

Tuition Fee Refund Policy and Procedure for Domestic Students

Policy

This policy and procedure set out the conditions in which domestic students are eligible to apply and obtain a refund of tuition fees in accordance with the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* and the *FEE-HELP Guidelines*.

Scope

This policy applies to prospective, new and continuing domestic students who have applied or are enrolled in a higher education course of study at Whitecliffe Institute of Creative Arts and Technology ("Whitecliffe"); and relevant staff that assess and process fee refund requests.

All Whitecliffe students are either FEE-PAYING or FEE-HELP students, and in some cases, students pay upfront and then switch to FEE-HELP and vice versa over the course of their studies.

Policy Statement

Whitecliffe ensures its refund conditions are easily accessible, transparent and comply with all Australian government legislative requirements in order to ensure that prospective and enrolled domestic students are fully informed of their financial obligations prior to enrolment. Each student acknowledges and agrees to the terms of the **Tuition Fee Refund Policy and Procedure for Domestic Students** when signing the *Acceptance Declaration* document contained in their Letter of Offer issued by Whitecliffe.

Related Policies and Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Institute policies and documents:

- Deferral, Suspension or Cancellation of Enrolment Policy
- Admissions to Coursework for Domestic and International Students Policy and Procedure
- Statement of Tuition Assurance Exemption
- Misconduct Policy and Procedure
- Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure
- Application for Fee Refund for Domestic Students

All documents referenced in this policy can be accessed via the [Forms & Policies](#) section at the bottom of the homepage of the Whitecliffe website.

Definition of Key Terms

"Census Date"	means the dates set for trimester as the last date that a student can withdraw from a course of study and/or unit of study without incurring financial penalty i.e., the cut-off dates.
"Course of Study"	means a higher education award delivered by Whitecliffe as per the National Register.
"Domestic Student"	means a student who is an Australian Citizen or Permanent Resident (humanitarian subclass).
"FEE-HELP Assistance"	means a Commonwealth Government loan scheme that assists eligible full-fee paying domestic students pay their tuition fees. FEE-HELP can cover all or part of a student's tuition fees. Permanent Residents (nonhumanitarian subclass) and New Zealand Citizens (non-special category visa) are considered domestic students but do not meet the citizenship and residency requirements for FEE-HELP assistance.
"Special Circumstances"	means circumstances which are an exception to the rule and beyond a student's control.
"Trimester"	means each twelve-week teaching period.
"Tuition Fees"	means the agreed amount of money charged to, and paid by, a student to undertake units of study as part of a course of study at Whitecliffe.
"Unit of Study"	means a single component or subject that a student undertakes as part of a course of study that leads to a higher education award at Whitecliffe.
"Upfront Fee/s"	means a student pays their tuition fees for units of study directly to Whitecliffe with no contribution from the Commonwealth Government.

Refund Eligibility

The following section outlines the grounds for a refund of domestic tuition fees. However, Whitecliffe may, in its absolute discretion, grant a partial or full refund where they determine there are extenuating or compassionate circumstances.

To be eligible for a refund of tuition fees, a student must withdraw (or cancel their enrolment) or suspend their enrolment (for a leave of absence) on or before the Census Date.

1. Withdrawal or Suspension of Enrolment by Whitecliffe on/before Census Date

a. Institute Default Event

Entitlement: Full Refund

In the event Whitecliffe withdraws or suspends a student's enrolment in a course of study before the Census Date of that course of study, the student is entitled to a refund of any tuition fees paid in advance. No other administration fee is charged in the event of this Institute Default.

b. Fraudulent, Forged or Misleading Information and/or Documentation Provided by the Student

Entitlement: No Refund

In the event that Whitecliffe withdraws or suspends a student's enrolment in a course of study as a result of fraudulent, forged or intentionally misleading information and/or documentation being supplied by the student, and it is not considered to be as a result of a Institute Default, the student will not be entitled to a refund of any tuition fees paid in advance.

