

Standard Operating Practice – ECU Student Financial Services

3015.001 Tuition Refund Appeals Committee

Authority: NC § 147-86-21
NC § 116-143.7

History: First Issued: July 1, 2000
Last Revised: October 28, 2019

Related Policy:

Additional References:

[Senate Bill 225 - Repeal Tuition Surcharge](#)
UNC System Office - Fixed Tuition Regulation
[The UNC Policy Manual 1000.1.7\[R\]](#)
UNC System Office – Course Withdrawal
[The UNC Policy Manual 4001.5\[R\].11.C](#)
ECU Registrar’s Office - Course Withdrawal Information –
<https://registrar.ecu.edu/course-drops-withdrawal-policy/>

Last Reviewed: November 22, 2020

1. **Purpose:** The Cashier’s Office processes all refunds on student accounts that were generated as a result of a reduction in credit hours or from withdrawing in accordance with the published refund schedule. Any refund is calculated on a term by term basis and based on the effective date in the Banner system. On occasion, cause for an appeal may arise when a request for a refund is submitted after the end of the refund period, or a request for a refund may be unusual and/or extreme, or a refund may be unresolvable at the appropriate level.

Additionally, guidance for other student charges such as Late Payment Penalties and Resident Fixed Tuition Credits have provisions for waiving the charges or reinstating the credit given specific, unique circumstances and/or based on “good cause”. Each type of appeal may have a different time limitation (see specific appeal sections for clarification).

The purpose of this Standard Operating Procedure is to establish a Tuition Refunds Appeal Committee, to define the committee’s membership, to define types of appeals that the committee will render decisions upon, and to define any limitations of the committee.

2. **Membership:** The committee is comprised of Administrative Level representation from the following university departments and/or divisions:
 - a. Dean of Students Office
 - b. Registrar’s Office
 - c. Financial Aid Office

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- d. Graduate School
- e. Academic Advising
- f. Center for Counseling and Student Development (advisory role)
- g. Student Health Services (advisory role)
- h. Student Financial Services (Ex-Officio non-voting role)

Note: Housing and Dining are not represented on this committee as those offices have a separate contractual appeals process for the refund of room and board charges. For more information on the appeals process for housing and dining charges, please visit <https://campusliving.ecu.edu/contracts-and-forms/>.

Note: Residency Appeals are not heard by this committee. All residency appeals (Undergraduate and Graduate/Professional) are managed by Residency Determination Services (RDS) at <https://ncresidency.cfnc.org/>. Questions may be directed to rdsinfo@ncresidency.org.

Note: AHEC housing charges related to the College of Allied Health Sciences are not represented on this committee as that office has a separate process for the refund of room charges. For more information, please contact Diane Apetsi at apetsid15@ecu.edu.

Note: The University Attorney and/or other officials may be asked to join the committee as deemed appropriate.

3. Meeting time: Meetings are usually held on the third Thursday of each month. If there happens to be an extreme or unusual circumstance that prevents the face-to-face meeting (i.e., committee may have less than three (3) appeals in a given month or an appeal must be heard outside of the normally scheduled monthly meeting), the committee may agree to hold the meeting by conference call.
4. Decisions: Decisions of the committee are final. The committee's decision will be communicated to the student in writing (or via email), and will be disseminated internally as necessary, and externally upon written request, in accordance with federal and state guidance related to release of student data (see Appendix I and Appendix II).
5. Outstanding student account balances: ***Any refund that a student becomes entitled to shall first be applied to outstanding financial obligations owed to the university.***
6. Tuition and Fees:
 - a. Submitting an appeal: The Cashier's Office is the authorized point of contact for initiating a formal appeal. All appeals must be in writing and students are encouraged to include any and all documentation they believe to be relevant to the appeal. Appeals can be submitted in person to the Cashier's Office or via email to tuitionappeals@ecu.edu.

