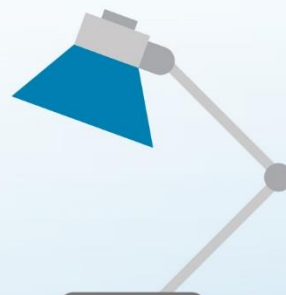


2021



Australian Government



# FEE-HELP information

This loan can help you  
pay your tuition fees.

Visit

[www.studyassist.gov.au](http://www.studyassist.gov.au)

for up-to-date information





Unique Student Identifier (USI) (if you are commencing a course of study from 1 January 2021):

Commonwealth Higher Education Student Support Number (CHESSN) (if you have studied at a higher education previously):

My education provider:



You must read this booklet before submitting the *Request for a FEE-HELP loan* form.

When you submit your form, you are declaring that you have read this booklet and that you are aware of your obligations under FEE-HELP.



If you are eligible and want to use a FEE-HELP loan, you must submit your form by the census date—you can get more information about your census date from your provider.



The Department of Education, Skills and Employment has endeavoured to ensure that the information in this publication is consistent with the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (the Act) and guidelines made under the Act, available at [www.legislation.gov.au](http://www.legislation.gov.au). However, there may be differences between this publication and the Act or guidelines. If there is any inconsistency the Act will take precedence.

ISSN 1449-9282

© Commonwealth of Australia 2020



The Department of Education, Skills and Employment supports and encourages the dissemination and exchange of information. All material produced by the Department constitutes Commonwealth copyright material.

Except where otherwise indicated, and save for the content in this booklet supplied by third parties, the Department's logo, the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, and any material protected by a trade mark, the Department has applied the <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment must be attributed as the author of the Department's copyright material. As far as practicable, material for which the copyright is owned by a third party will be clearly labelled. The Department has made all reasonable efforts to ensure that this material has been reproduced in this booklet with the full consent of the copyright owners.

Copyright requests and enquiries concerning further authorisation should be addressed to:

The Copyright Officer, Department of Education, Skills and Employment, Location code C10MT1 GPO Box 9880 Canberra ACT 2601 or emailed to [copyright@education.gov.au](mailto:copyright@education.gov.au).

## WHO IS THIS BOOKLET FOR?

This booklet is for people enrolling in:

- a higher education course of study as a **fee paying student**
- a higher education unit of study provided through Open Universities Australia
- bridging study required for professional recognition in Australia of qualifications gained overseas.

This booklet is a summary of the key points a person accessing the **FEE-HELP** loan scheme needs to know.

## USING THIS BOOKLET

Some pages in this booklet will have words **highlighted**. Check the glossary for a definition of these words.

Contact your **approved higher education provider** for any questions about:

- enrolments
- **tuition fees** and upfront payments
- **census dates** and **administrative dates**
- the eligibility criteria for **FEE-HELP**
- applying for a FEE-HELP loan
- your **CHESSN** or **USI** to check your **available HELP balance**
- withdrawing from study
- getting your **HELP debt** removed under '**special circumstances**'
- how to make a complaint.



The handbook and all HELP student information booklets are available at [www.studyassist.gov.au](http://www.studyassist.gov.au).

# CONTENTS

<b>GLOSSARY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>THE FEE-HELP LOAN SCHEME</b>	<b>5</b>
What is FEE-HELP?	5
Study at a non-university higher education provider	5
Open Universities Australia (OUA) students	6
NZ SCV residency requirements	6
How much FEE-HELP can I borrow?	7
What is the 50 per cent pass rate?	8
Changes in 2022	8
<b>BRIDGING STUDY FOR OVERSEAS-TRAINED PROFESSIONALS</b>	<b>8</b>
What is bridging study for overseas-trained professionals?	8
<b>APPLYING FOR A FEE-HELP LOAN</b>	<b>9</b>
Is there an application fee or loan fee?	9
Temporary loan fee exemption	9
How do I apply for a FEE-HELP loan?	10
What if I make a mistake on my eCAF?	10
Do I need a USI?	10
Do I have a CHESSN or a USI?	11
What is my CHESSN?	11
What is my USI?	12
<b>WITHDRAWING FROM STUDY</b>	<b>12</b>
Special circumstances	12
<b>REPAYING YOUR HELP DEBT</b>	<b>13</b>
How do I check my HELP debt?	13
What if I go overseas?	13
<b>FURTHER CONTACTS</b>	<b>15</b>
<i>StudyAssist</i> website	15
<i>myHELPbalance</i> portal	15
Australian Taxation Office	15
Services Australia	15
Department of Home Affairs	16
Office of the Student Identifiers Registrar	16

## GLOSSARY

**Administrative date**—A date set by your approved higher education provider (before the census date) for submitting your *Request for a FEE-HELP loan form* and making upfront payments of your tuition fees. You can still do this after the administrative date (but before the census date), however you may have to pay a late fee. Your provider cannot set an administrative date or charge you a late fee in relation to withdrawing from a unit or course.

