

Fees & Refunds Policy and Associated Procedures

Policy Area:	Governance / Student Support and Inclusion
Standards Reference:	Standards for RTOs 2025 – Outcome Standards 1.1, 1.2, 1.6, 1.7, 2.1, 2.2
Responsibility:	CEO, RTO Manager, Trainers and Assessors, Student Support Officer, Administrative Staff
Classification:	Internal Governance Policy – Student Access, Equity, Inclusion and Support

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Fees & Refunds Policy and Associated Procedures is to establish a clear, fair, and transparent framework for the management of all fees, charges, payments, fee protection arrangements, and refunds applicable to offshore learners enrolled with the Institute of International Studies (IOIS). The policy is designed to ensure that all learners are fully informed of their financial obligations prior to enrolment and throughout the duration of their studies, enabling them to make informed decisions based on accurate, accessible, and consistent information.

This policy outlines the principles and operational requirements governing the setting and disclosure of tuition and non-tuition fees, invoicing arrangements, payment schedules, and the management of overdue accounts. It also defines the circumstances and processes for fee adjustments arising from Credit Transfer (CT) and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), as well as the conditions under which refunds may be approved, calculated, and processed. By applying standardised rules, timeframes, and documented procedures, IOIS ensures equitable treatment of all learners and consistency in decision-making across all offshore delivery operations.

The policy further supports the protection of prepaid learner fees by limiting advance payments, promoting staged fee collection, and maintaining financial safeguards that reduce the risk of financial disadvantage to students. All fee-related decisions, transactions, and outcomes are required to be properly documented and retained to support accountability, audit readiness, and continuous improvement.

This policy is underpinned by and aligned with the Standards for RTOs 2025, particularly Outcome 2, which requires RTOs to provide clear pre-enrolment information and protect learner interests. It also aligns with Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) certification requirements and the Australian Consumer Law (ACL), ensuring that IOIS's fee and refund practices are lawful, transparent, and fair, and that learners' statutory rights are not limited or excluded by this policy.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all prospective and enrolled offshore students undertaking training and assessment with the Institute of International Studies (IOIS), regardless of the qualification, unit of competency, or stage of enrolment. It governs all financial arrangements associated with offshore delivery, including the provision of pre-enrolment fee information, the collection and management of tuition and non-tuition fees, payment scheduling, fee adjustments, and the administration of refunds.

The policy also applies to all IOIS personnel who are involved in, or have responsibility for, activities that influence or manage learner fees and refunds. This includes, but is not limited to, the CEO, RTO Manager, Trainers and Assessors, Student Support Officers, administrative staff, and

finance or accounts personnel. These staff members are required to apply the policy consistently and in accordance with documented procedures to ensure fairness, transparency, and regulatory compliance.

In addition, this policy extends to all approved third parties and education agents engaged by IOIS for offshore marketing, recruitment, admissions, or enrolment activities. Such parties must operate strictly within the boundaries of this policy and are not authorised to make representations, commitments, or guarantees regarding fees, payment arrangements, or refunds beyond those formally approved and published by IOIS. Compliance with this policy is a condition of engagement for all third parties and agents, and any non-compliance may result in corrective action or termination of the arrangement.

3. Principles

IOIS applies the following guiding principles to the management of fees, payments, and refunds for offshore learners, ensuring that all financial practices are transparent, equitable, and compliant with regulatory and consumer protection requirements.

- **Clarity and access to information:** IOIS is committed to providing clear, accurate, and accessible information about all fees and charges prior to enrolment. Details relating to tuition fees, non-tuition fees, payment schedules, due dates, methods of payment, and refund conditions are published and made available to prospective learners through multiple channels, including the IOIS website, Course Brochure, Offer Letter and Student Agreement, and Student Handbook. This ensures learners are fully informed of their financial obligations before accepting an offer and entering into a formal training agreement.
- **Fairness and consistency:** Fee structures and payment arrangements are designed to be reasonable and proportionate to the services provided. Refund decisions are applied consistently across all offshore cohorts, using clearly defined criteria and timeframes, and are assessed in accordance with Australian Consumer Law. IOIS ensures that learners are treated equitably and that refund outcomes are not arbitrary, discriminatory, or misleading.
- **Protection of prepaid learner fees:** IOIS places a strong emphasis on safeguarding learner funds by limiting the amount of fees collected in advance and encouraging staged payment arrangements aligned to study periods or milestones. Financial safeguards are maintained to ensure that IOIS can meet its refund obligations at all times, thereby reducing financial risk and protecting learners from potential disadvantage.
- **Evidence, accountability, and audit readiness:** All fee-related transactions and decisions are fully documented to support transparency and accountability. This includes records of invoices, payments, receipts, payment plans, notices for overdue accounts, fee adjustments, refund applications, decisions, and refund payments. Records are securely retained in accordance with IOIS records management requirements and are available to support internal reviews, audits, and regulatory compliance activities.

