

VIRTUAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE LLC

VRI Student Payments, Withdrawals, Refunds & Placement Policy

Financial rules for registration deposits, Placement Guarantees, remaining tuition, installments, cancellations, withdrawals, refunds, transfers, and credits

Organization: Virtual Research Institute LLC

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Applies To: Student registrations, families/payers, VRI student programs, payment/refund operations, and authorized VRI personnel

Policy Statement. This policy governs VRI's student financial and placement model so registration, checkout, payment automation, communications, refund operations, and public guidance apply one coherent rule set.

Relationship to Other Documents. Session-specific prices/deposits come from approved VRI program data and checkout. Executed transaction-specific terms may add details; this policy owns the general deposit, Placement Guarantee, withdrawal, and refund framework.

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1. Purpose

VRI uses a staged financial model because a registration can occur before final mentor/project assignment is complete. This policy distinguishes:

1. registration and the registration deposit;
2. readiness/placement review;
3. issuance of a Placement Guarantee;
4. exact assignment and onboarding;
5. remaining tuition/payment plan; and
6. program start and participation.

The policy is intended to avoid charging the full balance before VRI has made a meaningful placement commitment while preserving VRI's ability to plan cohorts, reserve capacity, and respond to family-initiated withdrawals.

2. Scope

This policy applies to VRI Research Circles, Research Teams, Research Extension when a student payment model applies, and other student offerings that expressly adopt this policy.

A sponsor-funded, school-district, institutional, scholarship, or special-project arrangement may use different invoicing or refund terms under a written agreement. Those terms should be disclosed to the affected payer before payment.

3. Definitions

Registration. Submission of the required student registration information and any required registration deposit; registration alone is not a guaranteed placement.

Registration deposit. A payment collected at registration, credited toward the applicable program fee, supporting placement planning and reserving the student's place in VRI's placement process. The approved amount is shown in current registration/checkout data.

Placement Guarantee. Written VRI confirmation that VRI commits to provide the student an eligible placement within the stated term/pathway/program parameters, subject to the student's continuing eligibility, accurate information, and required payment. The guarantee may precede announcement of the final mentor/project/cohort when the notice says so.

Exact assignment. The later communication identifying the actual mentor, project, cohort/session, and schedule as applicable.

Eligible tuition payment. Amounts actually paid toward the program fee other than the portion treated as the nonrefundable registration deposit and any separately disclosed, lawfully nonrefundable third-party fee.

First scheduled live session. The first live VRI program meeting in the student's assigned offering used to calculate family-withdrawal timing under this policy.

4. Registration, Placement, and Enrollment Are Distinct

A family may register before VRI has completed readiness review, schedule matching, mentor clearance, capacity planning, and exact assignment.

Registration places the student into VRI's placement process; it does not guarantee a particular mentor, project, cohort, schedule, or even that VRI will be able to issue a Placement Guarantee.

A Placement Guarantee is a later VRI commitment governed by this policy. Exact assignment may be announced later still.

5. Registration Deposit

Where a program requires a deposit, the deposit amount must be displayed before payment. Current deposit/pricing amounts are controlled by VRI's approved program data rather than hardcoded into this policy.

The deposit:

- is collected at registration;
- is credited toward the full program fee if the student proceeds;
- supports placement planning, capacity reservation, review, and pre-program commitments;
- does not itself constitute a Placement Guarantee; and
- is ordinarily nonrefundable for a family-initiated withdrawal, subject to applicable law and the exceptions in this policy.

VRI should not collect an undisclosed deposit or describe the deposit inconsistently across registration, checkout, email, Q&A, or Ask VRI.

6. What the Deposit Reserves

The deposit reserves the student's participation in VRI's placement process and supports planning based on the registration information provided.

VRI may begin readiness review, project/mentor matching, schedule analysis, cohort planning, and administrative work after deposit payment.

A deposit does not require VRI to ignore readiness, safety, legal, capacity, schedule, prerequisite, or quality considerations.

7. What the Deposit Does Not Guarantee

The deposit does not guarantee:

- admission to every requested pathway;
- a specific mentor;
- a specific project or first-choice project;
- a specific cohort or cohort size;
- a specific meeting time;
- a particular start configuration;
- publication, authorship, certificate, or external outcome; or
- that VRI will ultimately issue a Placement Guarantee.