2. Withdrawal or Suspension of Enrolment on/before Census Date

a. Withdrawal (or Cancellation) of Enrolment

Entitlement: Full Refund

Students who want to withdraw from their course of study or unit(s) of study must cancel their enrolment on or before the relevant census date (i.e., cut-off date) to be eligible for a refund. To withdraw from a course of study or unit(s) of study, an *Application to Withdraw or Cancel Enrolment Form* must be completed and lodged with the Registrar. For more information on how to withdraw (or cancel enrolment) without financial penalty, please refer to the **Deferral, Suspension or Cancellation of Enrolment Policy**.

Students who withdraw on or before the relevant Census Date:

- Do not incur a FEE-HELP debt; and
- Are eligible for a refund of all Upfront Fee payments

b. Suspension of Enrolment for a Leave of Absence

Entitlement: Full Refund

Students who want to take a leave of absence must suspend their enrolment on or before the relevant Census Date (or Cut-Off Date) to be eligible for a refund for any fees paid in respect of this period of absence. To suspend enrolment for a leave of absence and not incur a financial liability, an *Application to Suspend Enrolment Form* must be completed and lodged with the Registrar. For more information on how to withdraw (or cancel enrolment), please refer to the **Deferral, Suspension or Cancellation of Enrolment Policy**.

Students who suspend their enrolment to take a leave of absence on or before the relevant Census Date:

- Do not incur a FEE-HELP debt; and
- Are eligible for a refund for all Upfront Fee payments

3. Withdrawal or Suspension of Enrolment after Census Date

a. Withdrawal or Suspension of Enrolment Application Received after Census Date

Entitlement: No Refund

Where a domestic student withdraws (cancels) their enrolment or suspends their enrolment to take a leave of absence after the relevant Census Date and there are no extenuating circumstances, the student will incur a financial liability i.e., a FEE-HELP debt and/or are not eligible for a refund of Upfront Fee payments.

b. Withdrawal or Suspension of Enrolment Application Received after Census Date (Due to Special Circumstances)

Entitlement: Full Refund

Where a domestic student withdraws from a course of study after the Census Date as a result of extenuating or special circumstances, the student may be entitled to a full refund.

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

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

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.

For circumstances to be considered beyond a person's control, the situation should be one 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. The situation must be unusual, uncommon, or abnormal to be considered special circumstances. Whitcliffe 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:

- b. Before the Census Date but worsen after that day; or
- c. Before the Census Date, but the effect of magnitude does not become apparent until after that day; or
- d. After the Census Date.

Students must attach appropriate documentary evidence in support of this application.

Where a student is applying for special circumstances, students must submit their application within 12 months of the withdrawal day of the unit(s). If the student did not officially withdraw, the application must be made within 12 months after they undertook the unit. Whitecliffe may give students more time if it was not possible for them to apply within 12 months. Students will need to provide additional evidence on why they were unable to submit an application within the 12-month time frame.

4. Cancellation of Enrolment due to Misconduct

Entitlement: No Refund

Where a student's enrolment is cancelled by Whitecliffe as a result of misconduct in accordance with the **Misconduct Policy and Procedure**, including the non-payment of tuition fees, the student is not entitled to a refund including any tuition fees paid in advance at the time of suspension or cancellation. For more information on the suspension or cancellation of enrolment as a result of misconduct, please refer to the **Deferral, Suspension or Cancellation of Enrolment Policy** and **Misconduct Policy and Procedure**.

5. Cancellation of Enrolment due to Unsatisfactory Course Progression

Entitlement: Refund of fees paid for part of course not yet delivered

Where a student's enrolment is cancelled by Whitecliffe as a result of unsatisfactory course progression in accordance with the **Monitoring Academic Progression Policy and Procedure**, the student is entitled to a refund of tuition fees paid in advance at the time of cancellation for parts of the course not yet delivered. Previous trimester fees will not be refunded.

For more information on the cancellation of enrolment as a result of unsatisfactory course progression, please refer to the **Deferral, Suspension or Cancellation of Enrolment Policy** and **Monitoring Academic Progression Policy and Procedure**.

6. Changes to Enrolment

a. Granting of Advanced Standing

Entitlement: No Refund, Credit Applied

Where a domestic student applies for course credit and is granted Advanced Standing after the payment of tuition fees, the student is not entitled to refund of tuition fees for those units, including any paid in advance. However, the amount will be held by Whitecliffe and credited towards the next trimester fees.

b. Transfer to Another Course of Study at Whitecliffe

Entitlement: No Refund, Credit Applied

Where a domestic student applies for and is approved to transfer to another course of study at Whitecliffe after the payment of tuition fees, where the new course fee is lower than the original course, the student is not entitled to refund of the difference in tuition fees, including any paid in advance. However, the amount will be held by Whitecliffe and credited towards the next trimester fees.

