



## **Fees Refund and Waiver SOP 2023-24SOP**

**SOP Number: 342-01-2024**

**Academic Year:**  
2023/24 Onwards

**Date Of This Issue: January 2024**

**Responsible Owner: Head of Finance**

### **Summary of Contents**

This procedure identifies the occasions when fees may be waived or refunded and specify the method by which fees are refunded.

### **RO Review Information:**

Reviewed: December 2023

**Next Review Due: June 2024**

### **Requires CMT Approval (yes/no):**

Yes

### **Previous Reference (for control purposes):**

SOP 171-11-2014

SOP 224-08-2016

SOP 248-05-2018

SOP 263-09-2019

SOP 295-07-2020

SOP 318-07-2021

SOP 330-08-2022

SOP 330-08-2023

**First Created: May 2018**

**Last CMT Approval Date: December 2023**

**Date of Equality of Opportunity and Good Relations Screening (Section 75):**

**Date of Last Accessibility Screening:**

Feb 2024



## Contents

<b>1.0</b>	<b>CHANGE HISTORY</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>3.0</b>	<b>SCOPE</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>PROCEDURE</b> .....	<b>1</b>
4.1	WAIVER / REFUND CIRCUMSTANCES.....	1
4.2	HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) STUDENTS – WITHDRAWAL / HE LEAVE OF ABSENCE .....	2
4.3	WAIVER / REFUND PROCEDURE.....	2
4.4	APPEALS .....	3
<b>5.0</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE OWNER</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>COMMUNICATION PLAN</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>REVIEW</b> .....	<b>4</b>
	<b>APPENDIX A – FEE WAIVER / REFUND REQUEST FORM</b> .....	<b>5</b>
	<b>APPENDIX B – FEE WAIVER / REFUND FORM FLOW CHART</b> .....	<b>6</b>
	<b>APPENDIX C – CHANGE HISTORY TABLE</b> .....	<b>7</b>

## 1.0 Change History

Changes to this SOP are documented in Appendix c of this document. When reading electronic copies of this document, [you can click here to view the change history](#).

## 2.0 Background

The Fees Policy establishes the guidelines by which fees and charges may be levied for the provision of appropriate educational facilities and services. The Fees Policy provides the fee for each category of course per academic year.

The Policy states that fees are not waived nor refundable except in a number of circumstances outlined in this procedure.

Therefore, the purpose of this procedure is to:

- Identify the occasions when fees may be waived or refunded; and
- Specify the method by which fees are refunded.

## 3.0 Scope

This procedure refers to all waivers and refunds of the following fees:

Fee Type	Definition
Tuition Fee	This refers to the amount due to cover the teaching costs of the student attending the College.
Examination/Registration/Validation Fee	The money collected by the College which is then forwarded to the examination Awarding Body.

A Fee Waiver refers to the waiving of the remainder of any fees due to be paid. This relates to a fee that has not been paid in full. A Fee waiver is not a concession.

A Fee Refund refers to a fee, which has already been paid, being reimbursed to a student (or his/her sponsor). This may be partially refunded or refunded in full.

It is possible that a situation may arise where there is a requirement for a Fee Waiver and Fee Refund in the same instance.

This procedure applies to:

- All staff who shall inform an individual or organisation requesting a waiver or refund.
- Customer and Community Services Unit, Business Services Unit and Schools who shall process all applications for refund of money paid by applicant or applicant request for a fee waiver.
- Applicants requesting a refund of money paid or a fee waiver.
- The Finance Department which shall process refunds and waivers.

## 4.0 Procedure

### 4.1 Waiver / Refund Circumstances

The College Policy is that fees are not waived nor refundable except in the following circumstances:

- 4.1.1** A course/class is cancelled by the College; where cancellation of a course takes place prior to the course start date, students will be offered either a place on a suitable alternative

course or a full refund/fee waiver. If cancellation is after the course start date a partial refund/fee waiver may be offered.

- 4.1.2 If the time, day, evening or location of the class has been changed by the College and the student is unable to continue attending because of these changes.
- 4.1.3 A student does not attend the course of study and informs the College more than five working days prior to the commencement of the course. Any student who fails to notify the College at least 5 working days before the course commences, but prior to the course commencement, shall be liable for a £20 administration fee on any refund.
- 4.1.4 Other fee waiver or refund applications shall be considered only in exceptional circumstances by the Head of Finance. Any case for exceptional circumstances to be considered must be supported by appropriate evidence and a statement from the Head of School/Department. This will include situations where the student did not attend the course of study, but only informed the College after the course commenced. Any approved fee waiver or refund will be subject to a £20 administration fee on any refund.