If VRI cannot provide an eligible placement and does not issue or cannot honor the applicable guarantee, the VRI cancellation/non-placement provisions below apply.

8. Readiness and Placement Review

VRI may review the student's registration, academic preparation, project preferences, prerequisites, schedule availability, time zone, readiness, capacity, mentor status, safeguarding/legal restrictions, and other legitimate program factors.

VRI may request clarification or propose a different viable project/pathway. A family should disclose known hard schedule constraints before VRI issues a Placement Guarantee.

A student may be waitlisted, declined, or deferred. When VRI declines placement rather than the family withdrawing, VRI should apply the VRI non-placement refund rule.

9. Placement Guarantee

VRI may issue a Placement Guarantee only when it reasonably determines that an eligible placement is feasible under the applicable term/pathway and current operational rules.

The guarantee creates a VRI commitment to provide a qualifying placement, subject to:

- accurate and complete registration information;
- the student's continued eligibility and compliance;
- timely payment of the remaining tuition under the issued payment terms; and
- extraordinary legal/safety circumstances that may lawfully require another remedy.

The guarantee does not necessarily promise the student's first-ranked project or a named mentor unless the guarantee expressly says so.

10. What Constitutes Issuance of a Placement Guarantee

A Placement Guarantee is issued only through an authorized VRI communication or system status that clearly identifies itself as a Placement Guarantee or equivalent binding placement confirmation.

A project-preference screen, automated ranking, tentative match, waitlist message, mentor listing, informal conversation, registration receipt, or deposit receipt is not a Placement Guarantee.

VRI should record the guarantee timestamp, applicable registration, term/pathway, relevant conditions, and authorized system/person that issued it.

11. Mentor, Project, and Session Assignment

After a Placement Guarantee, VRI may announce the exact mentor/project/cohort/session according to the term calendar. Current operating data ordinarily targets exact assignment before program start; the specific date shown in the applicable calendar/communication controls.

Topic rankings are preferences. VRI may assign the highest-ranked viable option for which the student is eligible and schedule-compatible rather than guaranteeing the first choice.

12. Changes Before the Placement Guarantee

Before a Placement Guarantee, VRI may change proposed mentors, project listings, schedule options, cohort structures, or placement plans without creating an automatic refund beyond the applicable pre-guarantee family-withdrawal rule, unless VRI determines it cannot provide an eligible placement.

A family may update material schedule or readiness information, but late changes may reduce placement options.

13. Changes After the Placement Guarantee

After issuing a Placement Guarantee, VRI may still make reasonable operational changes such as replacing a mentor, adjusting project scope, reorganizing a cohort, or changing tools when needed for quality, safety, mentor availability, legal restrictions, or continuity.

A reasonable substitute consistent with the guaranteed pathway/term and the family's disclosed material schedule constraints ordinarily satisfies the guarantee even if the exact mentor or project changes.

If VRI cannot provide a qualifying substitute or makes a material VRI-caused change that defeats the essential guaranteed placement, VRI must apply the VRI cancellation/non-placement remedy rather than treat the matter as an ordinary family withdrawal.

14. Remaining Tuition

Remaining tuition does not become due before VRI issues a Placement Guarantee under the standard model.

Once the Placement Guarantee is issued, VRI will state the remaining balance and available payment options. The registration deposit is credited toward the full program fee.

Current tuition amounts are controlled by approved pathway/program data and the transaction record rather than by dollar figures fixed in this policy.

15. Installment Options After the Placement Guarantee

When enabled for the applicable pathway and enough time remains before the final payment deadline, a family may select an approved installment plan after the Placement Guarantee.

The currently configured standard maximum is **four installments** for Research Circles, Research Teams, and Research Extension. Fewer installments may be available for a later registration so that all ordinary installments finish by the final payment deadline.

Installment availability, count, spacing, and amount are generated by the approved payment configuration. A website or email summary must not state a higher maximum than the canonical pathway configuration.

16. Due Dates

The Placement Guarantee/payment notice controls the student's actual due dates.