**Approved higher education provider (provider)**—In this booklet, this term means a university or other accredited higher education provider that has been approved by the Australian Government to offer FEE-HELP loans to eligible students.

**Australian Taxation Office (ATO)**—The principal revenue collection agency of the Australian Government. The ATO is responsible for managing HELP debt repayments.

**Available HELP balance**—This is your available borrowing capacity for FEE-HELP (and HECS-HELP, VET Student Loans/VET FEE-HELP [closed]) from 1 January 2020. View your available HELP balance via the *myHELPbalance* website at [www.myHELPbalance.gov.au](http://www.myHELPbalance.gov.au).

**Census date**—This date is set by providers and it is the legal deadline for various requirements, like making an upfront payment of your tuition fees, applying for a FEE-HELP loan or formally withdrawing your enrolment so you do not incur a HELP debt.

**HELP loan Limit**—This is a cap on what you can borrow from the Australian Government to cover the cost of your tertiary studies. All FEE-HELP, VET Student Loans, VET FEE-HELP [closed] and HECS-HELP from 1 January 2020, count towards a HELP loan limit. (it supersedes the previous FEE-HELP limit).

**Commonwealth Higher Education Student Support Number (CHESSN)**—This is a 10-digit number provided by the Australian Government, to all students who are in receipt of a HELP loan. If you have accessed Commonwealth assistance between 2005 and 2020 you will have been assigned a CHESSN. From 2021, the CHESSN will be replaced with the Unique Student Identifier (USI) for new students.

**Commonwealth Assistance Notice (CAN)**—A notice from your provider given after the census date that gives you information about the Commonwealth assistance you have used for the study period.

**Course of study**—In this booklet, this term means a course leading to a higher education award (like a bachelor course), an enabling course or a bridging course for overseas-trained professionals.

**Electronic Commonwealth assistance form (eCAF)**—An electronic version of the relevant Request for a FEE-HELP loan form you must submit to your provider to *request a FEE-HELP loan*.

**Equivalent full-time student load (EFTSL)**—This is how your study 'load' (or amount of study) is measured. For one year, a full-time student is normally enrolled in one EFTSL of study.

**FEE-HELP**—The loan scheme that helps eligible fee paying students pay their tuition fees.

**Fee paying place**—A place in a course which is not a Commonwealth supported place (i.e. not subsidised by the Australian Government) and for which you are required to pay tuition fees.

**Fee paying student**—A student who is enrolled in a fee paying place.

**Higher Education Loan Program (HELP)**—Australian Government loans to help you pay your tuition fees (FEE-HELP or VET Student Loans/VET FEE-HELP (closed)), student contributions (HECS-HELP), overseas study expenses (OS-HELP) or the student services and amenities fee (SA-HELP). HELP loans are repaid through the Australian tax system once you earn above the compulsory repayment threshold.

**HELP debt**—The total of any HECS-HELP, OS-HELP, FEE-HELP, VET FEE-HELP (closed)/VET Student Loans or SA-HELP debts you have incurred (including any Australian Government study loans from before 2005). It will also include any applicable loan fees and any indexation that has been applied to your debt

**Higher Education Support Act 2003 (the Act)**—The Commonwealth legislation that outlines the requirements for getting a FEE-HELP loan and other Australian Government assistance.

**myHELPPbalance ([www.myHELPPbalance.gov.au](http://www.myHELPPbalance.gov.au))**—This portal will allow you to view your available HELP balance entitlement. You will also be able to see your study history, as well as view any repayments to the ATO that credit your HELP balance.

**New Zealand Special Category Visa (NZ SCV)**—If you arrived in Australia using a New Zealand passport, in the absence of another valid Australian visa, you will have automatically received a SCV provided you met certain security, character and health requirements. It is a temporary visa that expires as soon as you leave Australia, but it remains in place for as long as you remain in Australia.