If a fee waiver/refund applicant has attended one or more classes then no reduction in fee (waiver) nor refund may be given, except in circumstance 3.1.5 above.

Any requests for a fee waiver/refund should be submitted within the academic year (by 31 August). Requests cannot be considered for previous academic years.

Where a refund has been refused it may be possible to transfer the tuition fee paid to another programme in the current academic year.

Registration, examination and validation fees will only be waived or refunded if the amount is requested before the fee has been forwarded to the external body.

## 4.2 Higher Education (HE) Students – Withdrawal / HE Leave of Absence

In addition to the circumstances outlined above Full and Part time Higher Education students who withdraw from their course or go on a leave of absence will be charged a reduced tuition fee as detailed in the Fees Policy. These students are not required to complete the Fee Waiver / Refund Request Form.

Students may be permitted to take a Leave of Absence from their studies if experiencing exceptional circumstances. A student in this situation should follow the Leave of Absence (LOA) process, outlined in the HE Handbook, and submit the LOA1 form to their Programme Co-ordinator. If a Leave of Absence is approved by the Course Team, a copy of the LOA1 form will be forwarded to the Head of Finance for decision on the fees suspension. Where a student is granted a Leave of Absence the student will be guaranteed a place on the course, should they choose to return at the end of the agreed leave of absence period.

## 4.3 Waiver / Refund Procedure

The fee waiver / refund procedure for sections 3.1.1 – 3.1.5 is as follows:

- i. Course Cancellation – the student will be notified about the course cancellation by the School Support Officer. If the student does not wish to transfer to another course, and a refund is due, Customer Services will commence the refund request by completing the Student Withdrawal Form. This form will then require processing by MIS, and the student status on the enrolment system updated before the refund can be processed by the Finance Department.

- ii. Course changed from advertised - the student will be notified about the course change by the School Support Officer. If the student does not wish to transfer to an alternative course session and a refund is due, Customer Services will commence the refund request by completing the Student Withdrawal Form. This form will then require processing by MIS before the refund can be processed by the Finance Department.
- iii. Student withdrawal prior to course commencement - the student must submit a completed 'Fee Waiver/Refund Request Form' (Appendix A) to Customer and Community Services for the attention of the Senior Customer Services Officer. The form must be marked with the date received. The Customer Services Refund Administrator will create the Fee Waiver/Refund Request e-form and check if a withdrawal has been commenced, if appropriate. The Fee Waiver/Refund Request Form will be attached to the e-form. A £20 administration fee for any refunds will be noted on the e-form if the College is not notified less than 5 working days before the course commences.
- iv. Exceptional Circumstances - Where a fee waiver or refund is requested in exceptional circumstances the student must complete a 'Fee Waiver / Refund Request Form' (Appendix A). The Fee Waiver / Refund Request form must include supporting evidence e.g. medical evidence, proof of relocation, evidence from employer. The form must be submitted to Customer and Community Services for the attention of the Senior Customer Services Officer.

Upon receipt of the form, the Customer Services Refund Administrator will create the Fee Waiver/Refund Request e-form and check if a withdrawal has been commenced, if appropriate. The Fee Waiver/Refund Request Form will be attached to the e-form and an acknowledgement issued to the student, within five working days. If supporting information has not been submitted, this will also be requested at this stage. The request will be closed if supporting evidence is not submitted within 10 working days from date of the acknowledgment letter.

Customer Services Refund Administrator will forward the e-form to the Head of School to seek a statement of recommendation.

The e-form will then be sent to the Head of Finance to review. The Head of Finance will review the request and will make a decision based on the information and supporting evidence in conjunction with the recommendation from the Head of School.

If a refund/fee waiver is approved the e-form will be sent to the Accounts Receivable section to action the refund. Once the account adjustments and any refund, if applicable, has been actioned the form will be sent to Customer Services to notify the applicant, in writing, of the outcome of their request and the value of any refund amount, which will be minus a £20 administration fee.

