Fees, Charges and Refunds Policy

Purpose/objectives

The objectives of this Policy are to:

a) ensure the setting of course and unit fees is compliant with government requirements while supporting strategic and financial imperatives

b) ensure that any incidental charges levied are compliant with Commonwealth legislation

c) detail the requirements for administration, invoicing, collection and refund of fees.

The Fees, Charges and Refunds Procedure explains how this Policy is implemented.

Scope

This Policy and Procedure apply to all current, former and prospective students of the Australasian Academy of Higher Education (AAHE).

Definitions

Terms used in this document are defined in the AAHE Glossary.

Policy

1. Fees and charges

1.1 The AAHE Board of Directors may charge fees for admission, enrolment, tuition, examination, granting of degrees and such other activities as the Board may determine.

1.2 In setting tuition fees AAHE takes account of a range of factors including, but not limited to:

(a) the cost of delivery (including administrative support and infrastructure)
(b) type of student (international, domestic, undergraduate, graduate)
(c) location of study (campus, online)
(d) market forces including demand and trends
(e) government and legislative requirements
(f) commercial and strategic imperatives
(g) operational requirements and demands
(h) known and anticipated cost increases.

1.3 The tuition fee is charged per six-credit point unit according to the student's enrolment in the teaching period at census date. The student is charged the approved tuition fee applicable to the year in which they are studying.

1.4 Students are required to pay tuition fees for the teaching period by the prescribed date. A late payment fee may be charged if the amount due is not paid in full by the due date.

1.5 Students undertaking joint or dual programs pay fees at each participating institution for the individual units of study taken at each institution.

1.6 Fee liabilities are not refunded or remitted in cases where the student withdraws from study after the unit census date, except in circumstances that satisfy the criteria for special circumstances set out below and where the student submits a valid application within the application period.

1.7 Incidental charges are also payable and may be administrative, academic or facilities-related and include, but are not limited to charges for:

(a) academic records, transcripts or testamurs
(b) verification of enrolment or qualification
(c) fee statements
(d) payment extensions
(e) replacement student cards
(f) late fees for tuition fee payment, enrolment or re-enrolment
(g) course reinstatement
(h) library fees
(i) external examinations
(j) material fees
(k) field trips
(l) venue hire
(m) graduation.

1.8 Incidental charges are published and made available to applicants and students to give them a realistic measure of the full cost of study. Indicative costs may be published where the actual cost is variable.

1.9 Once a tuition fee has been set, approved and published, a business case must be made to the Board of Directors to change the rate.

1.10 The Chief Executive Officer has the authority to introduce, vary or waive incidental charges.

1.11 AAHE refunds fees (or remits HELP debt) under the conditions specified below in accordance with the Higher Education Support Act 2003.

1.12 Refunds will only be made to the person/sponsor who initially paid the fees.

2. Fee increases

2.1 AAHE will increase its fees for currently enrolled students (i.e. continuing students) by no more than 15% each year, and by no more than 30% over 3 years.

3. Penalties for non-payment of fees

3.1 Students who fail to meet their fee payment schedule or other terms and conditions are in breach of this Fees, Charges and Refunds Policy. Non-payment of fees incurs a penalty.

3.2 Penalties for non-payment of fees, charges or other monies owing to AAHE for any services provided to a student, may include, but are not limited to, the student not being entitled to:

(a) enrol/re-enrol
(b) receive any results of assessment
(c) graduate or receive a qualification from AAHE
(d) receive an official academic record.

3.3 Any amount owed to AAHE as fees or charges by a student, including those students whose enrolment is suspended or cancelled, is payable as debt and may be recovered by AAHE.

3.4 AAHE may off-set any outstanding fees or charges against student credit.

3.5 Students will be advised in writing of the penalty to be applied and the reasons for the decision, and of the review/appeal process and deadlines.

3.6 Where AAHE is proposing to suspend or cancel an international student's enrolment for non-payment, the student will also be advised that this may affect their visa and that the relevant government department will be notified of the decision.

3.7 AAHE will notify the relevant government department of any change to the student's enrolment status through PRISMS after the internal appeal process has been completed.

4. Fee refunds in special circumstances

4.1 Both international and domestic students may be eligible for fee refunds (or remission of a HELP debt) if their situation is deemed as constituting special circumstances. These are circumstances that:

- were beyond the student's control
- did not make their full impact on the student until on or after the census date and
- made it impracticable for the student to complete the unit or course requirements.

4.2 Students are not eligible for a refund or remission if they have successfully completed their unit(s) of study.

5. Other refund provisions

5.1 No monies received by AAHE will be refunded to applicants or students who provide false, fraudulent or misleading documentation and/or information in their applications for admission, course and unit enrolment, or for credit for learning undertaken elsewhere.

5.2 Where a student has their enrolment cancelled by AAHE and they either have not accessed the appeal process or their appeal was unsuccessful, no refund will apply for units already commenced.

5.3 For **international students**, the circumstances in which refunds will be provided and the rules that apply are set out in Schedule A to this policy. These refund provisions are consistent with the provisions of the ESOS Act (2000)[1].

