

TUITION APPEAL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CASES
Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to inform students about what circumstances will be considered for tuition refunds and forgiveness of debt owed to Laurel Ridge Community College. Refunds and debt forgiveness are exceptional and should not be considered automatic or an entitlement. This policy is applicable to all students taking credit classes.

Students will automatically receive a refund if:

- The student drops a class online via their MyLaurelRidge account by the last day to drop within the tuition refund for the respective term, as published in the college's academic calendar.
- The class is canceled by the College.

Students who are receiving financial assistance may be impacted by dropping or withdrawing from a class. Before dropping or withdrawing:

- Financial aid recipients should contact the Financial Aid Office. Final decisions for approval of tuition refund requests involving financial aid funds require the consent of the Financial Aid Office.
- Third-party contract recipients should contact the assisting organization.

1. Definitions

Administrative error by the College: Any College error will be considered as a special circumstance if the error can be documented by the student, for example error in academic advising, or unreasonable delays in processes. Disagreements with faculty, teaching methods or style, treatment or grading procedures are not considered administrative errors and must be resolved by contacting the division dean or through the College's student complaint/grievance procedures.

Extreme Financial Hardship: An event that created a financial hardship for the student such that the student's enrollment could not continue and involving sudden and unforeseen loss such as

foreclosure, termination from a job, involuntary job transfers outside of Laurel Ridge Service Area, or catastrophic event such as a fire.

Immediate Family Member: Father, mother, stepfather, stepmother, spouse, sibling, step sibling, child or stepchild.

Medical emergency: A medical emergency is:

- An extended illness or major medical issue occurring during the semester student is registered, which requires hospitalization, is life-threatening, or is contagious and a danger to the remainder of the College community. Student must have been absent more than 10 percent of the session length. Documentation demonstrating that the student was receiving care is required and must include the initial date of the problem, a statement that student is unable to attend class, and the duration of the problem.
- Or a psychiatric/psychological emergency or severe, extended illness occurring during the semester that student is registered which requires hospitalization or that prevents student from attending classes. Documentation demonstrating that the student was receiving care is required and must include the initial date of the problem, a statement that student is unable to attend class, and the duration of the problem.
- Or an extended period of physical or mental illness of immediate family member. An extended illness, major medical issue, or mental health crisis occurring during the semester student is registered, which requires hospitalization or, is life-threatening. Documentation demonstrating that the immediate family member was receiving care is required.

National emergency or mobilization Declared by the President of the United States: In accordance with Section 23-9.6.2 of the Code of Virginia, Laurel Ridge's [Policy on Refunds, Credits and Reinstatement as a Result of Military Service #30011](#) addresses tuition relief, refund, and reinstatement of military students in the event that the military requires their sudden withdrawal or prolonged absence from their enrollment. The policy is consistent with the Code of Virginia (§ 23-9.6:2), the corresponding guidelines of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, and Virginia Community College System (VCCS) Policy 4.3.2.3 (Policy on Refunds, Credits, and Reinstatement as a Result of Military Service).

2. Procedures

After the drop period has passed, there shall be no refunds, unless exceptional circumstances exist. Under exceptional circumstances, Laurel Ridge may grant tuition refund/debt removals for students who withdraw after the refund deadline. Refund/debt removals are guided by Virginia Community College System (VCCS) Policy 4.3.2.2 Policy on Tuition Refunds in Exceptional Cases.

These have been defined as the following:

- Administrative error; supporting documentation should be submitted by the department in which the error occurred
- Extreme financial hardship involving sudden, unforeseen loss
- Major medical emergency of extraordinary circumstances
- Death of an immediate family member
- National emergency or mobilization declared by the president of the United States

To be eligible for a refund under any of the above circumstances, a student must complete a withdrawal by the last day to withdraw without grade penalty. Withdrawals are completed within MyLaurelRidge in the Student Information System. Beyond the last day to withdraw without grade penalty, students must meet with their advisor to discuss withdraw for mitigating circumstances. It is recommended that the student meet with an academic advisor and financial aid staff (if appropriate) to discuss any changes in enrollment. Students must have no grade other than a “W” assigned for the course(s) in question prior to appealing for a refund.

Tuition refund requests must be initiated no later than the end of the subsequent academic semester in which the refund request is requested. (Example: A fall refund request must be completed no later than the end of the subsequent spring semester). Requests outside of this deadline will not be accepted. Questions regarding refunds should be directed to the Business Office at tuitionquestions@laurelridge.edu.

1. Submitting an appeal

To request a refund, the student must complete and submit the Tuition Refund for Exceptional Cases Application Form including appropriate documentation to the Admissions Office to justify one of the defined appeal reasons. Appeals are accepted at any campus Welcome Center or may be sent by mail to Laurel Ridge Records/Office of the Registrar, 173 Skirmisher Ln, Middletown, VA 22645 or email through a Student VCCS email account to Records@laurelridge.edu.

2. Appeal review process

Appeals are reviewed on a continuing basis. Depending upon the complexity of the appeal and receipt of all supporting documentation, the processing time may vary from two to four weeks. The Registrar will verify that the student has withdrawn from the course and forwards the appeal to the Director of Financial Aid. The Director of Financial Aid reviews the student’s aid status and impact on appeal and forwards the request to the Tuition Appeal Committee. The Committee will review the appeal, request additional documentation, if needed, and determine the appeal outcome. The decision of the appeal is final.

Unacceptable appeal justifications:

- Change of mode of instruction or instructor
- Personal errors in judgment or irresponsibility involving transportation, availability of finances, academic ability, time management, etc.
- Misinterpretation or lack of knowledge of college policies and procedures as published in the Laurel Ridge Catalog, Laurel Ridge Student Handbook, or Laurel Ridge Schedule of Classes
- Inadequate investigation / misunderstanding of course requirements prior to registration and attendance
- Non-qualification, late application, or loss of eligibility for financial aid or scholarships
- Non-receipt of mail due to obsolete address on file with the Enrollment Services Office
- Notification of change in domicile status after the refund period
- Voluntary acceptance of employment or other activity impacting ability to attend class
- Incarceration in a civilian or military facility
- Personal conflicts with the instructor of record, dissatisfaction with course content, instruction, or academic progress
- Conflicts with childcare

3. The following Circumstances do not qualify for a refund or forgiveness of debt:

- Bookstore Charges
- Financial Aid Refunds

4. A letter notifying student of the decision will be sent to the student's VCCS email address. Communication with individuals other than the student will require written consent of the student in accordance with the Family Educational Records and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). All committee decisions are final.

3. Responsible Office and Authority

This policy is developed in accordance with VCCS Policy 4.3.2 Tuition Refunds, which states in part: "Students are eligible for a refund for those credit hours dropped during the add/drop." After the add/drop period has passed, there shall be no refunds, except as provided in subsections 4.3.2.2, 4.3.2.3, and 4.3.2.4."

A College refund committee has been established and is responsible for determining approval for any refund or forgiveness of debt decision. The membership of this committee is made up of at least one representative from financial and administrative services, one from instruction, and one from student services.

Authority for interpretation for this policy rests with the vice president of financial and administrative services and the vice president of academic and student affairs.

4. Other Information

The Financial and Administrative Services Policy Committee developed this policy.

SACSCOC Standard 10.2 requires that: “The institution makes available to students and the public current academic calendars, grading policies, cost of attendance, and refund policies.” Accordingly, this refund appeal policy is published at laurelridge.edu/policies.

Document History:

Approved: President Cheryl Thompson-Stacy, May 2014

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Approved: President Kim Blosser, April 2023