**Request for a FEE-HELP loan form**—The official name of the form you must submit to your provider to apply for a FEE-HELP loan. This is usually completed online, as an eCAF. There are different FEE-HELP forms for universities, non-university higher education providers, and Open Universities Australia. Contact your provider for more information.

**Special circumstances**—The specific requirements that you must meet for your HELP balance to be re-credited and your FEE-HELP debt to be removed, as set out in **the Act** and its associated guidelines.

**StudyAssist ([www.studyassist.gov.au](http://www.studyassist.gov.au))**—This website provides information about how you can pay for your tertiary study. It includes information about the types of HELP loans available, a list of providers that offer HELP loans, and student income support options.

**Table B provider**—This is defined in the Act, currently it includes Bond University, The University of Notre Dame Australia, MCD University of Divinity, and Torrens University Australia.

**Tax file number (TFN)**—Your unique identification number from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) for everything tax-related. You must have a TFN to obtain a HELP loan and make HELP debt repayments to the ATO.

**Tuition fees**—The fees you will pay as a fee paying student. These fees are set by individual providers and are not regulated by the Australian Government.

**Unique Student Identifier (USI)**— Your USI is a reference number made up of a combination of ten numbers and letters. It is a student identifier assigned to you by the Student Identifiers Registrar under the *Student Identifiers Act 2014*. Your USI is used to connect your student loan information to your personal details. If you are starting a higher education course in 2021 you will need a USI to get a HELP loan for your study. If you do not already have a USI, you can apply for one on the Unique Student Identifier website ([www.usi.gov.au](http://www.usi.gov.au)).

## THE FEE-HELP LOAN SCHEME

### What is FEE-HELP?

**FEE-HELP** is a loan for students enrolled in **fee paying places**. These places are not subsidised by the Australian Government but eligible students may use a FEE-HELP loan to pay their **Tuition fees**.

Most postgraduate courses at universities are fee paying, as are undergraduate and postgraduate courses at private higher education providers (this is any education provider not listed under Table A in **the Act**).

If there is a direct connection between your work and your study, you may be able to claim your Tuition fees as a tax deduction. Find out more about claiming self-education expenses by visiting [www.ato.gov.au/selfeducation](http://www.ato.gov.au/selfeducation).



You can check which providers offer FEE-HELP at [www.studyassist.gov.au](http://www.studyassist.gov.au).

### Am I eligible for FEE-HELP?

You can only get **FEE-HELP** if you meet the citizenship and residency requirements. You must be either:

- an Australian citizen who will complete at least one unit of your course of study in Australia
- a **NZ SCV** holder who meets the long-term residency requirements and who is resident in Australia for the duration of your study
- a permanent humanitarian visa holder who is resident in Australia for the duration of your study
- a permanent visa holder who is undertaking bridging study for overseas-trained professionals and who is resident in Australia for the duration of your study.

You must also:

- meet the **TFN** requirements
- meet the **USI** requirements (for new students commencing a course of study on or after 1 January 2021)
- have enough **available HELP balance**
- be assessed as a genuine student and as academically suitable for your unit of study
- maintain a reasonable study load of no more than 2 **EFTSL** per year unless approved by your **provider** or providers to study a higher load
- be enrolled correctly at your provider by the **census date**
- have read this booklet
- have submitted a valid FEE-HELP **eCAF** to your provider by the census date (or earlier **administrative date**).

### Study at a non-university higher education provider

In addition, if you are enrolled at one of these providers, you must also:

- maintain the appropriate pass rate requirement
- submit the appropriate **FEE-HELP eCAF** to your **provider** by the **census date** (or earlier **administrative date**).

## Open Universities Australia (OUA) students

Further to the general **FEE-HELP** requirements, if you study through OUA you must also be:

- an Australian citizen who is resident in Australia on the day you submit your FEE-HELP OUA eCAF
- a **NZ SCV** holder who meets the long-term residency requirements, and who is resident in Australia on the day you submit your FEE-HELP OUA eCAF
- a permanent humanitarian visa holder who is resident in Australia for the duration of your unit(s) of study
- a permanent visa holder who is undertaking bridging study for overseas-trained professionals, and who is resident in Australia for the duration of your study.

You must also be enrolled correctly with OUA at the **census date** and have submitted a valid FEE-HELP OUA eCAF.