5.4 A **domestic student** who voluntarily discontinues their enrolment prior to the census date for the teaching period is not liable for the tuition fee in respect of that teaching period. The tuition fee paid will therefore be refunded, less the refund-processing fee, on application by the student. Alternatively, the tuition fee paid for a teaching period for which a student is not liable may be carried forward to be used towards the tuition fee in a future teaching period, or may be applied towards the payment of another fee or charge for which the student is liable.

6. Protection of student fees

6.1 All prepaid tuition fees will be paid into an account that is maintained in accordance with Part 3 Division 2 of the ESOS Act.

6.2 The Tuition Protection Service (TPS) is an initiative of the Australian Government that assists students whose education provider is unable to deliver fully a course of study. AAHE is a financial member of the TPS which is the fund that ensures international students are able either:

- to complete their studies in another course or with another education provider or
- to receive a refund of their unspent tuition fees.

6.3 In the unlikely event that AAHE are unable to deliver a course that a student has paid for and unable either to offer an alternative course acceptable to the student or to refund the student's unspent prepaid tuition fees, the TPS will assist students to find an alternative course or to obtain a refund if no suitable alternative can be found.[2]

[1] See ESOS Act (2000) Part 5 Division 1: www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A00757/latest/text

[2] see: https://tps.gov.au/StaticContent/Get/StudentOverview

6.4 Domestic up-front fee-paying students are also eligible for tuition protection assistance under the TPS if the course has not commenced, or ceases after commencement but before completion, and the student has not previously withdrawn.

Related documents and relevant legislation

Administrative Review Tribunal (Consequential and Transitional Provisions No.1) Act 2024
Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000
Higher Education Support (Administration) Guidelines 2022
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018
Tuition Protection Service (TPS)
Schedule A: Tuition fee refund schedule – international students

Document information

Document owner: Principal and Chief Executive Officer

Version	Approved by	Approved on	Implementation date	Changes made
1.0	Board of Directors	08/06/2023	01/10/2023	
2.0	Board of Directors	28/05/2026	01/07/2026	Change to policy title; distinction made between tuition fees and incidental charges; streamlined international student refunds table moved to Schedule

Fees, Charges and Refunds Procedure

1. Payment of fees

1.1 After determination by the Board of Directors of the annual fees and charges, the Registrar will publish current and comprehensive information about the fees and charges by no later than the end of November in the year preceding the fee. The information will include:

(a) fees and charges and the periods for which these apply and remain fixed
(b) the dates on which students are liable for fees and charges
(c) a statement that students may choose to pay a larger proportion of their tuition fees in advance
(d) a statement determining that full-fee rates will be levied for any additional units studied beyond the usual number of credit points required to complete the student's enrolled course
(e) circumstances in which a person may be eligible for a refund, remission, waiver or write-off of fees paid
(f) penalty fees or charges and the circumstances in which they will be applied.

1.2 Fees for AAHE programs including credit card fees are payable using any of the following methods:

- bank transfer
- bank cheque made out to "Australasian Academy of Higher Education"
- credit card (Mastercard, Visa).

1.3 In accordance with Government policy, students may be eligible to obtain a loan under the FEE-HELP Scheme to pay all or part of their tuition fees. Students who are not eligible for a FEE-HELP loan and who can demonstrate genuine financial hardship may be permitted to pay tuition fees over a period of time in the form of a payment plan.

1.4 Students are advised of fee payment deadlines and consequences for non-payment in the initial offer agreement and via regular communications thereafter.

1.5 Where a student's tuition fees are outstanding, the Registrar (or nominee) will issue a warning letter to the student providing five (5) calendar days to make a payment or enter into a payment arrangement. If no payment or arrangement is made, or if the payment arrangement is broken, AAHE will inform the student of its intention to cancel the student's enrolment in 20 working days from the date of the notification on the basis of non-payment of tuition fees, and the intention to notify the relevant government departments of the change in enrolment status.

1.6 Where students fail to pay fees and charges, other penalties as outlined under 3.2 of the policy may also be applied by the Registrar.

2. Refund request process

2.1 Before a student can apply for a refund:

(a) AAHE must have received money into its accounts as cleared funds
(b) the student's course or subject cancellation must have been processed; and
(c) the student must settle any other debts owing to AAHE, such as library fines. AAHE reserves the right to deduct outstanding debts or fines owing from the refund amount.

2.2 Students should refer to this procedure to check whether their refund claim is valid. If unsure, the student should seek advice from administration staff.

2.3 Students are required to complete a Refund Request Form, which will include the reason the request is being submitted, and attach the applicable original documentary evidence.

2.4 Once the student's request has been received and the approval process completed, AAHE will contact the student with information regarding the approval or rejection of the refund requested.

2.5 If a student's refund request is valid, a refund will be made within 28 days of AAHE receiving the request in writing.

2.6 Refunds will be made by EFT in Australian dollars only to the bank account that the payment was originally sent from. Under Australian banking regulations, if a student has made payment with a credit card, any refund must be credited to the original credit card.