Under the current standard configuration, the remaining balance or final installment is due no later than **7 calendar days before program start**, unless an approved session-specific rule or written VRI agreement states another deadline.

VRI may change future operational deadlines prospectively through approved configuration and policy synchronization. An undisclosed internal grace period is not a second public due date.

17. Late Payment

A late or incomplete payment may affect enrollment, exact assignment, platform access, or program-start eligibility unless VRI approves a documented exception.

VRI may send reminders and may provide a short operational grace period, but silence or delayed enforcement does not permanently waive the balance.

VRI should not assess an unapproved late-registration or late-payment fee. Any such fee must be affirmatively enabled in the approved program/payment configuration and disclosed before it is charged.

18. Failed Payment

If a card, bank, or processor payment fails, the family remains responsible for the amount due unless VRI cancels or adjusts it in writing.

VRI may request a new approved payment method through a secure processor flow. Families must not send full card numbers, security codes, or bank credentials by email.

Processor retries or automatic payments must follow the authorization provided in the applicable checkout/payment-plan terms.

19. Waitlists and Capacity

A waitlist does not create a Placement Guarantee. VRI may accept additional students only when an eligible placement remains feasible.

A waitlisted family should not be charged remaining tuition as though a Placement Guarantee had been issued. If a deposit is collected under a special waitlist process, the applicable treatment must be disclosed before payment.

20. VRI Inability to Provide Placement

If VRI determines before issuing a Placement Guarantee that it cannot provide an eligible placement, VRI should cancel the affected registration and initiate a full refund of payments attributable to that unavailable placement, including the registration deposit, unless the family affirmatively accepts a transfer or credit instead.

The family should not need to submit a refund request merely to receive a refund VRI already owes because VRI cannot provide the placement.

21. VRI Cancellation

If VRI cancels the relevant offering or guaranteed placement, VRI will ordinarily offer one or more of:

- full refund of payments attributable to the cancelled placement;
- transfer to another available project/session/pathway; or
- future-program credit.

A transfer or credit offered instead of a refund otherwise owed for VRI cancellation requires the family's affirmative acceptance.

VRI may also provide a reasonable substitute under Section 13 when the original mentor/project changes but a qualifying placement remains available.

22. Mentor Withdrawal or Replacement

A mentor's withdrawal does not automatically cancel the student's program if VRI can provide a qualified replacement and a materially comparable placement consistent with the guarantee.

VRI may replace the mentor, adjust project scope, modify meeting leadership, or reorganize the cohort. VRI should communicate material changes promptly.

If VRI cannot provide a qualifying replacement and therefore cannot honor the Placement Guarantee, Section 20/21 applies.

23. Project Cancellation or Replacement

VRI may cancel or replace a project because of mentor availability, insufficient feasibility, safety, legal restrictions, sponsor constraints, quality concerns, or other legitimate reasons.

If an eligible replacement within the guaranteed parameters is available, VRI may offer or assign the replacement consistent with the guarantee and the student's readiness/schedule.

If no qualifying replacement can be provided, the VRI non-placement remedy applies.

24. Material Schedule Change

A minor or reasonable schedule adjustment does not automatically create a refund right.

A **material VRI-caused schedule change** is one that makes the guaranteed placement infeasible based on schedule constraints the family disclosed before the Placement Guarantee, or that substantially changes the promised program timing in a manner VRI cannot reasonably cure.

When a material VRI-caused change prevents participation and no qualifying alternative is available, VRI should treat the matter as inability to provide the guaranteed placement rather than as a family withdrawal.

A conflict caused by a later family schedule change is governed by the family-withdrawal rule.

25. Family Withdrawal Before the Placement Guarantee

A family may withdraw before a Placement Guarantee by using VRI's official withdrawal/refund process.

Under the standard model, no remaining tuition is yet due. The registration deposit is ordinarily nonrefundable for a voluntary family withdrawal because placement planning and capacity reservation have begun, subject to applicable law and an approved exceptional-circumstance decision.

If VRI, rather than the family, determines it cannot provide an eligible placement, the deposit is refundable under Section 20.

26. Family Withdrawal After the Placement Guarantee

After a Placement Guarantee, a family may still request withdrawal. The amount refundable depends on the timing before the first scheduled live session and the payments actually made.