If you are not eligible for FEE-HELP, you will need to pay up-front tuition fees. If you can't afford to do so, ask your provider about other payment options/plans.

## What is my visa status?

Your **provider** will need proof of your visa status to check if you are eligible for **FEE-HELP**. If you do not know your visa status, you can check it on the Department of Home Affairs website at [www.homeaffairs.gov.au/vevo](http://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/vevo).

## NZ SCV residency requirements

If you are a **NZ SCV** holder, you may be able to access a **FEE-HELP** loan if you meet all of the following requirements:

- you first began to be usually resident in Australia at least 10 years before the test day\*
- at that time, you were a dependent child\*\* under the age of 18 with no spouse or de facto partner
- you have been in Australia for at least:
  - a total of eight years out of the last 10 years immediately before the test day
  - a total of 18 months out of the last two years immediately before the test day
- you are otherwise eligible for FEE-HELP.

You must give your **provider** evidence that you first began residing in Australia as a minor at least 10 years before the test day. You can do this by requesting your International Movement Record from the Department of Home Affairs.

\*'test day' means the first day you successfully applied for a **FEE-HELP** loan for a unit that formed part of the same course of study as an eligible **NZ SCV** holder. Otherwise, the 'test day' is the day you submit your FEE-HELP eCAF.

\*\*a 'dependent child' is someone who is aged under 18 and does not have a spouse or de facto partner.



## How much FEE-HELP can I borrow?

### HELP loan limit

Since 1 January 2020, there has been a **'HELP loan limit'** on what you can borrow for your study (this replaced the previous **FEE-HELP** limit on 1 January 2020). The HELP loan limit includes all previous FEE-HELP, VET FEE-HELP (closed) and VET Student Loan amounts you have borrowed. It also includes any HECS-HELP loans for units with a **census date** on or after 1 January 2020.

For 2021, the HELP loan limit will be \$108,232 for most courses and \$155,448 for certain medicine, dentistry and veterinary science courses which lead to initial registration to practise in one of these fields. Certain aviation courses are also eligible for the higher limit. Talk to your **provider** for more information.

### Will I be charged interest?

There is no interest charged on your **HELP debt** but indexation will be applied to the portion of your debt that is 11 months or older on 1 June each year. Indexation maintains your debt's real value by keeping it in line with the cost of living, as measured by the consumer price index. You can check current indexation rates at [www.ato.gov.au/indexation](http://www.ato.gov.au/indexation).

### Your available HELP balance

You will have an **'available HELP balance'** (which replaced the FEE-HELP balance on 1 January 2020). Your available HELP balance is your remaining loan entitlement for FEE-HELP, HECS-HELP and VET Student Loans (including the closed VET FEE-HELP loan scheme). That is, your available HELP balance is the difference between the HELP loan limit and the amount of relevant HELP loans you have already received.

It is your responsibility to keep track of your HELP loans and repayments to ensure you have enough available HELP balance to pay for your study.

Any compulsory or voluntary repayments made to the **ATO** on your HELP debt, from the 2019–20 income year onwards, will be re-credited to your HELP balance (i.e making HELP repayments will increase the available HELP balance you have to undertake further study).

### How do I check my available HELP balance?

You can check your **available HELP balance** at [www.myHELPbalance.gov.au](http://www.myHELPbalance.gov.au). To view your balance, in addition to your personal details (date of birth, first and last name), you will need your **CHESSN** or **USI** and your student ID number at your **provider**.

You should use your **CAN** to ensure your information on the **myHELPbalance** portal is correct. You will receive your CAN within 28 days of your **census date**. If you think there are errors on your CAN, you have 14 days (from the date of the CAN) to contact your provider and ask for a new, correct one. If you can't find your CAN, CHESSN, or USI, ask your provider. Additionally, students can ask the Student Identifiers Registrar (through the USI office) for their USI under s.14 of the *Student Identifiers Act 2014*.

For more information on the **myHELPbalance** portal, the HELP loan limit or your available HELP balance, please visit [www.studyassist.gov.au/help-loans/2020-loan-limit-changes](http://www.studyassist.gov.au/help-loans/2020-loan-limit-changes)

## What is the 50 per cent pass rate?

There is a pass rate requirement for OUA students. If you undertake eight or more units through OUA, you must maintain a 50 per cent pass rate to continue using **FEE-HELP**. This is based on the number of units you undertake through OUA. **For example**, if you undertake eight units, you must pass at least four; if you undertake 10 units, you must pass at least five, and so on.

