

Attendance, Progression and Exclusion Policy and Procedure

1. Introduction

Australian Performing Arts Conservatory (APAC) Attendance, Progression and Exclusion Policy and Procedure sets out the principles, scope, purpose, principles, policy statements, procedures and responsibilities relating to the management of student attendance, course progression and exclusion.

1.1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy and Procedure is to ensure that the management of student attendance, course progression and exclusion acknowledges the correlation between student performance and successful higher education; ensures that international students are in a position to complete their course within their expected course duration; to foster good practice; and to mitigate academic risk.

1.2. Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to all APAC students and staff.

1.3. Principles

- management of student attendance, course progression, and exclusion is fair, equitable, reasonable, transparent, and follows due process;
- processes and practices are designed to identify as early as possible students who are not actively participating, including through class attendance, in their course and are at risk of failing units and consequently at risk of not progressing satisfactorily through their course;
- intervention strategies are developed taking account of the multiple factors that can impede active course participation, and contribute to academic risk;
- intervention strategies are calibrated to the circumstances and needs of individual students, and are deployed reasonably and sensitively;
- a student is excluded from a course only after intervention strategies have been deployed and all reasonable efforts made to motivate and support the student;
- APAC's approach to managing student attendance, course progression and exclusion is regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with mandated requirements and to drive quality improvement.

2. Policy Statements

2.1. Academic Quality, Equity and Academic Risk

APAC is committed to providing a high-quality learning experience for all students to facilitate their achievement of required learning objectives and to support them in achieving academic success. The curriculum, modes of delivery, support services and facilities are designed in the context of these commitments. Active participation in units and courses, including attending classes and actively participating in class activities and academic interactions, is a key factor in contributing to academic success and in mitigating academic risk. Consequently, APAC encourages and supports active participation by all students and has in place equitable, reasonable, and sensitive processes and practices to do these things.

2.2. Risk Factors, Monitoring, and Interventions

Relatedly, APAC is proactive in managing academic risk and has a range of intervention and support strategies available for identifying students who are at risk of failing units and not progressing satisfactorily through their course. Many factors may contribute to a student becoming at risk of experiencing academic difficulties. Students in the following categories may be at a higher risk of experiencing academic difficulties:

- students who are employed;
- students with young children;
- students with caring responsibilities;
- students with health difficulties;
- students experiencing financial difficulties;
- students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- students experiencing a personal crisis;
- students from traditionally under-represented groups in higher education such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- students with a disability; and
- students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

While these categories identify risk factors, not all students in these categories will be at academic risk; students who are progressing satisfactorily in their studies are not considered at risk, irrespective of the risk factors above. APAC has in place an effective system for monitoring student attendance, including class participation, and course progression. Evidence obtained through this system is one of the triggers for interventions and provision of support.

2.3. Exclusion and Appeals

APAC may, under this Policy and Procedure, exclude a student from a course. Decisions to exclude are made in a fair and transparent manner. In particular, they are made only after APAC has made all reasonable efforts to assist students through interventions and provision of support. APAC ensures students are aware that they are at risk of exclusion well before a decision to exclude is made and in sufficient time to take steps to avoid exclusion. In

addition, prospective students and students are made aware of the range of matters relevant to assessment, course attendance, and progression, in materials they receive, prior to and at commencement, and in the orientation program. In particular, they are advised to acquaint themselves with this Policy and Procedure. Decisions to exclude may be appealed, using internal and external mechanisms, under APAC's Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure.

2.4. Review

APAC's processes and practices relevant to managing student attendance, course progression, and exclusion are regularly reviewed through the Teaching and Learning Committee to ascertain if there are systemic issues that APAC must address in order to mitigate academic risk. Review decisions may be, but are not limited to, adjusting admission requirements; improving curriculum design and delivery; improving the monitoring of student academic achievement and progression; or re-calibrating student support services. More broadly, APAC will incorporate into its regular reviews feedback from students and staff; the inputs of external experts; the findings of external benchmarking; and the findings of internal and external quality audits. Review findings drive planned improvements, which are implemented, reviewed, and improved once more, in an ongoing cycle of quality improvement.

2.5. Legislative and Regulatory Compliance

Monitoring attendance and course progression systems and processes will be compliant with education provider obligations under the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 and Standard 8 of the National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018.

3. Procedure

3.1. Identifying Students at Risk and Level 1 Risk Status

3.1.1. Indicators that a student is at academic risk include but are not limited to:

- not meeting the standard entry requirements for their course;
- identifying as requiring assistance with language, literacy or numeracy; and
- identifying as having a disability which requires specialist learning support or reasonable adjustments.
- not regularly logging in to the Learning Management System;
- not downloading unit materials;
- not participating in orientation sessions;
- not regularly attending classes;
- not submitting, or participating in, an assessment task;

- failing an assessment task or other evidence in formative or summative assessment tasks and activities of academic risk; and
- seeking more than one extension to an assessment task due date.

3.1.2. Students showing an academic risk indicator are entered in the Students at Risk Register, with the relevant details recorded. The presence of risk indicators becomes evident in various ways including self-identification by students; administrative processes at admission; student performance and behaviour in particular units; student performance tracked across all units attempted within a particular study period; student performance across all units in a sequence of study periods.

Consequently, some risk indicators will be become evident and be recorded through the implementation of academic and administrative processes such recording extension applications; recording academic results; calculating likely student completion times for their courses; and calculating grade point averages.