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- b. In order to be heard within the same month as submitted, appeals must be received five (5) business days prior to the third Thursday of each month. All documents submitted for an appeal are retained in Banner Xtender for audit purposes. The Director of Student Financial Services or his/her designee maintains the minutes from each meeting, documenting the outcome of each appeal.
- c. Limitations:
- i. Requests for refunds submitted later than one year after the end of the semester/term for which the refund is requested will not be considered, regardless of reason (s) unless a retro withdrawal is approved by the Student Academic Appellate Committee (reference item E below). Refunds are generally not approved when withdrawal or reduction in course load is caused by:
 1. personal reason(s);
 2. ignorance of publicized rules and regulations;
 3. circumstances within the student's control, and/or;
 4. failure of student to fulfill responsibilities.
 - ii. Remedial Math fees are generally not refundable as the remedial math class is taught under contractual arrangement with Pitt Community College. Any questions or concerns about this fee will be referred to the Division of Continuing Studies since that office administers the contract.
 - iii. Special course fees are generally not refundable. However, in the case of unique or unusual circumstance, the academic unit responsible for administering the fee will be contacted by a committee representative to inquire about the possibility of refund. The decision to refund a special course fee ultimately rests with the academic unit.
- d. Refund Consideration: In general, a refund of tuition and required fees for withdrawal or reduction in course load is approved if any of the following circumstances exist or if the request was caused by:
- i. Death of student – The death of a student occurs during a semester or session in which no academic credit is received, the University will elect to refund 100% of the tuition and required fees paid for that particular semester or term and waive the \$25 processing fee;
 - ii. Being called to active military duty or the reassignment to a new active duty station: When a student is called to active military duty or who is an active member of the armed forces and is transferred to a new permanent duty station preventing the student from completing the semester or term and receiving no academic credit, pending verification of orders, the University will elect to refund 100% of the tuition and required fees for that particular semester minus the \$25.00 processing fee unless the tuition and fees are being paid by an outside government agency;
 - iii. Documented serious medical reasons: The University may elect to limit the financial liability of a student who becomes unable to complete his/her course work and officially withdraws as a direct result of a serious medical condition,

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- pending the submission and review of pertinent medical records and supporting documentation;
- iv. Death or serious illness of immediate family (defined as mother, father, sister, brother, spouse, child, legal guardian or step relation): When the death of, or the serious illness of an immediate family member necessitates the withdrawal of a student before academic credit is received, the University may elect to refund up to 100% of the tuition and required fees paid for that particular semester or term minus the \$25 processing fee
 - v. Verifiable circumstances completely beyond the student's control that result in extreme or unusual hardship to the student (i.e. Catastrophic calamity; natural or otherwise): Notwithstanding any other provisions for refund, on rare occasions, when a student has withdrawn or reduced course load due to unforeseen circumstances totally beyond the student's control, under conditions in which the denial of refund would cause unreasonable and extreme hardship, the University may elect to limit the financial liability of a student, provided that no academic credit is received.
 - vi. Substantive error on the part of the University: Substantive error on the part of the University will be corrected and, if appropriate, refunded in a timely fashion. Any university penalty charges assessed as a result of the error(s) will be reversed.
- e. Notification of Appeal Determination: Decisions of the committee are final. The committee's decision will be communicated to the student in writing (or via email), and will be disseminated internally as necessary, and externally upon written request, in accordance with federal and state guidance related to release of student data (see Appendix I and Appendix II).
 - f. Retro-Withdrawals: In those instances where nonattendance is verified and a retro-withdrawal is granted, or in those instances where the Student Academic Appellate Committee grants a retro-withdrawal, tuition and fee charges will be adjusted in accordance with the University's established refund processes.

7. Tuition Surcharge:

The assessment of the tuition surcharge was repealed as of July 1, 2019 effective with the 2019-2020 academic year.

The appeal timeframe for all tuition surcharge amounts was 30-days after the charge was assessed. The appeal window for all tuition surcharge assessments prior to the 2019-2020 academic year have expired.

8. Fixed Tuition Waiver (Appeal):

- a. Submitting an appeal: The Cashier's Office is the authorized point of contact for initiating a waiver request. The Fixed Tuition Waiver form must be completed and submitted along with any and all documentation relevant to the appeal and the

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- specific basis selected for appeal. Waiver requests can be submitted in person to the Cashier's Office or via email to tuitionappeals@ecu.edu. All documents submitted for a waiver are retained for audit purposes by the Director of Student Financial Services or his/her designee, along with the minutes from each meeting, documenting the outcome of each waiver request.
- b. **Time Limitations:** Fixed Tuition appeals must be filed within 30 business days of the assessment of the current rate of tuition for the identified semester.
 - c. **Fixed Tuition Waiver Consideration:** Upon application by the student, the reversion to current tuition shall be waived if the student demonstrates that any of the following have substantially disrupted or interrupted their continuous enrollment: (1) a military service obligation, (2) serious medical debilitation, or (3) short-term or long-term disability. State Statute and UNC System Office guidance specifically define criteria for granting a waiver as follows:
 - i. ***Military Service Obligation*** - shall mean the performance of duty on a voluntary or involuntary basis in connection with service in the Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard including, but not limited to; active duty, active duty for training, initial active duty for training, and inactive duty training.
 - ii. ***Serious Medical Debilitation***- shall mean an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition requiring; (a) inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility; or (b) continuing treatment by a health care provider; provided that such incapacity did not result from the student's violation of University policy or the commission of a felony.
 - iii. ***Short-term or Long-term Disability*** - shall mean a mental or physical incapacity that causes the performance of the student's academic commitments to become impossible or impractical; provided that such incapacity did not result from the student's violation of University policy or the commission of a felony.
 - iv. ***Other Extraordinary Hardship***- shall mean hardship of any kind which, despite responsible handling, resulted in the substantial disruption or interruption of the student's pursuit of a degree.
 - d. **Notification of Appeal Determination:** Decisions of the committee will be final and will be communicated to the student in writing (or via email), and will be disseminated internally as necessary, and externally upon written request, in accordance with federal and state guidance related to release of student data (see Appendix I and Appendix II).