Similar rules also apply for students enrolled at non-university higher education providers. For bachelor-level courses, if you undertake eight or more units at one of these providers, you must pass at least four. For sub-bachelor courses (i.e. diploma/advanced diploma), if you undertake four or more units, you must pass at least two.

If you do not maintain the appropriate pass rate, you won't be eligible for FEE-HELP and will have to pay upfront **Tuition fees** until you do.

## Changes in 2022

The 50 per cent pass rate requirement does not currently apply to Commonwealth supported students. Similar rules will apply to Commonwealth supported students starting study at a university from 1 January 2022.

# BRIDGING STUDY FOR OVERSEAS-TRAINED PROFESSIONALS

## What is bridging study for overseas-trained professionals?

If you are an overseas qualified professional, bridging study will help you meet the academic requirements of your profession so you can work in Australia.

Only some bridging study undertaken by an overseas trained professional may be covered by a **FEE-HELP** loan, and there are specific eligibility requirements that you must meet (which are different to the general FEE-HELP requirements).

To be eligible for FEE-HELP for bridging studies:

- you must have trained in a profession overseas
- your profession must be included in the Skilled Occupation List
- you must hold an 'assessment statement' from the assessing body of your profession (the relevant assessing body will be in the 'assessing authority' column in the Skilled Occupation List)
- you must be an Australian citizen or a permanent resident
- you must be enrolled in bridging studies at a **provider** approved to offer FEE-HELP loans
- you must be in Australia for all of the bridging studies.

In addition, your chosen bridging course of study must:

- be less than one **EFTSL** of study (which is approximately one year of study)
- not lead to a full qualification (i.e. a graduate diploma course)
- not be a general English language course
- not provide a qualification beyond basic entry-level to your profession.

## Notes

1. For your course to be deemed a 'bridging course of study' it is required to be one EFTSL or less. The number of FEE-HELP loans you can access for this type of study is not limited. This means if you enrol in more than one 'bridging course of study' to meet the requirements of one assessment statement, and you keep each course under one EFTSL, it may be possible for you to use FEE-HELP for both courses.
2. If your assessing body recommends a course for you to become qualified in your profession, this does not mean you will automatically get FEE-HELP. If your course is 'approved' by the assessing body, it does not mean it is approved for a FEE-HELP loan—you must meet all relevant requirements.
3. Study that is called a 'bridging course', an 'approved course' or 'bridging study' does not automatically mean that it is approved for a FEE-HELP loan—you must meet all relevant requirements.



If you gained your qualifications overseas, you should contact the relevant professional, registration or licensing body for more information about getting your qualifications recognised in Australia.

## APPLYING FOR A FEE-HELP LOAN

### Is there an application fee or loan fee?

There is no application fee for **FEE-HELP**.

From 1 July 2021 there may be a 20 per cent FEE-HELP loan fee applied to some undergraduate study. The loan fee does not count towards the HELP loan limit.

The loan fee is applied to each unit of study. For example, if you are studying a unit that costs \$1,000, the loan fee for that unit will be \$200. Therefore, your total FEE-HELP debt for that unit will be \$1,200.

The loan fee does NOT apply to:

- units of study with census dates between 1 April 2020 and 30 June 2021
- undergraduate study (with a **census date** on or after 1 January 2019) if you are enrolled at a **Table B provider** (see glossary)
- postgraduate study or enabling courses
- undergraduate study through OUA
- bridging study for overseas-trained professionals.

### Temporary loan fee exemption

To provide relief in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the **FEE-HELP** loan fee will not be charged for units of study with a **census date** between 1 April 2020 and 30 June 2021. The loan fee exemption will be automatically applied when your loan data is submitted by your **provider** to the Department of Education, Skills and Employment.

## How do I apply for a FEE-HELP loan?

You will need to submit the FEE-HELP eCAF to your **provider**. Your provider will give you instructions on how to do this as it must be done before your provider's **census date** (or earlier **administrative date**).

You must give your provider your **TFN**, **USI** (if you are commencing a new course on or after 1 January 2021), name, date of birth and address. Your details must match the information held with the **ATO** and the USI Registry System. If the details in your application don't match ATO records and the USI Registry System, you won't be able to access a **FEE-HELP** loan until you correct the error.

