

Student Fees Procedure - Remission of Debt or Fee Liability

Section 1 - Key Information

Policy Type and Approval Body	Administrative - Vice-Chancellor
Accountable Executive - Policy	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Responsible Manager - Policy	Director, Student Administration
Review Date	8 July 2028

Section 2 - Purpose

(1) This Procedure outlines processes for the remission of HECS-HELP and FEE-HELP debt, and for the remission of fee liability in accordance with Commonwealth legislation, including the [Higher Education Support Act 2003](#), the [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000](#) and the [National Code 2018](#).

Section 3 - Scope

(2) This Procedure applies to:

- a. tuition fees for:
 - i. all University award courses, including subjects from award courses studied as Single or cross-institutional subjects where fees are charged and collected by the University;
 - ii. enabling courses and microcredentials;
- b. all current, former and prospective students, including those enrolled in La Trobe award courses through a third-party provider, unless specifically exempted (see below), who meet the eligibility criteria outlined in this Procedure.

(3) This Procedure does not apply to:

- a. short courses that are not microcredentials (see Short Courses Policy);
- b. students enrolled in subjects or courses delivered in partnership with other education providers where fees are collected by the partner. The policies of the partner institution apply to that enrolment.
- c. fees that are not tuition fees.

Section 4 - Key Decisions

Key Decisions	Role
Approve or deny remission applications	Director, Student Administration

Section 5 - Policy Statement

(4) This Procedure forms part of the [Student Fees Policy](#) which governs its application.

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Eligibility

(5) In accordance with the [Higher Education Support Act 2003](#), and the [Guide to Special Circumstances Decision-Making](#), students are entitled to remission of debt or fee liability where the University is satisfied that:

- a. all threshold criteria are met; and
- b. it is determined that demonstrable and verifiable Special Circumstances exist.

(6) A student cannot apply for remission if the relevant subject has been successfully completed, and they have achieved a passing grade and obtained credit points.

(7) The Student Services and Amenities Fee cannot be remitted under any circumstances.

Threshold Criteria

(8) To meet initial Threshold Criteria, students must have:

- a. been enrolled in the subject with La Trobe University;
- b. withdrawn from the subject after the Census Date and before completing the requirements of the subject;
- c. recorded a fail or Withdrawn Late (after Census [KN]) grade;
- d. made their application before the end of the application period (see Timing of Applications below).

(9) The nominated University Officer (the Nominated Officer) will determine whether an application meets the Threshold Criteria and where these are met, further assess the application to determine if Special Circumstances exist.

Special Circumstances

(10) The criteria for determining if Special Circumstances exist for remission of debt or fee liability are specified by the Commonwealth Government.

(11) In accordance with Administration Guidelines, the Nominated Officer must be satisfied that all of the following criteria listed below apply to the student:

- a. a change in personal circumstances occurred that was beyond the student's control, unusual, uncommon, or abnormal;
- b. the change in personal circumstances:
 - i. did not make the full impact on the student's capacity to continue study, until on, or after the Census Date for each subject;
 - ii. made it impracticable (defined as not possible), for the student to complete subject requirements in the teaching period in which it was scheduled to be, or have been, attempted.

(12) Special Circumstances are not deemed to exist where the basis of the circumstance is:

- a. lack of knowledge or understanding of university requirements, policies, visa conditions or relevant

Commonwealth legislation;

- b. a student's incapacity to pay tuition fees or repay an income-contingent HELP loan debt.

Part B - Applications for Remission

(13) Students in receipt of Fee-HELP through Open Universities Australia (OUA) whether for enrolment in a course or Single Subject, must apply through OUA for a remission of fee liability.

(14) All other students must use the Application for Remission of Debt or Fee Liability Form (available from the [Student Forms webpage](#)) and include:

- a. a clear and detailed Statement of Personal Circumstances (see Part A);
- b. documentary evidence from a professional or authority, that independently verifies the details of a change in personal circumstance, and clearly:
 - i. identifies the change in personal circumstance;
 - ii. dates the occurrence of the change in personal circumstance;
 - iii. dates the duration of fullest impact of the change in personal circumstance, and;
 - iv. provides a professional or clinical assessment of the level of impact of the change in personal circumstance on the student's capacity to complete the subject or withdraw by the Census Date.
- c. additional supporting documentary evidence should be relevant to one or more of the following categories:
 - i. medical;
 - ii. family or personal;
 - iii. employment-related;
 - iv. course-related.

(15) Provision of a statutory declaration or a medical certificate is not sufficient. At a minimum, a detailed letter from a medical professional must include:

- a. date of the consultation, and whether a diagnosis is based on an examination by the practitioner or a self-report by the student;
- b. either a new clinical diagnosis, or a circumstance that exacerbated a pre-existing condition, and when this first became evident or was predictable;
- c. the severity of impact on the student's ability to continue studies, or to withdraw by 11.59pm AEDT on the approved Census Date for the relevant teaching period; and
- d. the dates and duration of the fullest impact of the circumstance.

(16) Documents in languages other than English must be translated by a NAATI-accredited translator, with both the original and a certified copy provided.

Timing of Applications

(17) An application for remission must be made:

- a. within 12 months of the subject withdrawal date, or, if the person could not withdraw;
- b. within 12 months of the end of the teaching period in which the subject was, or was to be, undertaken.