If the no refund/fee waiver is approved the form will be sent directly to Customer Services to notify the student.

The process must be completed, and the student notified of outcome, within twenty working days of receipt of Fee Waiver/Refund Request Form.

All refunds will be issued by cheque regardless of the method of the original payment.

#### **4.4 Appeals**

In the event that a fee waiver/refund applicant is dissatisfied with the outcome of their application they may lodge an appeal, in writing, within 10 working days of the receipt of the

outcome letter. The outcome letter will explain the appeals process. An acknowledgement of the appeal will be issued to the student within five working days.

Applicants cannot appeal a Fee Waiver/Refund decision on the same issue unless there is new evidence or other grounds to do so.

Applicants who have exhausted the Fees Refund and Waiver procedure cannot submit a complaint on the same issue unless there is new evidence or other grounds to do so.

The Chief Finance Officer will form the Appeals Panel with a Senior Customer Services Officer. The appeal process must be completed, and the student notified of the outcome, within twenty working days of the receipt of the appeal.

## **5.0 Responsible Owner**

Head of Finance

## **6.0 Communication Plan**

This procedure will be communicated to staff via the Learning Engine on the Intranet and made available to any customer upon request.

This document can be made available in alternative formats upon request.

## **7.0 Review**

This procedure will be reviewed annually, or when the need for change has been identified.

**1. REQUEST TYPE (please tick as appropriate)**

<b>WAIVER OF OUTSTANDING FEES</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>REFUND OF FEES ALREADY PAID</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>BOTH WAIVER AND REFUND</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
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**2. PERSONAL INFORMATION**

<b>STUDENT ID (if available):</b>	
<b>SURNAME:</b> DR/MR/MRS/MS/MISS	<b>FORENAME:</b>
<b>DOB:</b>	<b>EMAIL:</b>
<b>PERMANENT HOME ADDRESS:</b>	<b>POSTCODE:</b>
<b>CONTACT NUMBER:</b>	

**3. COURSE DETAILS (INCLUDING CAMPUS)**

<b>COURSE TITLE:</b>	<b>COURSE FEE:</b>
<b>COURSE CODE:</b>	<b>AMOUNT PAID:</b>
<b>CAMPUS:</b>	<b>RECEIPT NUMBER:</b>
<b>FEES PAID BY: (tick as appropriate)</b> <b>STUDENT</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>SPONSOR/EMPLOYER</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	

