



SOUTH CAROLINA
COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE)
Guidance**

**REFUNDING SPRING 2020 STUDENT FEES GUIDANCE
April 1, 2020**

The following guidance is provided for refunding student fees associated with the suspension of in-person instruction due to COVID-19 during the Spring 2020 semester.

Application:

This guidance applies to all public institutions of higher learning in the State of South Carolina.

Background:

U.S. Department of Education (ED) Guidance

Although the US Department of Education has released [Guidance for interruptions of study related to Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) (March 5, 2020), this guidance does not address the impact of suspending in-person instruction on student living decisions and associated costs.

Instructive guidance was provided by ED in 2018 regarding the inability of an institution to educate students relating to a natural disaster or pandemic influenza outbreak. That [2018 disaster guidance from ED](#) encouraged institutions to remit fees and other institutional charges, or to provide credit in a comparable amount against future charges, for students who withdraw from school as a direct result of a disaster.

Commission on Higher Education (CHE) Conclusion:

Given that South Carolina public institutions of higher learning are providing full educational and student services by virtual and remote learning, the CHE concludes that tuition and other academic/student service fees do not need to be refunded.

Furthermore, the CHE concludes that if an institution will not be providing services for which the student has been charged, an appropriate refund (or credit) should be made to the student's account. Therefore, this guidance is focused on auxiliary or self-supporting services that will no longer be provided to students due to the Governor's order authorizing public institutions of higher learning to provide instruction through virtual learning through the end of spring term. See [Executive Order 2020-09](#) and [Executive Order 2020-15](#).

CHE's Recommendations for Refunding Students in Spring 2020 Due to COVID-19:

1. These guidelines are applicable to those students who remain enrolled for the remainder of the semester. The suspension of in-person instruction for the remainder of the semester does not change the student's modality classification for billing, financial aid, and/or reporting purposes.
2. Given that public institutions of higher learning are providing full educational and student services (including health services) by virtual and remote means, tuition and academic/student service fees are outside the scope of this guidance.
3. Students should be refunded housing, dining, and other fees deemed appropriate by the specific institution of higher learning. Students who remain on campus for the rest of spring term 2020 will not be eligible for refunded services.
4. Refunds should be prorated based on the number of days for which the service will not be provided to the student(s). The way institutions calculate the amount to be refunded will be determined at the institutional level.
5. The preferred method of reimbursement is through a refund to the student account. Credits to student accounts for future use may be used as an alternative if circumstances warrant. There may be federal financial aid implications for credits applied for a future award year, so the CHE recommends that institutions review federal guidance to minimize any impact on students. In either case of a refund or credit, it should first be applied to any remaining current charges.
6. Refunds for eligible students should be processed by an institution at the earliest possible time based on a schedule determined by the institution.