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9. Late Payment Penalty:

- a. Submitting an appeal: The Cashier's Office is the authorized point of contact for requesting a waiver of the late payment penalty. The initial point of contact for this specific waiver is the Cashier's Office as the penalty is assessed as a function of collection activity. There is no specific form for submitting a waiver request: all requests must be in writing and students are encouraged to include any and all documentation they believe to be relevant to the waiver request. Waiver requests can be submitted in person or via email to cashier@ecu.edu. All documents submitted for an appeal are retained in Banner Xtender for audit purposes. The Director of Student Financial Services or his/her designee maintains the minutes from each meeting, documenting the outcome of each appeal.
- b. Time Limitations: There is not a time limitation on submitting a late payment penalty request as the collections process is on-going until the balance is paid in full. However, once any past due balance – including the late payment penalty is paid – no requests for waiving a late payment penalty will be accepted or considered.
- c. Late Payment Penalty Waiver Consideration: State Statute allows for waiving the late payment penalty with good cause. Criteria for waivers are applied in determining if good cause is shown as follows:
 - i. Military Service Obligation;
 - ii. Serious Health Debilitation;
 - iii. Short-term or Long-term Disability; or
 - iv. Other Extraordinary Hardship.
- d. Notification of Appeal Determination: Decisions will be final and will be communicated to the student in writing (or via email), and will be disseminated internally as necessary, and externally upon written request, in accordance with federal and state guidance related to release of student data.

Distribution:

TRAC Committee Members
Director of Student Financial Services
University Cashier
University Registrar
University Attorney

Revisions:

May 2004 – Revised committee membership
July 2010 – Included Tuition Surcharge - revised procedure statement to include surcharge specifics

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November 2011 – Included Late Payment Penalty - revised procedure statement to include late payment penalty specifics

January 2012 – removed reference to refunds being unavailable once fifty percent of the term had expired

June 23, 2016 – Updated wording for retaining supporting documentation

July 3, 2017 – Added Fixed Tuition Appeal wording; updated committee representatives; added wording on types of appeals that cannot be heard by TRAC and added wording to cover electronic meetings

February 28, 2018 – Updated point of contact information to Cashier's Office to include email address to tuitionappeals@ecu.edu to submit appeals. Added communication letters for approved and denied appeals to be issued by the Cashier's Office.

March 13, 2018 – Added wording to types of appeals that cannot be heard by TRAC as it relates to AHEC housing charges.

March 16, 2018 – Updated additional references section and section 9c to further identify disability as short-term and long-term

February 14, 2019 – Updated additional references for withdrawal information - UNC Policy Manual and ECU Registrar's Office

July 8, 2019 – Updated to remove appeal information related to Repeal of Tuition Surcharge effective with Senate Bill 225.

October 28, 2019 – Updated wording in #2 to support all appeals (Graduate and Undergraduate) must be heard through RDS. Removed Registrar's Office as point of reference to submit an appeal. Added webpage link for submitting Housing/Dining appeals.

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APPENDIX I: Student Communication of Approved Appeal

Date

Student Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Dear Student:

The Tuition Refund Appeals Committee has carefully considered your appeal. We are pleased to inform you that your appeal has been granted. We have been notified of the approval, and will make the proper adjustments to your account. Please allow 48-72 hours for any applicable adjustments to be processed.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Cashier's Office by telephone at (252) 737-6886 or by email at cashier@ecu.edu.

Sincerely,

University Cashier's Office

cc: Student file

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APPENDIX II: Student Communication of Appeal Denial

Date

Student Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear Student:

The Tuition Refund Appeals Committee has met to review your appeal. The Committee gave your request every consideration; however, the appeal was denied. The decision of the Committee is the final step in the appeal process.

If you have any questions concerning your account or this decision, please feel free to contact the Cashier's Office by telephone at (252) 737-6886 or by email at cashier@ecu.edu.

Sincerely,

University Cashier's Office

cc: Student file