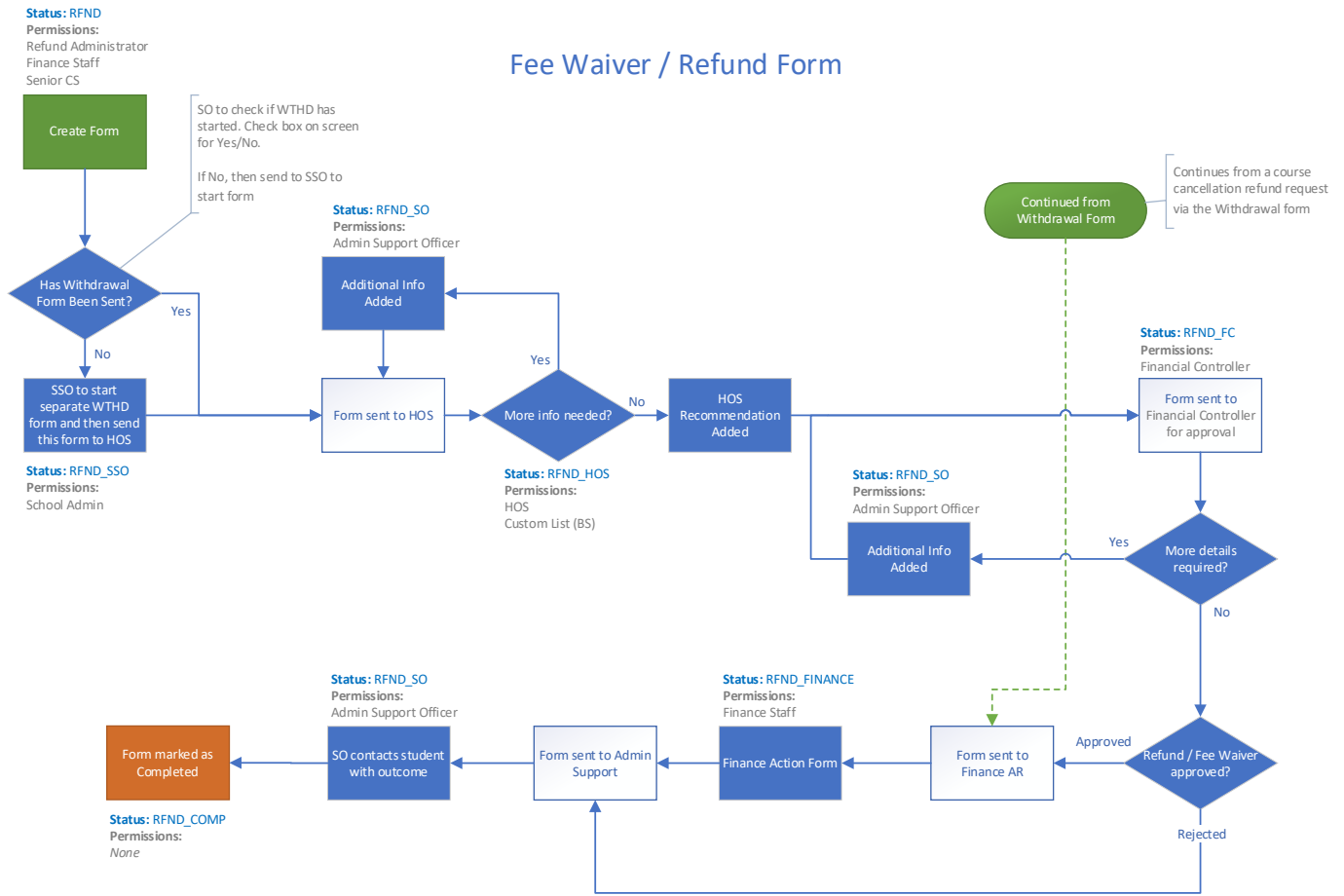
**4. REASON FOR REQUEST (Please attach any supporting documentation/medical evidence to support your request. Requests received less than one week before the course start date can only be considered if supporting evidence is provided).**

**PRIVACY NOTICE:** Information gathered on this form will be processed within the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and used for the purpose of determining eligibility for a fee waiver/refund. The College is permitted to process personal data where there is a 'lawful basis' to do so. This processing is necessary for the performance of a **public task** or in the exercise of official authority vested in the College as a Data Controller e.g. SERC Fees Policy and SERC Fees Refund and Waiver Standard Operating Procedure. Your information may be shared with relevant College staff for the purpose of determining eligibility for a fee waiver/refund. It may also be shared with third parties where there is a lawful basis to do so. I realise that if I choose not to agree to these terms I will be unable to request a review of my fees liability. Further information on data protection and your rights are available on our website <https://www.serc.ac.uk/customer-privacy>

**1. STUDENT SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_**

<b>For Admin Use Only:</b>		<b>Logged Date:</b>	
<b>Form Accepted by CSA:</b>		<b>Decision:</b>	
<b>Received Date:</b>		<b>Initials &amp; Date:</b>	
<b>HE/FE Course:</b>		<b>Student Notified Date:</b>	

# Appendix B – Fee Waiver / Refund Form Flow Chart





## APPENDIX C – CHANGE HISTORY TABLE

Version	Date	Change Detail
1	May 2018	created
1.1	June 2020	<p>Section 2 – Scope now applies to Business Services courses.</p> <p>Section 3 – Course/Class cancellation updated to include cancellations after the course start date where partial refund/fee waiver may be offered.</p> <p>Fee Waiver / Refund Request Form updated to include section on “Fees Paid By: Student or Sponsor/Employer”.</p>
1.2	June 2021	Procedural Updates to reflect new E-Form model of transferring requests.
1.3	July 2022	Update to section 3.3 to reflect E-Forms creation.
1.4	December 2023	<p>Update job title from Financial Controller to Head of Finance.</p> <p>Section 3.3: Overall timeframe for processing fee waiver/refund, including notification, changed to twenty working days. Acknowledgement of receipt to be issued within five working days.</p> <p>Section 3.4: Overall timeframe for processing appeal, including notification, changed to twenty working days. Acknowledgement of receipt to be issued within five working days</p>
1.5	Feb 2024	Transferred to new Accessibility Template