The most common way to apply for a TFN is at a participating Australia Post outlet. If you do not have a TFN, you can give your provider a *Certificate of Application for a TFN*, which you can ask for when you apply for a TFN. You must give your TFN to your provider within 21 days of receiving it or your access to FEE-HELP may be affected.



You have to provide your TFN because your HELP debt is repaid through the Australian tax system.

## What is the census date and administrative date?

The **census date** is the last day you can submit your **FEE-HELP eCAF** form or withdraw from a unit without incurring the cost or debt for your units.

Providers set their own census dates so each provider will be different. Each unit of study also has its own census date—contact your **provider** for more information.



The census date is the most important date for you as it is a legal deadline.

The **administrative date** is before the census date and it is your provider's deadline for you to complete certain requirements such as submitting forms or finalising payments without getting charged a late fee. Your provider cannot set an administrative date or charge you a late fee in relation to withdrawing from a unit or course. Not all providers have administrative dates—check this with your provider.

## What if I make a mistake on my eCAF?


If you realise you have made a mistake, you should correct it with your **provider** as soon as possible. You only have six weeks after the **census date** to correct any errors to ensure your loan is not affected. This period is not an extension to the census date. You must meet the citizenship, residency, **USI** and **TFN** requirements by the census date.

## Do I need a USI?

From 1 January 2021 if you are starting a higher education course you will also need to provide your **USI** to your **provider** before your first **census date** to be eligible for **FEE-HELP**.

Applying for a USI is fast and free, and you keep the same USI for life. You can apply for a USI in as little as five minutes at [usi.gov.au](http://usi.gov.au).

If you have studied a VET course in the last five years, including while at secondary school, you might already have a USI. Locate it easily at [www.usi.gov.au/faqs/find-your-usi](http://www.usi.gov.au/faqs/find-your-usi).



From 1 January 2023 all higher education students, including those who commenced prior to 2021, must have a USI in order to be eligible for a **CSP** and entitled to Commonwealth financial assistance (HECS-HELP, FEE-HELP, OS-HELP and SA-HELP) and to graduate and receive their award.

Your provider will assess whether you meet the eligibility requirements for a FEE-HELP loan. Please contact your provider if you require more information about this process.

### Do I have a CHESSN or a USI?

The Government uses unique reference identifiers to monitor and manage your use of Commonwealth assistance. Depending on when you started study, your identifier will either be a **CHESSN** or a **USI**.

If you accessed Commonwealth assistance to pay for higher education or VET study between 2005 and 2020 you will have been allocated a CHESSN. If you believe you already have a CHESSN, please read the information under the heading 'What is my CHESSN?'

From 2021, the CHESSN is being phased out and replaced by the USI. This is to improve the management of student information and to create a single Government identifier for higher education and VET students.

If you are starting a higher education course in 2021, you will need a USI to get a **FEE-HELP** loan for your study.

If you already have a CHESSN, once you provide a USI to your **provider** it will become your primary identifier and replace the CHESSN.

### What is my CHESSN?

If you accessed Commonwealth assistance to pay for higher education or VET study between 2005 and 2020 you will have been allocated a **CHESSN**. It is a unique, personal identification number that was allocated to you as part of your first application to study or enrolment process. Your CHESSN is an important identifier used to monitor and manage your Commonwealth assistance, especially for identifying whether you have reached the HELP loan limit. You should have only had one CHESSN for the duration of your studies—even if you changed providers, started a new course a few years after completing your first course, or changed your name.

If you have studied before in a Commonwealth Supported Place or received a **FEE-HELP**, HECS-HELP, VET FEE-HELP (closed) or VET Student Loan in the past, you can find your CHESSN on a past **CAN** issued to you by your **provider** for that course.

If you have more than one CHESSN, there is a greater risk that you could exceed the **HELP loan limit**. If this is the case, your provider may seek payment of your **Tuition fees** directly from you.

One way to tell if you have more than one CHESSN is by logging into the **myHELPbalance** portal. The portal should show you all of the courses for which you have received a HELP loan (or a VET Student Loan). If you can't see past study on your account, you may have another CHESSN. You can verify this by checking the CHESSN on a CAN from your past course(s).

If you have more than one CHESSN, please contact your provider for assistance. For further information on CHESSN s, please visit [www.studyassist.gov.au/help-loans/your-chessn](http://www.studyassist.gov.au/help-loans/your-chessn).