(18) Students may seek a formal extension to the initial 12-month application period where they can verify that it was not possible for the application to be made within the relevant 12 month period. Students must first submit a query via ASK La Trobe and will then be advised of the application and documentation requirements for their circumstances.

(19) Where a student is on approved Leave of Absence that is demonstrably due to their application circumstances and the end date of the Leave extends no more than three months beyond the 12 month applicable period, the application period may be extended at the discretion of the Director, Student Administration or nominated officer. Where an extension has been granted, the student must submit their application within 21 business days.

Provision of False or Misleading Information

(20) If the University knows, or believes, that a student has provided false or misleading information in their application for remission of debt or fee liability, the University will notify the student immediately and will cease assessment of the application.

(21) The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) will be notified where appropriate.

Part C - Notification of Outcome

(22) The University will notify the applicant of the outcome by email as soon as practicable.

(23) A notification will include:

- a. the reason for the decision;
- b. advice concerning when and how the applicant may seek a formal review of the decision.

Part D - Impact of Decision on Academic Grade

(24) The University considers that where it is determined that Special Circumstances exist, and that remission is warranted, this also warrants reconsideration of any fail grades or academic progression outcomes incurred as a result. Thus, where the University approves an application for a remission:

- a. consideration will be given to adjusting any recent progression outcome of an affected student back one step (for example from Stage 3 back to Stage 2 etc – see [Academic Progression Review Policy](#));
- b. the relevant subject attempt will be removed from the student's external academic transcript.

Part E - Reporting of the Decision

(25) The University will:

- a. notify the Australian Government of decisions to remit for students covered under the [Higher Education Support Act 2003](#);
- b. report outcomes for international students to the Department of Home Affairs (DHA) where applicable.

Part F - Review of Decision

(26) A student may seek a review of a decision made under this Procedure. The University may reconsider the decision where satisfied that there is sufficient reason to do so. A formal request for review must:

- a. be written in response to the initial outcome notification;
- b. be received by the University within 28 days after the date of notification of the decision;
- c. set out the reasons for making the request, for example, why and how the applicant considers the initial application was not assessed in line with due process, this Procedure and/or legislation;
- d. provide any relevant additional evidence that was not available at the time of application.

(27) The reviewer will be an officer who was not involved in the original decision and who is senior to the officer who made the original decision.

(28) The reviewer, or their nominee, will notify the applicant by email of a decision to confirm, vary or set aside the initial decision. A notification will include:

- a. the reason for making the decision on review, which may state subsequent evaluation of Special Circumstances criteria;
- b. advice concerning when and how the applicant may submit a formal appeal of a decision under review.

(29) Where a review is undertaken and the University has not notified the applicant of a decision within forty-five (45) calendar days, the reviewer is taken to have confirmed the initial outcome decision.

Part G - Further Review

(30) Where a student is not satisfied with the outcome of any review they may apply to the University Ombudsman for a further review of the matter, in accordance with the [Ombudsman Statute](#) and Regulations.

(31) If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of the review of the University Ombudsman, they may lodge a complaint with the [National Student Ombudsman](#). This action, and the availability of other complaints and appeals processes, does not remove the right of the student to take action under Australia's consumer protection laws.

Section 7 - Definitions

(32) For the purpose of this Procedure:

- a. Census Date: the day on which a student becomes liable for fees for a subject, corresponding to the date no earlier than 20 per cent and no later than one third through the period during which the subject is undertaken, which is the time between the unit commencement and completion dates;
- b. charge: all fees for facilities, goods or services, excluding tuition fees and SSAF;
- c. course: a program of study leading to the award of a degree, diploma, or other award;
- d. debt: payment liability incurred for HELP deferred or up-front tuition fees;
- e. enrolment: the process by which a person becomes a student of a subject from or subjects within a course at La Trobe University;
- f. FEE-HELP: the Commonwealth government scheme that provides eligible fee-paying students with a loan to pay their student fees;
- g. HECS-HELP: the Commonwealth government scheme that provides students who have a Commonwealth Supported Place (CSP) with a loan to pay the student contribution amount of their tuition fees;
- h. international student: a student who is not a domestic student at the time of the relevant study and who holds a visa with rights to study in Australia;
- i. National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI)-Accredited Translator: an interpreter or translator who has obtained professional certification from NAATI;
- j. remission of fee liability: cancellation of a liability to pay fees upfront, and owed by a student to the University, specifically tuition fees or student contribution charges incurred at the Census Date;
- k. Student Contribution Amount (SCA): the payment for tuition required by students who are enrolled in a Commonwealth Supported Place;
- l. Study Abroad: a program in which students (incoming or outgoing) enrol in one or more subjects with a higher education institution or third party provider overseas, normally for on semester and for credit towards their course at their home institution. Tuition fees are payable at the host institution, unless the enrolment occurs

- under an exchange agreement in which case students are only liable for fees payable at their home institution.
- m. subject: a unit of study involving students in a series of learning activities, the outcomes of which are assessed;
 - n. tuition fees: course or subject fees payable by students who are not enrolled in a Commonwealth Supported Place, including for Single Subjects.

Section 8 - Authority and Associated Information

(33) This Procedure is made under the [La Trobe University Act 2009](#).

(34) Associated information includes:

- a. [Higher Education Support Act 2003](#);
- b. [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000](#).

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	8th July 2025
Review Date	8th July 2028
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor
Approval Date	8th July 2025
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Manager - Policy	Rachel Cumberland Director, Student Administration
Enquiries Contact	Student Administration