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RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS:	
Legislation:	Higher Education Support Act (2003) HESA Standards for RTOs 2025 2025 Victorian VET Student Statistical Collection Guidelines
Documents:	BP005 Withdrawal of units not commencing PPP031 Money Collection and Handling Guidelines PPP029 Management of Fee Payments Options PPP146 Student Enrolment Guidelines PPP153 VET Student Loan Review Guidelines PPP175 VET Student Loans Entry Guidelines PPP046 Information Privacy Policy SDM010 Enrolment Amendment Skills First Fact Sheet – Guide to Withdrawals

1. Introduction

The Department of Jobs; Skills, Industry & Regions (DJSIR) provides guidelines regarding tuition fees and other fees associated with government subsidised training. South West TAFE (SWTAFE or 'the Organisation') abides by these Guidelines.

SWTAFE is committed to providing every possible opportunity for students to successfully complete their studies. However, there will be occasions when students need to withdraw from all or part of their course and will be eligible for a fee refund.

SWTAFE collects tuition fees from students to participate in funded training through various funding methods, including:

- Government subsidised
- Self-funded
- Fee for service
- VET Student Loans enabled

2. Scope

These Guidelines are applicable to all student withdrawals irrespective of funding or payment method.

3. Definitions

Government Subsidised	where the tuition cost of the course is offset by a funding contribution from the Victorian Government
Skills First	Victorian Government's program for funding individual's entitlement to funded training

Self-funded	the student does not meet the eligibility criteria for a Skills First funded place within the course and is liable to pay the full tuition course cost.
Fee for Service	training where the cost of the course has been negotiated with a third party (usually Industry client) and where the Government makes no contribution towards the cost of the course
Consumable/Material Fee	a fee charged to recover the cost of providing textbooks, learner guides and resource modules that are retained by the student as his/her personal property
VET Student Loan	a Federal Government income contingent loan scheme for the Vocational Education and Training sector that is part of the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP).
Course Commencement	the date at which a student engages in structured learning in the course for the first time.
Official Withdrawal	activated by the student contacting their teacher or teaching department requesting to be withdrawn. The date of request determines if a refund is applicable.
Apparent Withdrawal	where the withdrawal is activated by SWTAFE without the student's consent and following a minimum of three separate attempts to contact the student. Also known as AWOL

4. South West TAFE's responsibilities

In the first instance, students will be provided with support and guidance to ensure they are aware of the alternatives to withdrawing at a course level, support services available, as well as the correct process to follow if withdrawal is necessary.

Where a student has had an extended absence or is disengaged, the teaching department is responsible for attempting to contact the student a minimum of three (3) separate and varied attempts over a reasonable period of time (i.e.: not all on the same day) – preferably once each of phone, email and text. These must be documented in the individual student's Communication Log.

If these attempts are unsuccessful, prior to submitting withdrawal paperwork, the teaching department is responsible for referring the student's contact details and Communication Log to Skills & Jobs who will attempt to contact the student to discuss their reasons for absence or withdrawal and offer assistance.

If Skills and Jobs determine that the student is still to be withdrawn or they fail to make contact, they will advise the teaching department who will then be responsible for proceeding with the relevant withdrawal process and documenting on the withdrawal form

All students will be treated equitably and will be provided with access to the full range of personal and study support services available through SWTAFE. At all times their privacy and dignity will be respected.

5. General conditions

- It is the student's responsibility to request to be officially withdrawn from their course. The student activates their withdrawal by contacting their teacher or teaching department in writing preferably via email so an **initiation date** is established. This initiation date is key in establishing if the student is entitled to a refund.
- Students who have not withdrawn and have outstanding fees are still liable for those fees, irrespective of their non-attendance.

- Outstanding fees remain on a student's record indefinitely even if they are written off as a bad debt. Until full payment is made, a Statement of Attainment (SOA) and/or qualification documents may not be issued, and the outstanding debt may affect future enrolment.
- In the event a course is cancelled by SWTAFE, a full refund will be issued to the student, less fees associated with completed units of competency (where a result has been entered). A Statement of Attainment will be issued.
- All refunds will be payable by cheque or electronic funds transfer (**CS012 – Request for refund by EFT**) must be received to provide electronic transfer of refund.
- Where a refund is eligible to a deceased student, SWTAFE will attempt to return the refund to the student's estate. Where it is not possible to identify the Estate, the refund amount will remain on the student's Account.
- Where the payment of fees (either partial or in full) has been received in the name of a third party (i.e. not the enrolled student) any refund will be issued in the name of the third party up to an amount not exceeding the total of their payment. If provided by written authorisation from the third party, the refund can be issued in the name of the student.
- Where the student has been supported through a SWTAFE Access and Equity Fund or Scholarship, any entitlement to a refund will firstly be allocated to the relevant scholarship or Access and Equity Fund not exceeding the value of support provided. Any residual amount will be issued to the student.