4. Information about Fees

- IOIS ensures that all prospective offshore students have timely access to clear, accurate, and comprehensive information about fees and charges prior to enrolment. Fee information is publicly available through official IOIS communication channels, including the IOIS website, Course Brochure, and Student Handbook. These sources provide an overview of tuition and non-tuition fees, allowing prospective learners to compare options and understand their financial commitments before submitting an application.

- Once an offer is made, detailed and personalised fee information is formally confirmed in the Offer Letter and Student Agreement (OLSA). The OLSA itemises all applicable fees, including the application fee, total tuition fees, any additional non-tuition charges, and the approved payment schedule. It clearly specifies accepted payment methods, invoice due dates, and the conditions under which refunds may be granted. Where applicable, the OLSA also outlines any statutory cooling-off rights available to students under relevant local consumer protection legislation, ensuring transparency and informed consent.
- IOIS advises students that published fees are subject to periodic review, ordinarily on an annual basis, to ensure alignment with operational costs, regulatory requirements, and market conditions. Any revised fee structures are normally applied to new intakes only and are updated consistently across all marketing, enrolment, and learner information materials to prevent misinformation or inconsistency.
- Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all fees and charges are quoted in Australian Dollars (AUD). Where alternative currencies or payment arrangements apply, this information is clearly disclosed in writing to the student prior to enrolment to avoid confusion or misunderstanding regarding payment obligations.

5. Schedule of Additional Fees

Fee/Charge	Amount
Deferral fee	\$100 Processing fee
Re-assessment fee (after 2 attempts)	\$50 per attempt
Late payment fee	\$100 per week in arrears
Credit Transfer	\$250 application
RPL	\$250 application + \$300 per unit assessed
Certificate re-issue	\$50

The current Fees & Charges Schedule is appended to the OLSA and published on the IOIS website.

6. Fee Protection

IOIS is committed to protecting offshore learners from financial risk by implementing prudent fee protection measures that align with regulatory expectations and good practice in student fee management. These measures are designed to ensure that learners are not required to make excessive advance payments and that IOIS remains capable of meeting its financial obligations in all circumstances.

- IOIS does not require students to pay more than AUD \$1,500 in advance for training and assessment services that have not yet been delivered. While students may choose to pay a higher amount voluntarily, IOIS actively recommends staged payment arrangements that

align with defined study periods or delivery milestones. This approach reduces the financial exposure of learners and supports ongoing affordability and access to education.

- To further safeguard learner interests, IOIS maintains adequate financial reserves and cash flow controls to ensure that refund obligations can be met promptly and in full if required. These financial safeguards support IOIS's ability to manage provider default situations, overpayments, and other refund scenarios without placing learners at financial risk.
- Invoicing is structured on a study-period or milestone basis rather than requiring payment of full course fees upfront. This ensures that fees collected are proportionate to services delivered or about to be delivered and supports transparency, fairness, and compliance with learner protection principles. All fee protection practices are monitored as part of IOIS's financial governance and quality assurance processes to ensure ongoing effectiveness and regulatory compliance.

7. Payments

IOIS provides clear and accessible information regarding approved payment options to ensure that offshore learners understand how and when fees are to be paid. Payment methods and relevant bank or payment details are formally documented in the Offer Letter and Student Agreement (OLSA) and are repeated on all issued invoices. This ensures consistency of information and reduces the risk of error or misunderstanding at the point of payment.

All fees must be paid in accordance with the payment schedule and by the due dates specified on the invoice. Students who anticipate difficulty meeting a payment deadline are required to contact IOIS prior to the due date to discuss their circumstances. Where appropriate, IOIS may approve a payment arrangement or plan, provided this is documented in writing and does not compromise compliance with fee protection and learner support requirements. Failure to engage with IOIS before the due date may result in the initiation of overdue account procedures.