7. Institute Default

Domestic students are eligible for a refund of tuition fees where, as the result of an event or action (Institute Default), Whitecliffe ceases to provide a course of study in which a student is enrolled, including where the course of study:

- does not commence on the scheduled Trimester Start Date; or
- ceases to be provided at any time after it starts but before it is completed; or
- is not provided in full due to sanctions placed on Whitecliffe by the Australian Government or Regulator.

Whitecliffe will refund all the unused portion of prepaid tuition fees within ten days of the date of the Institute Default and provide the student with a written statement outlining how the refund amount has been calculated.

or

The student may be offered enrolment in an alternative course by Whitecliffe at no extra cost. The student has the right to choose whether they prefer a refund, or to accept a place in another course. If the student chooses placement in an alternative course with Whitecliffe, the student will be issued with a new Letter of Offer.

8. Transfer to another Provider

Entitlement: Refund paid directly to the new provider

In accordance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF) 2021 and the Tuition Protection Service (TPS), Whitecliffe is obligated to help the student:

- by placing the student in another provider to finish or complete their course of study with another provider; or
- by providing a refund of any unspent tuition fees paid directly to Whitecliffe.

As part of this cooperation, Whitecliffe may be also pay any refund directly to the alternate provider should the circumstances necessitate this.

Fee Refund Application Process

1. Applying for a Refund of Fees

1.1 Submit an online application to the Registrar

Responsible: Applicant

A fee refund is not an automatic result of cancelling or suspending enrolment.. Applicants seeking a fee refund should also lodge an '*Application for Fee Refund for Domestic Students*' using the online form located in the Forms & Policies section at the bottom of the Home Page of the Whitecliffe website.

All applications are required to be completed, signed, and accompanied by appropriate documentary evidence in support of the application as outlined in this policy. The completed application form and attachments should be submitted to the Registrar.

Where a student is applying for special circumstances, students must submit their application within 12 months of the withdrawal day of the unit(s). If the student did not officially withdraw, the application must be made within 12 months after they undertook the unit. Whitecliffe may give students more time if it was not possible for them to apply within 12 months. Students will need to provide additional evidence that details why they were unable to submit an application within the 12-month time frame.

1.2 Review and consideration of the Application

a. Confirm application for completeness

Responsible: Registrar

The '*Application for Fee Refund for Domestic Students*' form as submitted is checked for completeness by the Registrar. All sections of the application are required to be completed and the application signed (Completed Application). It is the responsibility of the student to attach any relevant supporting documentation in relation to the unit(s) for which a refund is being sought.

All attachments should be copies of originals certified by a Justice of the Peace or approved certifier. However, if this is not possible, the original documentation can be presented with the application and the Registrar will take copies of the documentation and witness them as being true copies of the originals presented. The original documentation is then returned to the applicant.

Whitecliffe only accepts Completed Applications for assessment.

b. Assessment of the Completed Application

Responsible: Office of the Registrar & Student Accounts Officer

The Office of the Registrar is the designated Fee Refund Officer responsible for the assessment of refund requests. The Student Accounts Officer is the designated Review Officer of any recommendations relating to the full or partial refund of tuition fees. The Registrar undertakes a review of the Completed Application against the assessment criteria as outlined in the **Tuition Fee Refund Policy and Procedure for Domestic Students** and makes a recommendation to the Student Accounts Officer to grant or deny the application for the refund of tuition fees within fifteen working days of the Submission Date.

1.3 Advise assessment decision in writing

Responsible: Registrar

Following assessment, the Registrar will forward written notification of the decision to grant or deny the application for the refund of tuition fees.

Where an 'Application for Fee Refund for Domestic Students' is successful, Whitecliffe sends the student an *Approval of Fee Refund Letter* advising the decision in writing and confirming how the refund will be made (see 1.4 Processing Refunds).