## What is my USI?

The **Unique Student Identifier** (known as a USI) is a reference number made up of a combination of ten numbers and letters. Amendments made in June 2020 to **the Act** means it is now **compulsory** for all students commencing a course of study from 1 January 2021 to apply for and obtain a USI, in order to be eligible for a **CSP** and Commonwealth financial assistance (HECS-HELP and FEE-HELP). From 1 January 2021, all students must have a USI before applying for OS-HELP.

For new students, in order to be entitled to **FEE-HELP**, the student must have a USI before the **census date** for the unit of study.

From 2021, once a student has provided a USI it will become their primary identifier and replace the **CHESSN**. Your USI will be used to connect your student loan information to your personal details. You can log in and check or update your details at any time.

Applying for a USI is fast and free, and you keep the same USI for life. You can apply for a USI in as little as five minutes at [usi.gov.au](http://usi.gov.au).

If you have studied a VET course in the last five years, you will already have an existing USI. Locate your USI easily at [www.usi.gov.au/faqs/find-your-usi](http://www.usi.gov.au/faqs/find-your-usi).

From 1 January 2023, all higher education students will need a USI to be eligible for a CSP and Commonwealth financial assistance (HECS-HELP, FEE-HELP, OS-HELP and SA-HELP).

Also, from 1 January 2023, all higher education students will need a USI in order to graduate and receive their award unless an exemption applies.

## WITHDRAWING FROM STUDY

To withdraw from a unit or course without getting a **HELP debt** or losing an upfront payment, you must complete your provider's formal withdrawal process by the **census date**.

If you are enrolled with more than one **provider**, you will need to withdraw from each one individually.

Your provider cannot set an **administrative date** separate from the census date or charge you a late fee in relation to withdrawing from a unit or course.

### Special circumstances

If you withdraw from a unit of study after the **census date** because you become seriously ill or because of another unforeseen event, you can apply to your **provider** to request a refund of your upfront payment or a re-credit of your **available HELP balance**. To do this, you will have to meet specific **special circumstances** criteria set out in **the Act**. To meet the 'special circumstances' criteria, you will have to demonstrate to your provider that what happened to you:

- was beyond your control
- did not make its full impact on you until on or after the census date
- made it impracticable for you to complete the requirements for your unit(s) of study.

You will need to apply to your provider within 12 months of your withdrawal day (or your provider may allow you more time). If your HELP balance is re-credited, your **HELP debt** for the unit will also be removed. For more information please visit [www.studyassist.gov.au/paying-back-your-loan/cancel-your-help-debt-under-special-circumstances](http://www.studyassist.gov.au/paying-back-your-loan/cancel-your-help-debt-under-special-circumstances).

This process does not apply if you have successfully completed your unit of study, or you changed your mind about studying, or you failed the unit.

## REPAYING YOUR HELP DEBT

For the most up-to-date information on **HELP debt** repayments, check the ATO's website at [www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Study-and-training-support-loans/When-must-you-repay-your-loan](http://www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Study-and-training-support-loans/When-must-you-repay-your-loan).

### How do I check my HELP debt?

Your *myGov* account will show you a consolidated total of your HELP debt and what your repayments have been. If you don't have a *myGov* account, you can set one up following the instructions at [www.mygov.au](http://www.mygov.au). You can then call the **ATO** on 13 28 61 to assist you with linking the 'ATO online services' to your *myGov* account so you can view your ATO account balances, for example, your HELP debt and superannuation accounts.



*myGov* only shows information from 2014 onwards. If you want information prior to 2014, call the ATO to request an account information statement.

### When do I start paying back my HELP debt?

You start repaying your **HELP debt** through the Australian tax system once you earn above the compulsory repayment threshold. The compulsory repayment threshold is different each year. For the 2020–21 income year it is \$46,620. The more income you earn, the higher your repayment will be (see **Table 1**).

To manage repayments, your employer will withhold some of your pay to go towards paying your tax, which includes your HELP debt repayments. Although these amounts are withheld from your pay throughout the year to offset your compulsory repayment—your compulsory repayment won't be processed until your tax return is processed.

This is because your compulsory repayment is calculated from a number of different sources on your income tax return, including:

- your taxable income
- reportable fringe benefits (reported on your payment summary)
- total net investment loss (including net rental loss)
- reportable super contributions
- exempt foreign employment income amounts.