IOIS issues an official receipt for every payment received, regardless of the amount or payment method. Receipts serve as formal evidence of payment and are recorded in the student management and accounting systems. All payment records and receipts are securely retained for a minimum period of two years following the student's completion or withdrawal from their course, in accordance with IOIS records management and audit requirements.

7.1 Overdue Accounts

IOIS applies a consistent, transparent, and documented process for managing overdue accounts for both domestic and offshore students. This process is intended to ensure fairness to learners while supporting effective financial management and organisational sustainability. Where a payment is not received by the invoice due date and no approved payment arrangement is in place, IOIS implements a staged escalation process that provides the student with reasonable opportunity to resolve the matter.

A **First Warning** notice is issued five (5) working days after the payment due date. This notice advises the student of the outstanding amount, reiterates the payment obligation, and requests prompt payment or immediate contact with IOIS to discuss a suitable payment arrangement.

If the account remains unpaid, a **Second Warning** is issued five (5) working days after the First Warning. This communication formally notifies the student that the fees remain overdue and outlines the consequences of continued non-payment, while again encouraging the student to engage with IOIS to resolve the issue.

Where payment is still not received, a **Final Notice** is issued five (5) working days after the Second Warning. The Final Notice advises that ongoing non-payment may result in suspension of access to learning resources, including the Learning Management System (LMS), and/or cancellation of enrolment in accordance with the IOIS Deferral, Suspension, Withdrawal and Cancellation Policy.

If the outstanding fees remain unpaid following the Final Notice, IOIS may proceed with suspension or cancellation of the student's enrolment and may refer the outstanding debt to an external debt collection agency for recovery. All notices, communications, and decisions relating to overdue accounts are documented and retained on the student file to support transparency, consistency, and audit requirements.

8. Fee Adjustments for Credit Transfer (CT) & RPL

IOIS applies fair and transparent fee adjustment arrangements where a student is granted Credit Transfer (CT) and/or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) that results in a reduction to the number of units required to be undertaken as part of their enrolled course. Where CT or RPL is approved and leads to a reduction in the overall volume of training and assessment to be delivered, tuition fees are adjusted on a pro-rata basis to reflect the reduced training commitment.

As a guiding calculation method, IOIS applies the following formula to determine the tuition fee reduction:

(Total course tuition fee ÷ total number of units in the course) × number of units granted as CT/RPL = tuition fee reduction.

This approach ensures that fee adjustments are applied consistently, proportionately, and in a manner that is directly aligned with the services no longer required to be delivered.

Any approved CT or RPL outcome, including the resulting changes to course duration and tuition fees, is formally confirmed to the student in writing. Updated enrolment details, revised fee amounts, and any changes to the payment schedule are reflected in the next issued invoice and, where applicable, through a formal variation to the Offer Letter and Student Agreement (OLSA). All calculations, approvals, and communications relating to fee adjustments are retained on the student file to support transparency, accuracy, and audit requirements.

9. Refunds

IOIS administers refunds in a fair, timely, and transparent manner to ensure that students are not financially disadvantaged and that refund decisions are applied consistently across domestic and offshore cohorts. Refund arrangements are clearly defined and communicated to students prior to enrolment and are implemented in accordance with documented procedures and applicable consumer protection requirements.

- Application fees are generally non-refundable, as they cover administrative and processing costs incurred by IOIS. The only exception to this applies where IOIS cancels a course prior to its commencement, in which case the application fee will be refunded in full along with any other fees paid.
- Where IOIS cancels a course either before or after commencement (referred to as a provider default), IOIS will automatically refund all applicable fees to affected students. In such circumstances, students are not required to submit a refund application form. Refunds arising from provider default are processed within ten (10) working days of the cancellation decision.
- For all other refund circumstances, students must submit a completed Refund Application Form within ten (10) working days of the event giving rise to the refund request. IOIS assesses each request against the approved refund conditions and communicates the outcome to the student in writing within twenty (20) working days of receiving the application. Where a refund is approved, payment is processed at the time the outcome is issued.

- All refunds are paid in Australian Dollars (AUD) and are normally made to the original payer, unless an alternative arrangement is required by law. Any applicable bank or transaction charges may be deducted from the refund amount, provided these charges are disclosed to the student. Nothing in this policy limits or excludes a student's rights under the Australian Consumer Law, which continue to apply in all circumstances.