For example, a student's total fees were \$400 of which they paid \$200 and \$200 was allocated from the Access & Equity Fund. The student is entitled to a refund of \$250 upon withdrawal – the first \$200 would be allocated back into the Access & Equity Fund with the remaining \$50 being issued to the student.

- Consideration of any refund is subject to the student having no outstanding commitments with SWTAFE including outstanding fees, and/or department equipment loans.
- Where a student is under a Department of Education Clearance, notification of the withdrawal is to be sent to Mailbox Registrar so the RTO Governance Admin can follow the Department's required process.

6. Processing Refunds associated with enrolment

All refunds, irrespective of payment method to SWTAFE – cash, cheque, direct debit, EFT or via our Payment Gateway STRIPE – are processed electronically.

A Student Administration Team Leader (or the Manager Student Administration) are authorised to approve the requested refund once all process checks are undertaken to ensure the student is unable to transfer dates and the refund is within the specified timelines.

The refund will be processed via direct credit to the nominated bank account or where payment was made through the gateway, the refund will be processed back on to the Card that was used for payment.

Where payment is made via a third party or ATI, the refund will be issued back to the person /third party who made the payment using the relevant process above. These details may vary from the name of the enrolled student.

7. Apparent Withdrawal

On occasions where a student ceases engaging with their study and have not initiated withdrawal from their course, it will be necessary for SWTAFE to initiate the withdrawal process. In these scenarios:

- A minimum of three separate and varied unsuccessful attempts to contact the student must be made and recorded within the student's Communication log
- Contact attempts must be made over a reasonable period of time (ie: not all on the same day). Request that the student contact a nominated person within a reasonable timeframe (ie: within a week) and advise that if no contact is made that they will be withdrawn and will remain liable for any outstanding fees.

- If these attempts are unsuccessful, prior to submitting withdrawal paperwork, the teaching department is responsible for referring the student's contact details and Communication Log to Skills & Jobs who will attempt to contact the student to discuss their reasons for absence or withdrawal and offer assistance. If Skills and Jobs determine that the student is still to be withdrawn or they fail to make contact, they will advise the teaching department who will then be responsible for proceeding with the relevant withdrawal process.
- The teaching department may activate an Apparent Withdrawal (AWOL) by completing a Withdrawal Form on the student's behalf. The Communication Log demonstrating the attempts made must be submitted along with the Withdrawal Request form.

8. Tuition Fee Refunds for Certificate I to IV courses

A student who is withdrawn – either official or apparent:

- Before the course commences will be eligible for a full refund although it may not be possible to refund costs associated with materials due to health regulations
- Within four weeks of their course commencement date, will receive a refund of fees paid, less fees associated with completed units of competency (where a Grade has been applied). Where Units of Competency have been achieved, a Statement of Attainment will be issued to the student.
- Beyond four weeks of their course commencement date, a refund will be issued for units of competency in which participation has not commenced. Units of competency which have commenced participation will not receive a refund.

9. Tuition Fee Refunds for Diploma and Advanced Diploma Courses (including Approved VET Student Loans)

Refund eligibility for VET Student Loan eligible courses is determined by the relevant Census date and processed in consultation with the VET Student Loan Officer. This applies to all students whether they pay their tuition fees up-front or seek VET Student Loan assistance.

For all courses at the Diploma and Advanced Diploma levels, a refund or credit of all tuition fees charged for the unit will be made if the withdrawal is prior to the unit census date. Any portion of any other fees or levies (such as material fees) to be refunded or credited will be at the discretion of the Teaching Area. The exception to this is where:

- VET tuition assurance has been activated because SWTAFE has ceased to provide the unit; **and**
- The student has chosen the VET tuition assurance option in relation to that unit.

