



# International students – transferring between education providers

This factsheet is all about **transferring between education providers**; what you should know and what to consider before applying to transfer to another education provider.

## When do I need permission from my provider to transfer to a course at another education provider?

If you want to transfer to a different education provider before completing the first six months of your principal course<sup>1</sup>, (or, if you are enrolled at school, the first six months of your school course) you will need your provider to **release** you before you can enrol with a new provider.

After having completed six months of your principal course, you do not need your provider's permission to transfer to another education provider.

Education providers must have a **transfer policy** that sets out how they will consider transfer applications within the restricted transfer period.

## When can my provider refuse to release me?

In some situations, your provider may refuse a transfer application. This must be outlined in its transfer policy. Reasons a transfer may be refused include:

- you apply to transfer into a course that you do not have the credentials to enter
- the transfer would jeopardise your progression through a package of courses
- the transfer would put you in breach of your visa conditions
- you are trying to avoid being reported to the Department of Home Affairs for failure to meet attendance or course progress requirements
- you owe money to the provider.

Your provider's transfer policy must also outline circumstances in which it would **approve** a transfer application because it is in your best interests, including:

- where you are unable to achieve satisfactory course progress, even after engaging with your provider's intervention strategy
- where you demonstrate compassionate and compelling circumstances
- where your provider fails to deliver the course as set out in your written agreement
- where there is evidence that your reasonable expectations about your course are not being met
- where there is evidence that you were misled (by the provider or its agent) about your provider or your course, making the course unsuitable for your needs or objectives.

<sup>1</sup> The principal course of study is the main course of study (where the student visa has been issued) for more than one course. This is normally the final course in a package.

### Contact us

[ombudsman.gov.au](http://ombudsman.gov.au)  
1300 362 072

GPO Box 442  
Canberra ACT 2601

[Read your provider's transfer policy](#)

[Read your written agreement, especially the refund policy](#)

[Find out from the Department of Home Affairs whether the transfer is likely to affect your student visa](#)

[The Commonwealth Ombudsman is a free service](#)

[Have you seen our video? Scan the QR code to watch](#)



## What should I do before I apply for release?

- read your written agreement to see what you agreed to when you accepted it. **Do not** transfer to another provider without understanding the refund terms and conditions in your written agreement
- read your education provider's **transfer policy** to see what you need to do
- read your provider's **fees, refunds and cancellation policies** to see if you will owe fees or if you may apply for a partial refund
- check whether you will have to pay a **cancellation** fee for withdrawing from your current provider
- find out from the Department of Home Affairs whether the transfer is allowed under your **student visa conditions** or if a new visa may be needed
- obtain a letter of offer for the course you would like to transfer to.

You can read more about the effect of changing courses on your student visa on the [Department of Home Affairs'](#) website.

## What can I do if my provider refuses to release me?

If your provider refuses to release you from your course(s), you can appeal through your provider's **internal** complaints and appeals process. If you are not satisfied with your provider's decision, you can make an **external** complaint to our Office.

## How do I make an external complaint?

If you are an international student studying with a **private education provider**, you can complain to the Commonwealth Ombudsman. The Ombudsman investigates complaints about problems that intending, current or former students may have with private schools, colleges or universities (education providers) in Australia. You can fill out our online form or phone us **1300 362 072**. For more information about how to complain and how to contact us, visit [ombudsman.gov.au](#)

If you are an international student or a domestic student studying with a **public (government) education provider** you can complain to the appropriate [state or territory ombudsman](#).

## Who else can help me?

You can find a list of [useful links](#) to other organisations that may be able to help you on our website.

## Case Study

Ms Silva from Brazil<sup>2</sup> had her transfer request refused because her provider decided that the transfer would not be in her best interests. Ms Silva was not progressing well in her course, and her provider thought she was trying to avoid being reported to the Department of Home Affairs. However, the provider could not give us any evidence to show that it had attempted to engage Ms Silva in an intervention strategy. Because the provider had not followed the right procedures, we recommended that it release Ms Silva from her course, which it did.

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More information is available at [ombudsman.gov.au](#).

Please note: This document is intended as a guide only. For this reason, the information should not be relied on as legal advice or regarded as a substitute for legal advice in individual cases. To the maximum extent permitted by the law, the Commonwealth Ombudsman is not liable to you for any loss or damage suffered as a result of reliance on this document. For the most up-to-date versions of cited Acts, please refer to the [Federal Register of Legislation](#).

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<sup>2</sup> Name and country has been changed to protect privacy