9.1 Refund Circumstances – IOIS Offshore and Domestic Delivery

Circumstance	Refund Due
IOIS cancels a course before commencement.	Full refund of all fees paid.
IOIS cancels a course after commencement.	Full refund of unspent tuition fees, calculated as: weekly tuition × weeks in the default period (from date of default).
Student withdraws \geq 4 weeks before commencement.	Application fee non-refundable; 100% refund of other fees.
Student withdraws $<$ 4 weeks before commencement.	Application fee non-refundable; 90% refund of other fees.
Student does not commence on the agreed start date and has not previously withdrawn.	No refund; fees for first study period are payable.
Student withdraws after commencement.	No refund; fees for current study period are payable.
Enrolment cancelled for misconduct or serious breach of IOIS policy.	No refund; fees for current study period are payable.
Offer withdrawn due to false/misleading/incomplete information supplied by student.	No refund; fees for first study period are payable.
Overpayment of fees.	Full refund of the overpaid amount.

10. Procedures

10.1 Process Invoices

- IOIS follows a structured and documented process for the issuance and management of student invoices to ensure accuracy, transparency, and consistency with approved enrolment and fee arrangements. Invoices are generated in accordance with the payment schedule outlined in the Offer Letter and Student Agreement (OLSA) and are typically structured on a study-period or milestone basis, rather than requiring payment of full course fees upfront.
- Invoices are issued to the student or, where applicable, to the approved payer, and clearly state the invoiced amount, due date, payment instructions, and reference details required to ensure correct allocation of payments. IOIS ensures that invoices are issued in a timely manner to allow students adequate notice to meet their payment obligations.

- Upon receipt of payment, IOIS issues an official receipt confirming the amount paid, the date of payment, and the method of payment. Payment details are promptly recorded in the accounting system and the student management system (SMS) to ensure that financial and enrolment records remain accurate and up to date.
- All invoices and receipts, including records of payments received, are securely retained for a minimum period of two (2) years following the student's completion or withdrawal from their course. These records support financial accountability, audit readiness, and compliance with IOIS records management and regulatory requirements.

10.2 Manage Overdue Fees

- IOIS implements a systematic process to monitor and manage overdue fees to ensure timely follow-up, consistent application of procedures, and clear communication with students. Student accounts are reviewed on a daily or weekly basis, as appropriate, to identify any outstanding amounts that have passed the invoice due date.
- Where an amount becomes overdue, IOIS issues an initial Payment Reminder to the student and allows a period of five (5) working days for the outstanding fees to be paid or for the student to make contact to discuss an acceptable payment arrangement. This step provides the student with an early opportunity to resolve the matter without escalation.
- If payment is not received within this timeframe, a **First Warning** notice is issued. Should the account remain unpaid after a further five (5) working days, a **Second Warning** notice is issued, advising the student that the account continues to be overdue and that further action may follow if the matter is not addressed.
- Where the outstanding fees remain unpaid after an additional five (5) working days, a **Final Notice** is issued. The Final Notice formally advises the student that failure to resolve the overdue amount may result in suspension of access to learning resources and/or cancellation of enrolment in accordance with the IOIS Deferral, Suspension, Withdrawal and Cancellation Policy.
- If the matter remains unresolved following the Final Notice, IOIS may proceed with suspension or cancellation of the student's enrolment and, where appropriate, refer the outstanding debt for external recovery. All payment reminders, warning notices, communications, decisions, and outcomes are fully documented and recorded in the student file and student management system (SMS) to ensure transparency, consistency, and audit readiness.

10.3 Process Refunds

- IOIS applies a clear and timely process for the assessment and payment of refunds to ensure that students are treated fairly and that refund obligations are met in accordance with approved refund conditions and consumer protection requirements.
- In the event of a provider default, where IOIS cancels a course either before or after commencement, IOIS will notify all affected students in writing within three (3) working days of the cancellation decision. In these circumstances, students are not required to submit a refund application. Applicable refunds are processed automatically and paid within ten (10) working days of the provider default.
- For all other refund scenarios, the student is required to submit a completed Refund Application Form within ten (10) working days of the event giving rise to the refund request. IOIS assesses each application against the approved Refund Circumstances Table to ensure that decisions are consistent, transparent, and aligned with published refund conditions. A decision is made and communicated to the student in writing within twenty (20) working days of receiving the completed application.
- Where a refund is approved, payment is made in Australian Dollars (AUD) to the original payer, unless an alternative arrangement is required by law. Following payment, IOIS updates the accounting system and student management system (SMS) to reflect the refund transaction. All supporting documentation, including the refund application, assessment, decision, and proof of payment, is retained on the student file to support accountability, audit requirements, and continuous improvement activities.