Where an 'Application for Fee Refund for Domestic Students' is denied, Whitecliffe does not grant the refund or re-credit the FEE-HELP balance. The applicant is sent a *Refusal of Fee Refund Letter* outlining the reasons for the decision and informing them of their rights to appeal by lodging a formal complaint application within 20 working days of receiving the letter. Applicants wishing to make an appeal should refer to Whitecliffe's **Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure**.

1.4 Processing refunds

a. Refund of Upfront Fees

For students granted a refund of Upfront Fees, the refund is made by the same method in which the Upfront Fee was originally paid. Due to the absence of a Payment Gateway system for domestic students, refunds cannot be processed directly to credit cards. Payments are manually entered via EFTPOS using a Payment Authorisation Form. Therefore, if the original payment was made by credit card, the refund can only be issued to the student's nominated current bank account. Refunds will not be paid in cash.

b. Re-Crediting FEE-HELP Debt

For students granted a refund of FEE-HELP Fees, the refund is re-credited to their FEE-HELP balance to remove or reduce the FEE-HELP debt. Whitecliffe makes payment to the Commonwealth Government the amount equal to the FEE-HELP paid to Whitecliffe on behalf of the student at the time of enrolment for the unit(s) of study approved for refund. Whitecliffe

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.

Students are encouraged to log in to the Government's [myHELPbalance](#) portal to view their detailed HELP loans history. This HELP loan history lists the HELP loans reported by Whitecliffe, including any remitted or reversed loans

c. Partial Upfront Fees & Re-Crediting of FEE-HELP Debt

For students granted a refund where tuition fees were paid as partial upfront fees and the balance via the FEE-HELP loan scheme, 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.

The following table summarises the eligibility and entitlement for a refund of domestic student tuition fees as outlined in this policy. However, Whitecliffe may, in its absolute discretion, grant a partial or full refund where they determine there are special or compassionate circumstances.

Refund Table

Whitecliffe will pay refunds for fees related to tuition.

Refund Eligibility	Refund Entitlement
1. Withdrawal of enrolment by Whitecliffe on/before Census Date	
a. Whitecliffe withdraws the offer on/before Census Date (Institute Default Event)	Full Refund (no Administration Fee)
b. Student provides fraudulent, forged, or misleading documentation	No Refund
2. Withdrawal or Suspension of Enrolment on/before Census Date	
Student withdraws on/before Census Date	Full Refund
3. Withdrawal or Suspension of Enrolment after Census Date	
a. Student withdraws after Census Date	No Refund
b. Student withdraws after Census Date due to Special Circumstances	Full Refund
4. Cancellation of enrolment due to misconduct	No Refund
5. Cancellation of Enrolment due to Unsatisfactory Course Progression	Refund of fees paid for part of course not yet delivered
6. Changes to Enrolment	
a. Granting of Advanced Standing	No Refund. Credit applied to next trimester fees
b. Transfer to another course of study at Whitecliffe	No Refund. Credit applied to next trimester fees
Other	

Refund Eligibility	Refund Entitlement
7. Institute Default	Refund of unused portion of prepaid tuition fees
8. Transfer to another Provider	Any refund paid directly to the new provider

Change and Version Control

Version	Date Approved	Authored by	Approved by	Description
1.0	7 Jan 2016	Collaborative	CEO	Policy prior to change of Ownership
1.1	23 Jun 2022	Collaborative	Academic Board	Update to section regarding Institute default in the policy
1.2	30 Nov 2023	Director of Operations and Compliance	Academic Board	Revisions made to include references to SSAF SA-HELP loan information in accordance with HESA
1.3	13 Aug 2025	Academic Compliance Lead	Governing Board	Changed policy title. Updated procedure to reflect the online application process. Removed references to SSAF SA-HELP loan information. Included Refund Table.
1.4	8 July 2026	Director of Operations	Governing Board	Removed reference to Moodle Removed 'Employment related circumstances' as a category of special circumstances considered at Census Date when assessing cases where it is impracticable for a student to complete unit requirements.

Policy Information

Author:	Academic Compliance Lead
Policy owner:	Chief Executive Officer
Approved by:	Governing Board
Approval date:	8 July 2026
Status:	Approved
Next review due:	13 August 2028