

As a pre-2005 PELS student, the arrangements under FEE-HELP are much the same as those that existed under PELS. The main difference is that the FEE-HELP loan limit will apply for all FEE-HELP debts you incur from 1 January 2005.

If you are a pre-2005 PELS student who holds a permanent visa (other than a permanent humanitarian visa), your eligibility for FEE-HELP will be determined under the old PELS rules until the end of 2008. This means if you would have been eligible for PELS, you will be eligible for FEE-HELP.

I have a HECS debt. How will the changes affect me?

HECS debts

On 1 June 2006, any HECS-HELP or FEE-HELP debt you have incurred from 1 January 2005 will be added together with your accumulated HECS debt to become one accumulated HELP debt.

Bankruptcy rules

HELP debts and accumulated HELP debts are not provable under the Bankruptcy Act 1966 and you will have to pay them as if you had not been declared bankrupt. Your HECS debt will remain provable until it becomes part of your accumulated HELP debt on 1 June 2006.



www.goingtouni.gov.au

Where can I get more information on HECS-HELP and FEE-HELP?

- Read the Information for Commonwealth supported students booklet.
- Read the FEE-HELP Information booklet.
- Visit the Going to Uni website at: www.goingtouni.gov.au.
- Call the enquiry line on **1800 020 108** between 8.30am and 5.00pm EST, Monday to Friday.
- Contact your higher education provider.

Where can I get more information on HECS and HELP debt repayments?

- Visit the Tax Office website at: www.ato.gov.au.
- Call the Personal Tax Infoline on **13 28 61** between 8.00am and 6.00pm, Monday to Friday.
- Call the Higher Education Loan Accounts (HELA) Unit on **1300 650 225** between 8.00am and 6.00pm, Monday to Friday.



Australian Government
Department of Education,
Science and Training

Did you commence a
course under

HECS or PELS?



Changes were introduced from the
beginning of 2005 that may affect you.

www.goingtouni.gov.au

HECS & PELS

Background to the changes

In 2002, the Australian Government conducted a review of Australia's higher education system. The Government's response to the review was announced in the policy statement, *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future*.

The statement included changes to the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) and the Postgraduate Education Loan Scheme (PELS), which came into effect on 1 January 2005.

What happened to HECS?

New student contribution ranges

From 2005, HECS places are called Commonwealth supported places. Higher education providers determine student contribution amounts for these places, within ranges set by the Australian Government.

New Student Learning Entitlement

The Australian Government introduced the Student Learning Entitlement (SLE). The SLE gives Australian citizens, New Zealand citizens and holders of permanent visas access to a Commonwealth supported place for 7 years of equivalent full-time study.

Eligibility for loans and discounts

The deferred payment arrangements and discount for up-front payments that existed under HECS are now called HECS-HELP. Australian citizens and holders of a permanent humanitarian visa are eligible for HECS-HELP. The discount for full up-front payments or up-front payments of \$500 or more is now 20%.

I began my course as a HECS student before 2005. How do the changes affect me?

Generally, you will be considered a pre-2005 HECS student if you:

- commenced your course of study as a HECS student before 1 January 2005;
- have not discontinued your enrolment without formal approval from your higher education provider; and
- have not completed the requirements of your course or the requirements of another course at the same level into which you have transferred.

Your provider will be able to help you determine whether you are a pre-2005 HECS student.

IMPORTANT!

If you are returning to study (after an approved leave of absence) in a course that you commenced as a HECS student before 2005 (or are transferring to another course at the same level), you must complete a Request for Commonwealth support and HECS-HELP – pre-2005 form (if you have not already done so) on or before the census date for the first unit of study you enrol in from 2005.

Failure to do so will result in your provider cancelling your enrolment as a Commonwealth supported student.

Before you sign the form, you must read the Information for Commonwealth supported students booklet so that you are aware of your obligations as the recipient of assistance from the Commonwealth. You can obtain the form and the booklet from your provider.

As a pre-2005 HECS student, most of the changes for all students outlined in the previous section apply to you. If eligible, you will:

- be a Commonwealth supported student;
- use your Student Learning Entitlement; and
- have access to HECS-HELP.

The only changes that affect you differently as a pre-2005 HECS student are the new:

- student contribution amounts; and
- eligibility criteria for HECS-HELP.

These are described below. From the end of 2008, you will cease to be a pre-2005 HECS student and will study under the new arrangements, regardless of whether you have completed your course.

Student contribution amounts

As a pre-2005 HECS student, your higher education provider sets your student contribution amount as it does for other students. However, in setting this amount, your provider cannot exceed what the HECS rates would have been for you in that year had there been no changes to HECS. Therefore, your contribution will not be more than what you would have contributed under HECS until the end of 2008.

Eligibility for HECS-HELP

If you are a pre-2005 HECS student, and you are a New Zealand citizen or the holder of a permanent visa (other than a permanent humanitarian visa), your eligibility for HECS-HELP will be determined under the old HECS rules until the end of 2008. If you would have been eligible under HECS to defer your contribution, you will be eligible for HECS-HELP.

What happened to PELS?

From 2005, the deferred payment arrangements for postgraduate fee-paying students that were available under PELS are called FEE-HELP. FEE-HELP assists eligible fee-paying students to pay their tuition fees at eligible higher education providers. Australian citizens and holders of permanent humanitarian visas are eligible for FEE-HELP.

Under FEE-HELP, students can borrow up to the FEE-HELP limit over their lifetime. Visit the Going to Uni website (www.goingtouni.gov.au) to find out the current FEE-HELP limit.

I began my course and obtained a PELS loan before 2005. How do the changes affect me?

Generally, you will be considered a pre-2005 PELS student if you:

- commenced your postgraduate course of study before 1 January 2005;
- incurred a PELS debt before 1 January 2005;
- have not discontinued your enrolment without formal approval from your higher education provider; and
- have not completed the requirements of your course or the requirements of another course at the same level into which you have transferred.

Your provider will be able to help you determine whether you are a pre-2005 PELS student.

IMPORTANT!

If you are returning to study (after an approved leave of absence) in a course that you commenced as a PELS student before 2005 (or are transferring to another course at the same level), and wish to access FEE-HELP, you must complete a Request for FEE-HELP assistance form (if you have not already done so) on or before the census date for the first unit of study you enrol in from 2005.

Failure to do so may result in you being charged a late fee, or your enrolment being cancelled and/or you not being eligible for FEE-HELP.

Before you sign the form, you must read the FEE-HELP Information booklet so that you are aware of your obligations as a recipient of FEE-HELP. You can obtain both the form and the booklet from your provider.