The standard family-withdrawal schedule below applies unless an executed program-specific agreement, scholarship/sponsor arrangement, or applicable law requires a different result.

After program start, no automatic refund is created by this pre-start schedule; Section 28 applies.

27. Standard Pre-Start Refund Schedule

For a voluntary family withdrawal after a Placement Guarantee:

Withdrawal timing	Standard refund treatment
More than 21 calendar days before the first scheduled live session	100% of eligible tuition payments actually paid , excluding the registration deposit and any separately disclosed, lawfully nonrefundable third-party fee

Withdrawal timing	Standard refund treatment
20 to 8 calendar days before the first scheduled live session	50% of eligible tuition payments actually paid , excluding the registration deposit and any separately disclosed, lawfully nonrefundable third-party fee
7 calendar days or fewer before the first scheduled live session	No standard refund , absent an approved exceptional circumstance or legally required remedy

For clarity, the registration deposit is credited toward the program fee if the student participates but is excluded from the standard family-initiated refund amount.

VRI should calculate the refund from the actual payment ledger, not from an assumed full tuition amount the family never paid.

28. Withdrawal After Program Start

After the first scheduled live session has begun, a voluntary family withdrawal does not create an automatic refund entitlement.

VRI may consider an individualized partial refund, credit, transfer, or other remedy for a documented exceptional circumstance, a substantial VRI-caused failure, or a legally required reason.

Payment does not guarantee a certificate or continued participation, and academic or conduct removal does not automatically create a refund unless this policy, an executed agreement, or applicable law provides one.

29. Nonrefundable Amounts and Disclosure

VRI may treat the registration deposit and a separately disclosed third-party fee as nonrefundable for a voluntary family withdrawal only to the extent permitted by law and clearly disclosed before payment.

VRI should not invent or retain an undisclosed "administrative fee" after the transaction. If VRI later adopts a processing or late fee, the fee must be approved, disclosed, configured consistently, and applied prospectively.

No nonrefundability provision overrides a full refund VRI owes because it cancels or cannot provide the guaranteed placement.

30. Exceptional Circumstances

VRI may approve an exception for circumstances such as serious illness, bereavement, military orders, major family emergency, a material VRI-caused schedule change, duplicate payment, payment-processing error, safeguarding issue, or another documented circumstance VRI determines warrants equitable review.

An exception is not automatic unless required by law. VRI may request reasonable supporting information while avoiding unnecessary collection of sensitive medical or family details.

The decision should identify the policy basis, approved remedy, reviewer, and payment/reconciliation record.

31. Transfers

VRI may offer a transfer to another available project, session, term, or pathway when academically and operationally appropriate.

A family is not required to accept a transfer instead of a refund that VRI otherwise owes for cancellation/non-placement.

If a family voluntarily chooses a transfer, VRI should state how existing payments, deposit, price differences, credits, and deadlines will be applied.

32. Future-Program Credits

VRI may offer a future-program credit as an alternative remedy or exceptional accommodation.

The credit notice should state value, expiration (if any), eligible programs, transferability (if any), and whether unused credit is refundable. A credit offered instead of a VRI-owed cancellation refund requires affirmative family acceptance.

A discretionary credit does not create a general precedent requiring the same remedy in every case.

33. Duplicate and Processing-Error Refunds

Duplicate charges, clear overpayments, or verified processing errors should be corrected promptly after VRI confirms the payment record.

A duplicate/processing-error refund is not subject to the family-withdrawal schedule because it does not represent a voluntary withdrawal from an otherwise valid charge.

VRI may need to wait for a payment to settle or obtain processor confirmation before executing the correction.

34. Processor and Bank Timing

VRI may initiate a refund through its approved payment processor, ordinarily to the original payment method when practicable.

VRI does not control how quickly a bank, card issuer, intermediary, or international payment network posts the refund after the processor accepts it. A processing delay after VRI's documented initiation is not itself a new refund obligation.

VRI should provide the processor refund reference or status when reasonably available.

35. Chargebacks and Payment Disputes

A family may exercise lawful payment-dispute rights. VRI encourages families to use the published refund/review process first when practical so that VRI can correct errors without unnecessary processor escalation.