10.4 Adjust Fees for CT/RPL

- IOIS applies a formal and documented process when adjusting fees following the approval of Credit Transfer (CT) and/or Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). Once a CT or RPL application has been assessed and approved, the outcome is confirmed to the student in writing, clearly outlining the units granted, the impact on course duration, and any resulting changes to tuition fees.
- Where CT or RPL results in a reduction to the number of units required to be completed, IOIS applies a pro-rata reduction to the tuition fees in accordance with the approved fee adjustment methodology. Revised fee amounts and any changes to the payment schedule are reflected on the next issued invoice and, where applicable, through a formal variation to the Offer Letter and Student Agreement (OLSA), ensuring that the student has an accurate and current record of their financial obligations.
- All CT and RPL calculations, supporting evidence, approvals, and related communications are retained on the student file. This documentation supports transparency, consistency in decision-making, and compliance with record-keeping and audit requirements.

11. Records & Retention

- IOIS maintains accurate, complete, and secure records relating to all fee and refund activities to support transparency, accountability, and regulatory compliance. Records include, but are not limited to, invoices, payment receipts, payment plans, overdue account notices and warnings, refund application forms, refund assessments and decisions, and evidence of refund payments. These records provide a complete audit trail of all financial transactions and decisions affecting students.
- All fee- and refund-related records are retained for a minimum period of two (2) years following the student's completion or withdrawal from their course. Records are stored in accordance with IOIS records management and data security requirements to ensure confidentiality, integrity, and accessibility for authorised personnel.
- In addition, IOIS retains both current and superseded versions of this policy, associated procedures, and fee schedules in line with its records management procedures. Maintaining version-controlled policy documentation ensures traceability of changes over time and supports internal reviews, audits, and continuous improvement activities.

12. Responsibilities

Clear roles and responsibilities are assigned to ensure the effective implementation, monitoring, and ongoing compliance of this Fees & Refunds Policy and Associated Procedures.

- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for ensuring that appropriate financial safeguards are in place to protect learner funds and that IOIS can meet its financial and refund obligations at all times. The CEO approves this policy and any significant amendments, providing overall governance and strategic oversight of fee and refund management.
- The Academic Manager (RTO Manager) is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day implementation of this policy and ensuring that fee and refund practices are applied consistently across all domestic and offshore operations. This includes approving fee adjustments arising from Credit Transfer (CT) and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), approving refund decisions in accordance with documented criteria, and ensuring ongoing alignment with the Standards for RTOs 2025 and other applicable regulatory requirements.
- The Administration and Student Support Officer is responsible for the operational administration of fees and refunds. This includes issuing invoices in accordance with approved payment schedules, monitoring and recording payments, managing overdue account communications, preparing refund calculations, processing approved refunds, and maintaining accurate and complete financial and student records within the accounting system and student management system.

- The Finance/Accounts function, where applicable, is responsible for bank reconciliations, receipting of payments, processing refund disbursements, and maintaining accurate financial records to support financial reporting and audit requirements.
- Agents and approved third parties engaged by IOIS for marketing or recruitment activities must strictly adhere to IOIS-approved fee schedules and information. They are not authorised to make representations, commitments, or claims regarding fees, payment arrangements, or refunds beyond what is formally approved and documented by IOIS. Compliance with this policy is a condition of engagement and is monitored by IOIS.

13. Related Documents

- IOIS Offer Letter & Student Agreement (OLSA)
- IOIS Fees & Charges Schedule
- IOIS Refund Application Form
- IOIS Deferral, Suspension, Withdrawal & Cancellation Policy
- IOIS Complaints & Appeals Policy
- IOIS Student Handbook
- IOIS RPL Kit / Credit Transfer Form
- IOIS Records Management Procedure



Document Version Control

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