2.7 Refunds will only be made to a nominated person/sponsor who initially paid the student fees.

2.8 Scholarship and sponsored students' refunds will only be paid to the scholarship provider or sponsoring body.

2.9 Students must apply to the provider of their Overseas Student Health Cover or any other third party services for a refund and those providers' refund policies will apply.

3. Fee refunds in special circumstances

3.1 Examples of special circumstances where refunds may be approved include:

Medical reasons

Where a student has a medical condition that existed before the census date, continued past that date and deteriorated to the extent that the student was unable to continue their studies or their medical condition only became known after the census date.

Family/personal reasons

Due to unforeseen personal/family reasons that are beyond the student's control, they are unable to continue with their studies.

Employment-related reasons

The student's employment status or employment arrangements change unexpectedly due to circumstances beyond their control and they are unable to complete their studies.

Course-related reasons

AAHE changes the arrangements for a unit or course and as a result the student is unable to complete the requirements of the course.

3.2 Applications for fee refunds in special circumstances must contain contact details and be submitted in writing to the Registrar along with independent supporting documentation either in person, by post or email. All copies of supporting documentation must be certified.

3.3 Within five days of receipt of the application, the Registrar will email an acknowledgment to the address on the application. Students who do not receive acknowledgement of their application within two weeks of lodging the application should contact the Registrar. Students should generally allow 3–5 weeks for their application to be processed.

3.4 The decision to approve or not approve an application will be considered principally on the basis of the independent supporting documentation submitted. It is the student's responsibility to ensure all relevant documentation is provided.

3.5 Students will be advised in writing of the decision.

4. Reviews /Appeals process

4.1 Any applicant for admission or enrolled student may request an internal review of a decision made under this Policy within 10 working days after they are notified of the decision, or may lodge an appeal within 20 working days where AAHE is proposing to suspend or cancel their enrolment.

4.2 Internal review requests must be lodged with the Registrar on the approved form and will only be considered on one of the following grounds:

- new evidence is available that could not be provided when the initial decision was made
- there has been a misapplication of AAHE policies or procedures.

4.3 The Registrar will refer the request to the Chief Operating Officer (COO) who will make a decision within 10 working days.

4.4 The Registrar will notify the student of the decision and the reasons for that outcome within five working days after it is decided.

4.5 The outcome letter will also explain that, if not satisfied with the outcome after exhausting internal review and appeal options, a student may seek an external review by:

- contacting the National Student Ombudsman via nso.gov.au or telephone 1300 395 775, or
- contacting the Overseas Student Ombudsman via their online complaint form or telephone 1300 362 072
- an independent external reviewer nominated by AAHE
- an independent external mediator nominated by AAHE.

4.6 Where an external mediator or reviewer is appointed, AAHE and the student will each pay 50% of the costs.

4.7 AAHE will implement any recommendations as soon as possible where the external process finds in favour of the student.

4.8 This Policy and Procedure do not affect the rights of the student to take action under the Australian Consumer Law if the Australian Consumer Law applies.

Document information

Document owner: Chief Operating Officer

Version	Approved by	Approved on	Implementation date	Changes made
1.0	Board of Directors	08/06/2023	01/10/2023	
2.0	Board of Directors	28/05/2026	01/07/2026	Inclusion of information on communications, warning letters, refund request process and updated appeal details

Schedule A: Tuition fee refund schedule – international students

Reason and timing of cancellation/withdrawal	Refund
Full Refund	
Cancellation given with minimum of 30 calendar days prior to the course commencement date	Full refund less $200 application fee
Visa refusal (onshore, cancellation with minimum of 30 calendar days' notice given prior to course commencement date)	Full refund less $200 application fee (subject to documentary evidence of visa refusal)
AAHE fails to start delivery of the unit or course on the agreed start date or ceases to deliver the course or unit	Full refund, or AAHE may offer a place in an alternative course at no additional expense to the student
Provider default	Full refund of tuition fees
Partial or No Refund	
Cancellation given with less than 30 calendar days prior to the course commencement date	No refund of tuition or application fees
Request to withdraw or defer after commencement of the teaching period	No refund of tuition or application fees – liable for full cost of teaching period
Cancellation of student enrolment due to student default on tuition payments	No refund of tuition or application fees
Visa refusal (offshore)	Full refund less $200 application fee and $500 of any tuition fees paid (subject to documentary evidence of visa refusal)
Visa refusal (onshore, post-course commencement)	No refund of tuition or application fees
Student visa expires before completion of the course	Refund of all unused unit fees paid in advance
Credit transfer or recognition of prior learning is granted at the time of enrolment	*Pro rata* refund according to the proportion of the course or unit credited
Student granted deferment or temporary suspension of studies after course commencement and, without seeking AAHE approval, does not return	No refund for units already commenced and enrolment cancelled
Student provisionally enrolled and fails to provide evidence of English language proficiency prior to course commencement	No refund of any fees for enrolled units paid in advance
Visa refused or cancelled due to breach of visa conditions, fraud or violation of AAHE policies	No refund of tuition or application fees