When a chargeback or payment dispute is active, VRI may pause duplicate refund processing, preserve relevant records, respond to the processor, and reconcile the final outcome before issuing additional funds for the same transaction.

VRI will not use a chargeback to waive or eliminate a non-waivable consumer right, but an unresolved payment dispute may affect account reconciliation or continued participation where lawful and appropriate.

36. No Sensitive Payment Credentials by Email

VRI will not ask families to send full card numbers, card security codes, passwords, or complete bank-account credentials by ordinary email or contact form.

Payment-method updates should occur through an approved secure processor or verified payment workflow.

37. Scholarships and Financial Assistance

A scholarship, remission, sponsor payment, or institutional credit ordinarily reduces the amount the family owes and does not create a cash entitlement unless the award terms expressly say so.

A refund generally cannot exceed the amount actually paid by the family for the refundable portion of the transaction. Sponsor-funded or aid-funded amounts may be returned or reallocated according to the applicable sponsor/award terms.

Financial assistance availability is not guaranteed and may vary by funding and program cycle.

38. Third-Party Payment

If a school, employer, sponsor, relative, or other third party pays on the student's behalf, VRI may need to return any refund to the original payer/payment method unless an applicable agreement or processor rule provides otherwise.

The student/family remains responsible for providing accurate payer information and for resolving private reimbursement arrangements that do not involve VRI.

39. Future Foundation-Funded Participation

If a separate charitable entity later funds VRI participation, the charitable award and VRI LLC tuition transaction must remain appropriately documented and separate.

This policy does not imply that a Virtual Research Foundation currently exists, has tax-exempt status, or that payments/donations are tax deductible.

40. International Payments and Currency

VRI prices are stated in the currency shown at checkout, ordinarily U.S. dollars unless VRI expressly offers another currency.

A family's bank or payment provider may impose foreign-exchange spreads, international transaction fees, local taxes, or other charges outside VRI's control. VRI does not guarantee that currency-conversion movements will make the local-currency value of a later refund identical to the local-currency value originally charged.

International enrollment may require additional consumer/refund disclosures through a country-specific addendum.

41. Taxes and Fees

VRI will collect taxes or legally required fees when applicable to the transaction and system configuration.

Any separate VRI fee affecting refund treatment must be approved and disclosed before payment. Payment-processor or bank charges outside VRI's control are subject to the processor/bank terms and applicable law.

42. Written Decisions and Records

VRI should maintain auditable records for consequential payment/refund decisions. A refund/withdrawal record should include, as applicable:

- registration/student identifier;
- term/pathway/session/project;
- Placement Guarantee status and timestamp;
- payment transaction references without full payment credentials;
- request/reason and relevant timing;
- payment ledger and refund calculation;
- decision basis and authorized reviewer;
- transfer/credit acceptance if used instead of an otherwise owed refund;
- processor refund identifier/status; and
- family notification/reconciliation status.

Individualized refund amounts require authorized human review when the calculation is not purely mechanical.

43. Relationship to Registration, Checkout, Stripe, and Session-Specific Pricing

The following systems must remain synchronized with this policy:

- registration Step 5 payment/placement acknowledgment;
- Step 6/checkout presentation;
- canonical pathway pricing/deposit configuration;
- Placement Guarantee automation;
- payment Worker/Stripe logic;
- installment-plan calculations;
- /refunds/ public page;
- Q&A and Ask VRI;
- registration/payment/guarantee/refund emails; and
- internal payment/refund records.

The policy must not hardcode pathway tuition/deposit amounts when the approved canonical data is intended to own those values.

If code and policy conflict, VRI must investigate and correct the inconsistency rather than silently allowing separate rules to coexist.

44. Amendments and Version Control

VRI may revise this policy prospectively through its controlled policy-release process. Material adverse financial terms should not be retroactively imposed on an existing transaction when inconsistent with the participant's executed terms or applicable law.

Immediate clarifying, fraud-prevention, processor-required, security, or legally required changes may be implemented when appropriate, but VRI should preserve a record of the governing terms applicable to each transaction.

Policy adoption must include synchronized review of registration, checkout, payment/refund automation, public knowledge, emails, and the stable public policy page/PDF.