### What if I go overseas?

If you go overseas and have a **HELP debt**, you still need to make repayments as if you were living in Australia. If you live or plan to move overseas for 183 days or more (about six months) in any 12 month period, you must complete an *Overseas Travel Notification*. You must also update your contact details through **ATO** online services within seven days of leaving Australia.



For more information, visit [www.ato.gov.au/overseasrepayments](http://www.ato.gov.au/overseasrepayments).

## How much will my repayments be?

The amount you repay each year is calculated as a percentage of your world-wide income. The more income you earn, the higher your repayments will be. When you do your tax return, the **ATO** will calculate your income for the year and tell you on your tax notice of assessment how much your compulsory repayment will be. Compulsory repayments are not tax deductible.

**Table 1: Repayment rates for the 2020–21 income year**

Repayment income	Repayment % rate
Below \$46,620	Nil
\$46,620 - \$53,826	1.0%
\$53,827 - \$57,055	2.0%
\$57,056 - \$60,479	2.5%
\$60,480 - \$64,108	3.0%
\$64,109 - \$67,954	3.5%
\$67,955 - \$72,031	4.0%
\$72,032 - \$76,354	4.5%
\$76,355 - \$80,935	5.0%
\$80,936 - \$85,792	5.5%
\$85,793 - \$90,939	6.0%
\$90,940 - \$96,396	6.5%
\$96,397 - \$102,179	7.0%
\$102,180 - \$108,309	7.5%
\$108,310 - \$114,707	8.0%
\$114,708 - \$121,698	8.5%
\$121,699 - \$128,999	9.0%
\$129,000 - \$136,739	9.5%
\$136,740 and above	10.0%

In addition to your compulsory repayment, you can also make a voluntary repayment at any time.



For more information on voluntary repayments, visit [www.ato.gov.au/voluntaryrepay](http://www.ato.gov.au/voluntaryrepay).



## What if I can't make my compulsory repayment?

If you are struggling to make a compulsory repayment, there may be some options to relieve the stress. Depending on your situation, you may be eligible to apply to the **ATO** to request an amendment or deferment of your compulsory repayment.



For more information, visit [www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/study-and-training-support-loans/overseas-repayments](http://www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/study-and-training-support-loans/overseas-repayments).

## FURTHER CONTACTS

### *StudyAssist* website

This website provides information about options for financing tertiary study, including:

- **HELP** loans available in both the higher education and vocational education and training sectors
- a list of providers that offer HELP loans
- student income support options and available scholarships.

Please visit [www.studyassist.gov.au](http://www.studyassist.gov.au)

### *myHELPbalance* portal

You can log into this portal to see your study and loan information, so you can keep track of your **available HELP balance**.

Please visit [www.myHELPbalance.gov.au](http://www.myHELPbalance.gov.au)

### **Australian Taxation Office**

It can help you with:

- your **HELP debt**
- compulsory repayments
- voluntary repayments
- overseas repayments.

### **Contact details**

- Visit [www.ato.gov.au/getloaninfo](http://www.ato.gov.au/getloaninfo).
- For information on viewing your loan account online, visit [www.ato.gov.au/onlineloanbalance](http://www.ato.gov.au/onlineloanbalance)
- use its online services to view loan accounts and other information such as your Payment Reference Number and voluntary repayment options.
- Call 13 28 61 for information about your HELP account and personal tax topics.
- Call 13 36 77 TTY or 1300 555 727 TTY for hearing or speech impaired students.

### **Services Australia**

It can help you with Youth Allowance, Austudy, ABSTUDY and other payments and services. Visit [www.servicesaustralia.gov.au](http://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au) and keep up to date by subscribing to news for students.

It can also get information and ask questions at [facebook.com/StudentUpdate](https://facebook.com/StudentUpdate) or [@StudentUpdateAU](https://twitter.com/StudentUpdateAU) on Twitter.

## Department of Home Affairs

It can help you with visas and Australian citizenship. Visit [www.homeaffairs.gov.au](http://www.homeaffairs.gov.au) or call 13 18 81.

## Office of the Student Identifiers Registrar

It can help you with:

- getting a **USI**
- finding your USI
- updating your USI account details

### Contact details

- Visit [www.usi.gov.au](http://www.usi.gov.au).
- For information on finding your USI online, visit [www.usi.gov.au/faqs/find-your-usi](http://www.usi.gov.au/faqs/find-your-usi).
- Call 1300 857 536 for further assistance.