedure

2.2 If a student requests to be withdrawn from a VET Course of Study or VET Unit of Study on or before the VSL census date:
   • The student will not incur a VSL debt;
   • Any tuition fees paid up-front will be refunded; and
   • VFA Learning will NOT charge a withdrawal fee.
2.3 If a student requests to be withdrawn from a VET Course of Study or VET Unit of Study after the census date:
   • The student will incur a VSL debt for that VET Unit of Study; and
   • No refund is applicable to any fees paid up-front.
2.4 If VFA Learning cancels a student’s enrolment, it will:
   • Inform the student concerned of a proposed cancellation;
   • Provide the student with at least 28 days to initiate grievance procedures before the cancellation takes final effect;
   • Provide for the cancellation to take effect only after the grievance procedures initiated by the student have been completed;
   • Set out the circumstances in which fees for the course, or the part of the course concerned will, or will not be refunded.
2.5 If a student elects to enrol in a part of an approved course where the student had earlier withdrawn from a part of the course, the student must request to re-enrol in writing to VFA Learning’s Academy Managers.

3. Special Circumstances

3.1 VFA Learning will only consider applications for remitting a VSL debt after the census date where there are special circumstances. To assist students with making their application the following definitions and guidelines are to be applied in determining special circumstances:
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3.2 Special circumstances which would make it impracticable for the person to complete the requirements for the unit of study may include:
- medical circumstances;
- family circumstances;
- personal circumstances;
- employment related circumstances;
- course related circumstances.

3.3 Special circumstances need to be:
- beyond a person’s control; AND
- do not make their full impact until on or after the census date for the unit of study in question; AND
- make it impracticable for a person to complete the requirements for the unit of study.

3.4 For circumstances to be beyond a person’s control, the situation should be that which a reasonable person would consider is not due to the person’s action or inaction, either direct or indirect, and for which the person is not responsible.

3.5 VFA Learning needs to be satisfied that a person’s circumstances did not make their full impact on the person until on or after the census date for a unit of study if the person’s circumstances occur:
- before the census date but worsen after that day; or
- before the census date, but the full effect of magnitude does not become apparent until on or after that day; or
- on or after the census date.

3.6 The situation must be unusual, uncommon or abnormal to be considered special circumstances.

4. Remittance of a VSL Debt

4.1 In requesting a remittance of the VSL debt, a student must provide relevant and appropriate evidence that they are unable to continue their study in the unit due to special circumstances. Students can obtain further information about special circumstances from the VSL Officer. The Manager, Contracts and Compliance will act as the VSL Officer in all cases.

4.2 A student must apply in writing for withdrawal and remittance of their VSL debt within 12 months of the specified completion date of the unit or units of study.

4.3 Once a request to remit a person’s VSL debt is approved, a student’s VSL debt is removed for the relevant unit/s studied.

4.4 VFA Learning will refund to the Commonwealth the amount of VSL paid to the College on behalf of the student, if the student’s request is successful.

4.5 VFA Learning will notify the Australian Government Department of Education of variation if the student’s request is successful.

4.6 VFA Learning has the discretion to disallow an application for withdrawing from a unit or units of study after the Census Date if it considers the student’s request is not based on special circumstances. If it believes there is not sufficient and relevant evidence or if it believes the student’s request does not fall within the relevant timeframes for the application and processing of requests for remittance of VSL debt.

4.7 VFA Learning’s VSL Officer will consider the student’s application as soon as practicable. Applications will be considered within 15 working days. Applicants will be notified of the decision in writing, within a further 15 working days.
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5. Review of Decision

Where VFA Learning makes a decision NOT to re-credit a student’s FEE-HELP balance, that decision may be subject to review.

5.1 If a Student is not satisfied with the decision made by VFA Learning, the Student may apply, within 28 days of the receipt of the original decision, for a review of the decision. The application for review must:
   • be made within 28 days of receipt of the original decision
   • include the date of the original decision
   • state fully the reasons for applying for the review
   • include any additional relevant evidence

5.2 Applications should be made in writing to the Director, Corporate Operations (VFA Learning, 78 Yarra Street, Geelong, VIC, 3220) as the designated Review Officer of any decisions relating to a request for re-crediting of a VSL balance.

   Note: The Review Officer is senior to the designated VSL officer responsible for the original decision and was not involved in making the original decision to be reviewed.

5.3 The Review Officer will:
   • acknowledge receipt of the application for review of a decision in writing within 10 working days; and
   • inform the Student that if the Review Officer has not advised them of a decision within 45 days of receipt of the application for review, it is taken that the Review Officer has confirmed the original decision.

5.4 The Review Officer will then:
   • review the information from the original decision and then assess any new evidence provided by the Student
   • provide written notice to the Student of the decision, setting out the reasons for the decision
   • inform the Student of their right to apply to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal if they disagree with the Review Decision, and timelines involved (see below).

6. Reconsideration by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal

At the time of the original decision, and at the time of the subsequent Review Decision, the student will be notified of their review rights and responsibilities. The VSL officer will inform a student in writing of their right to appeal to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) if they are not satisfied with the outcome and the contact details of the closest AAT office and the approximate costs of lodging an appeal. The Application must be lodged at the AAT within 28 days of receiving written notice of the Review Decision. This time limitation can be extended in limited circumstances by order of the AAT.

AAT Details and Approximate Costs

AAT Registry, GPO Box 9955, MELBOURNE VIC  3000
Telephone: 1300 366700

Full details of the application process and fees payable are available on the AAT Registry’s website: www.aat.gov.au. An application fee may have to be paid in the amount of $816 and is subject to change. Applications cannot proceed until the fee has been paid or waived. Applications for fee waiver must be made to the AAT directly. Students are informed of the AAT website and payment arrangements as part of the written notification of the student’s right for an external review and through publishing of this Policy & Procedure on VFA Learning’s website.
Upon receipt of notification from the Commonwealth Department of Education & Training (DET) of a lodged AAT appeal, VFA Learning commits to the provision of copies of all the documents that are relevant to the appeal within ten (10) business days.

Related Documents
POLICY AND PROCEDURE Grievances, Complaints & Appeals
POLICY AND PROCEDURE Fair Treatment & Equal Benefits and Opportunities
POLICY AND PROCEDURE Fees & Charges
POLICY AND PROCEDURE Recognition of AQF Qualifications

Responsible Officer
The responsible officer for the implementation and training for this Policy and Procedure is the Director.

Publishing details

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<tr>
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<td>Manager, Contracts and Compliance</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Cultivating Pathways</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Refund of Fees and Re-Crediting</td>
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