

Supporting a Student who needs to apply for a Remission of Fees?

Firstly, thanks for supplying your student with this support. It will go a long way with helping their application be successful.

What is a Remission of Fees Application?

It is an application to the University Fee's department to refund the fees for one or more courses where the student failed or withdrew from study. The application is assessed against a federally legislated criteria outside of the University of Newcastle's control (hence the need to be quite specific). If successful it will remit any fees paid (upfront or HECS) and remove the failed or withdrawn grades for those courses from the student's transcript.

Supporting Documentation.

This process requires supporting documentation and will not be accepted with just the student's statement alone. An effective support letter can make all the difference in these processes. Supporting Documentation can be written by the Student's doctor, psychologist, psychiatrist, counsellor, physio, social/case worker, police etc or any other person, medical or not, who may be relevant to the circumstances.

What to include in a support letter for a Remission of Fees.

It is very important that this documentation be thorough, include all relevant dates, indicate the severity or escalation of the problem and explain the impact it has had on the student's decision making and their ability to engage successfully in their studies.

A letter of support should be term (trimester/semester) specific and concise in nature. (e.g. only semester 1 not Semester 1 & Semester 2 and not to delve into unnecessary information). **If** multiple terms are impacted the student will need separate supporting documents for each term.

This supporting documentation should include, but not limited to:

- The date the circumstances first began;
- If the circumstances started prior to census date, how did they change or what made the circumstances worsen after census date. The documentation would need to explain, if the circumstances began before census date, why the student didn't withdraw prior to that date. For example, maybe the circumstances relate to a health condition they live with. Usually it is managed however, it was exacerbated due to XYZ circumstances. Or maybe it is a new condition/circumstance that they could not predict would deteriorate the way it did/impact in the way they thought.
- How the circumstances affected their ability to study (were they disengaged/not attending? Were they engaged but not in the mind frame to concentrate effectively? Were they unable to physically attend classes due to their circumstances? Etc.);
- If the circumstances impacted on their decision making. For example, were they so unwell that they were not making the decisions they usually would. E.g. staying enrolled despite not attending but continually thinking they could "catch up".

The text boxes below are excerpts from the Remission of Fees Application Form. It shows the exact legislative language used. Your support letter should mimic this language as close as possible.

Supporting document statement from the application:

What Supporting Documentation Do I Need to Provide?

The University will assess your application primarily on the independent supporting documentation you provide to substantiate your claims. Documentation should include all relevant dates and indicate the severity of the problem.

Documentation from a doctor, counsellor, employer, or independent member of the community should indicate:

- The date your circumstances first began; and
- Whether the circumstances changed after the census date, and if so, the date they changed and to what extent; and
- How your circumstances affect your ability to study; and
- The date it became apparent that you could not continue your studies.

A personal statement outlining your circumstances is not sufficient evidence for the University to assess your application. If you do not have independent supporting documentation your application will not be assessed.

Note: You will need to ensure that your supporting documentation is original and on official letterhead (if relevant), is signed and dated, and is certified prior to sending.

What are special circumstances:

What are Special Circumstances?

Special Circumstances are those that are generally considered to be unusual or uncommon and were not able to be foreseen before the census date.

You must also be able to demonstrate that the **Special Circumstances** were:

- beyond your control; and
- did not occur or make their full impact on you until on or after the census date; and
- made it impracticable for you to complete the requirements for the course(s).

You must be able to demonstrate, with independent supporting documentation, that:

1. **Your Special Circumstances were beyond your control**, i.e., a situation occurs that a reasonable person would consider is not due to your action or inaction and for which you are not responsible. This situation must be unusual, uncommon, or irregular.
Note: A lack of knowledge or understanding of the Higher Education Support Act (HESA), HELP scheme and relevant deadlines and University policies and procedures are not considered to be beyond your control; and
2. **Those Special Circumstances did not make their full impact until after the census date**, i.e., your circumstances occur:
 - a. before the census date, but worsen after that day; or
 - b. before the census date, but the full effect or magnitude does not become apparent until on or after that day; or
 - c. on or after the census date: **and**
3. **Due to Special Circumstances you were unable to complete your course requirements**, i.e., you could not undertake the necessary private study required, attend sufficient lectures or tutorials, or meet other compulsory attendance requirements.