Refer to Statement of Tuition Assurance for Exempt TAFE VET Student Loans (VSL) Providers.

Students who have requested VET Student Loan assistance and withdraw from a unit of study after the census date will incur a VET Student Loan debt for any unpaid tuition fees. Students that have paid tuition fees upfront will not receive a refund for any delivered units post the census date.

Students may apply to SWTAFE to have their VET Student Loan balance re-credited (and thus their VET Student Loan debt remitted) in special circumstances. Refer to **PPP153 VET Student Loan Student Review Guidelines**.

10. Withdrawals from Skill Set, Short Course or Non-Accredited Programs

- Skills Set can be Skills First funded or fee for service Nationally Accredited (appear on TGA) or informal Skills First Skills Sets (such as CONISS programs).
- Short Courses are identified by a course code commencing with 3120 and are fee for service.
- Non-Accredited Programs (NAP) are identified by a program code commencing with NAP and are fee for service.

Notification	Refund
More than five (5) business days prior to course commencement date	Full refund or transfer to new date in an identical course

Less than & including five (5) business days prior to course commencement date	No refund - transfer to the next available identical course may be requested
Course commencement date and after including “no show”	No refund No transfer No substitutions
Course cancelled by South West TAFE	Full refund

11. Transferring to an alternate date

Where a student provides notification within the approved timeline above, a transfer to an alternate date may occur.

- If no future date is currently scheduled, the student will be placed on a priority waitlist and admitted to the next available identical course.
- If no course date is scheduled within three (3) months of the original commencement date, the student may request a full refund of the course fees paid.
- Where extenuating circumstance apply and a mutually agreeable date cannot be provided, a request for refund will be considered by the Manager, Student Administration on a case by case basis.

All transfer and refund requests must be submitted **in writing** to the designated administration contact.

12. Material and Consumable Fees

In all circumstances, the refund of unused materials is at the discretion of the teaching department and will be determined by the units of competency commenced and the condition of the materials. In some circumstances, materials cannot be refunded due to health regulations.

13. Unpaid fees or debt

Outstanding fees and debts with SWTAFE may impact on a student's ability to continue studying with us; enrol in any further courses; impact on any fee refund; and will result in qualification documents being withheld until payment is made.

Where SWTAFE engages the services of debt collection agencies to recover unpaid fees or debts, we reserve the right to also recover associated debt collection costs from the student. In addition, debt collection processes have the potential to affect your future credit rating.

Engagement of a debt collection agency will require elements of a student's personal information to be shared with them. Only necessary information will be shared. Depending on the nature of the debt, shared information is not limited to but may include name; date of birth; contact details including phone and address; evidence of signature; course details; debt amount and payments made; and where the student was under the age of 18 at the time of enrolment, their nominated guardian/parent details.

14. Legal Action

Legal action may be undertaken if all debt collection activities have been completed and;

- The student has not paid in full, organised a payment plan or have defaulted on a payment plan **and;**
- The student has not lodged a formal complaint with our Audit Risk and Compliance Manager to dispute the outstanding debt. **Or**
- A decision has been made in regards to the student's dispute and they have not taken any further action

Once legal action is initiated, the student may be liable for the legal costs incurred. Students will also be advised that, debt collection processes have the potential to affect your future credit rating.

15. Special Circumstances

If a student was unable to officially withdraw within the specified required timelines to be eligible for a refund due to extenuating circumstances, they may write to state their case to:

Manager Student Administration
South West TAFE
P O Box 674

Warrnambool 3280

Or email Mailbox.EESA@swtafe.edu.au

ONLY **written claims** for Special Consideration will be addressed.

16. Record Keeping

SWTAFE will keep records of attempts to re-engage a student who has withdrawn. This can include emails, file notes or any other attempts of contact on the student file. DJSIR may request these records when you report a withdrawal.

17. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

SWTAFE is committed to making diversity, equity and inclusion part of everything we do, including in the implementation of this policy/procedure/guideline. For more information, please visit the 'Our Values' page on our [website](#) [external] or the Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Homepage on ECHO [internal]. [Diversity, Equity & Inclusion \(DEI\)](#)

18. Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

South West TAFE is committed to the protection of all children from all forms of child abuse and demonstrates this commitment through the implementation of a Child Safe Program designed to keep children safe within our organisation. For Child Safe key documents, resources, contact officer details please go to: [Child Safe Commitment](#)