

## **I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

This policy describes the University of Houston Clear Lake (UHCL) process for managing student financial obligations, and student responsibilities provided herein.

University administrators have a fiduciary responsibility to ensure that student financial obligations are billed, accounted for, collected, and subsequently made available to the state and the university on a timely basis. Further, the university will use reasonable efforts to notify students of any outstanding obligations. It is the student's responsibility to meet these, as is required under Texas Education Code Section 54.007(a-b).

Texas Education Code Section 54.007 (c-d) further provides that the university may impose penalties for failure to pay tuition, fees, charges or any other financial obligations on time. These penalties include the use of third-party collection agencies if the university has not collected past due accounts directly.

## **II. PROCESS DESCRIPTION and DEFINITIONS**

- A. Collection Responsibility – UHCL Student Business Services has the primary responsibility for the collection of registration-related student fees and other charges. They are accountable for (i) minimizing losses from unpaid student financial obligations, (ii) managing the business relationship with collection agencies, (iii) partnering with other departments to consider student financial appeals and enrollment initiatives, and (iv) working equitably, honestly and transparently with students to customize payment plans that enable students to continue their education while still preserving the university's financial health.
- B. Student Financial Obligations – Student financial obligations commence when an individual becomes a UHCL student. These may include tuition, room, board/meals, late registration fees, application fees, graduation fees, and other registration-related fees such as technology or lab fees.
- C. Other Charges – Additional charges may be added to the student account because of added classes; financial aid/veteran's benefit changes; credit card processing fees for online payments via MasterCard, Discover, Visa, or American Express, or any additional card services; financial appeal refunds which, if approved, and as a result of previous financial aid, may increase student debt; various fines; various late payment or default fees; interest on short term loans; late penalty charges for

missed installments; returned checks; returned electronic check or ACH fees; collections fees; payment plan set-up fees; and various auxiliary charges.

- D. Payment Methods – Payment can be made online via electronic check or ACH transaction, personal check, cashier check, money order, cash [in person only, 8- 5, Monday-Friday] credit card [online only], or wire. Payments made after hours can be placed in a secure depository slot at the Student Business Services windows in Clear Lake or Pearland. Payment information must include student name and UHCL student ID number. Please note - if payment is made via depository after hours on the last day of payment then the payment will be processed the following business day.

Wire transfers may also be used to pay for financial obligations; the student should use their UHCL email account to obtain precise instructions from Student Business Services at [SBS@UHCL.edu](mailto:SBS@UHCL.edu). The wire transfer amount should be the actual outstanding tuition and fee amount; any additional amount transferred will cause the original wire to be returned. Any associated costs for the wire(s) will be charged to the individual or company initiating the transfer, and these will be deducted from the wired amount. Tuition and fees are payable in US dollars. The student's account will be credited within three business days from the date the funds are received and confirmed in a UHCL bank.

- E. Notification – UHCL notifies students of their outstanding balances through the Student Business Services offices [Clear Lake and Pearland] throughout the semester. Student Business Services communicates with the students via their UHCL email account. UHCL email is the official university notification channel; students should check their email account periodically and maintain access to it if they have unpaid accounts. End of semester notices are also sent to students who still have an outstanding balance on the official closing day of the semester. Three notifications are sent to students regarding outstanding balances of accounts in jeopardy of being sent to collections. The notifications are sent approximately 90, 120, and 150 days after the end of the term. After 180 days any uncollected accounts are sent to a UHCL-contracted collections agency for further action.

- F. Additional Payment Options – UHCL Student Business Services offers two payment plan options for students who may have temporary difficulty in meeting their financial obligations. Winter or May mini semesters must be paid in full; no payment plans are available for these sessions since they have short durations. Students may select a payment plan by logging into their e-Services account or visiting the Student Business Service offices to obtain support from staff. Under either option students must pay the open balance over \$500 on their account to enroll in classes for the next semester. The \$500 is still due

and payable, however students will be permitted to enroll in additional courses if they are continuing their education at UHCL.

- Installment Plan – This consists of four equal payments of 25% for tuition and fees, including an installment fee, with the first due by the initial payment due date of the semester. It is available in the Fall and Spring semesters. This plan is not available for the Summer session. Subsequent due dates are reflected on the agreement and on the student account in a “charges due” category. Courses subsequently added after registration ends will be feathered into the plan and an additional amount may be due with the change and remaining payments.

Students who have not fulfilled their financial obligations on the installment plan by the later of payment deadlines or the end of the semester will be unable to obtain grades/transcripts. In addition, late fees accrue if payment is not made by the due dates, and a default fee applies if the balance is not paid in full by the official closing of the semester.

- Short Term Loan – This is a more flexible arrangement. It is available in the Fall/Spring and Summer semesters. The first 25% payment of tuition and fees plus the installment fee, is due by the initial payment due date of the semester. The remaining 75% is due at later date and that is documented on the loan agreement in addition to being reflected on the student account in a ‘charges due’ category. Courses subsequently added after registration end will be put into the plan and an additional amount may be due immediately as a result of the change and remaining payment amounts may also be increased. Students can make flexible payments of any amount throughout the semester until the final due date. Any payments they make after the final due date will be accepted; however, they will have a financial hold on their account until it is paid in full.

G. Third Party Accounts - A company may arrange to pay UHCL tuition and fees for their employee, or alternatively, an individual may wish to pay for a particular student. These are identified as third-party accounts since someone other than the student is financially responsible. The Student Business Services office manages third party accounting, billing and collection after the student provides a voucher from their corporate or individual sponsor. Billing generally occurs after the final drop/cancellation process by the Registrar’s Office (after the 20<sup>th</sup> class day of the semester).

H. Non-Payment Consequences – As consequences for a student’s failure to meet their financial obligations UHCL may take the following actions:

- Withhold official transcripts;

- Deny registration for subsequent semesters;
- Deny additional installment or loan options for subsequent semesters;
- Deny additional financial aid disbursement
- Assess additional fees for delinquent payments and/or returned items;
- Report unpaid account balances to credit and/or collections Agencies;
- Cease university-provided services;
- Place holds with State Comptroller’s office preventing state payment(s) to the individual holding the debt – this happens automatically through credit agencies
- Place student on temporary 1-year cash payment basis after 3 bank returned items within an academic year, or a permanent cash payment basis after 5 bank returned items. Cash includes cashier’s check, certified check, money order, or credit card.

I. Transcript /Diploma Holds – Students with unresolved financial obligations to UHCL may receive *unofficial* grade reports/transcripts or diploma, however, the university may withhold an *official* validated transcript or diploma containing the registrar’s seal.

**III. REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Responsible Party: Associate Vice President for Business

Operations Review: Every five years

**IV. APPROVAL**

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 /Mark Denney/  
 Vice President for Administration and Finance

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 /Richard Walker/  
 President

Date: 4/20/2023

**V. REVISION LOG**

Revision Number	Approved Date	Description of Changes
#1		Entire rewrite of previous verbiage, format and content changed for clarity and compliance.

**VI. REFERENCES – NONE**