Others will become evident to members of the academic, administrative and support staff who will ensure that the relevant details are recorded in the Students at Risk Register. See also APAC's Student Support Policy and Procedure.

3.1.3. Where a student shows an academic risk indicator, the lecturer responsible for any unit in which they are enrolled will meet with that student to determine the degree of academic risk and the usefulness of providing academic support or other support to the student. Where support is judged to be useful, the lecturer works with the students, and student support staff as required, to develop an intervention plan.

3.1.4. In cases where a student fails an assessment task or has not met attendance requirements, they are assigned a formal Level 1 Risk Status. Students assigned a formal Level 1 Risk Status are required to meet as soon as possible with the relevant Head of Discipline (HoD), who will develop an intervention plan appropriate to the student's particular circumstances. Intervention plans may include but are not limited to:

- academic support;
- counselling support;
- resilience coaching;
- English language support; and
- referral to appropriate external expert support.

Details of intervention plans are entered in the Students at Risk Register, the subsequent academic performance of those students is monitored, and where appropriate additional intervention plans are developed and implemented.

3.2. Course Progression and Level 2 and Level 3 Risk Status

3.2.1. APAC collects and monitors data, using the Student Management System, to identify students at risk of not making satisfactory progress in their course. This triggers

interventions and provision of support, and, sometimes, exclusion from the course. Data collected for each student includes:

- number of completed units relative to course duration;
- proportion of units not passed in a given study period as a proportion of units attempted;
- number of times a unit has been attempted but not passed; and
- grade point average.

3.2.2. A student is assigned a formal **Level 2 Risk Status** if:

- they fail a unit twice;
- they fail more than 50% of units attempted within a study period; or
- their grade point average falls below a passing grade of 4.

Students assigned a formal Level 2 Risk Status are required to meet with the Director of Higher Education (DoHE) to discuss their situation. The DoHE will explain the consequences of unsatisfactory course progression and will develop an intervention plan. This intervention plan will be formalised in writing, will include milestones which the student must meet, and will specify points at which adherence to, and the effectiveness of, the plan is reviewed.

This formalised intervention plan is recognised as an 'implemented intervention strategy' for the purposes of an allowable extension of course duration for international students under Standard 8 of the National Code.

Intervention plans may include but are not limited to:

- having students attend regular learning support sessions that may assist student with time management, study skills, exam preparation and essay writing;
- study sessions with subject specialists;
- one on one tutorial sessions with a paid instructor;
- English language support;
- counselling that may assist with personal issues that may be affecting progress;
- reviewing appropriateness of unit or course selection;
- reduction in study load; and
- reasonable adjustments, where the student is identified as having a disability.

Details of intervention plans are entered in the Students at Risk Register, as are details of achievement relative to milestones and details of the plan review. The Academic Board receives information regarding cases and details of the intervention plans developed.

3.2.3. A student is assigned a formal **Level 3 Risk Status** if:

- they fail a unit three times;
- they fail more than 50% of units attempted in two consecutive compulsory study periods; or
- their grade point average falls below a passing grade of 4 in two consecutive compulsory study periods; and
- an intervention strategy was formalised in writing and implemented after the student was assessed as not making satisfactory course progress at the end of an initial compulsory study period.

Students assigned a formal Level 3 Risk Status are issued with a formal Show Cause Notice by the Academic Board.

In responding to this Notice, students are invited to identify all circumstances outside their control, such as health issues, personal crises, unexpected family or employment issues, or any unforeseen event which may have negatively impacted their academic performance.

The Academic Board will consider the students response in deciding whether to exclude the student from their course and may take advice from the DoHE.

The Chair of the Academic Board will formally notify the student in writing of the decision. Notification will include information regarding appealing the decision and refer the student to APAC's Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure.

A student who has been excluded from an academic course may apply for re-admission to that course or another course in accordance with APAC's Admissions Policy and Procedure.

3.3. Maintaining Eligibility for FEE-HELP for Domestic Students

New domestic students commencing their course after 1 January 2018 and choosing to pay their tuition fees using FEE-HELP, are required to maintain a minimum successful completion rate in units in which they remain enrolled after the respective study period Census Date.

Under the Higher Education Support Act (HESA) 2003, this is determined as:

- having undertaken eight (8) or more units in the course, the student is required to have successfully completed (i.e., passed) at least 50% of the units in which they remained enrolled after study period Census Date;
- for students seeking to move between APAC higher education courses and having completed four (4) or more units in a higher education course with APAC, the student is required to have successfully completed (i.e., passed) at least 50% of the units in which they remained enrolled after the study period Census Date.

At the end of each study and prior to re-enrolment, relevant administrative staff identify and contact students utilising FEE HELP, and who do not meet the definition above of a

successful completion rate, to advise they are able to continue their studies only by paying their own fees.

3.4. International Students Only

If an international student is identified for a second, but not consecutive, study period as not making satisfactory course progress, APAC does not report the international student for unsatisfactory course progress.

If a student is identified at Level 3 Risk Status, in accordance with Clause 3.2.3 of this Policy and Procedure, the student is notified in writing of APAC's intention to report the student to the Department of Home Affairs for unsatisfactory course progress - a Notification of Intent to Report to Immigration.

Appeal Process

The Notification of Intent to Report to Immigration informs the student that they are able to appeal under APAC's Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure and that they have twenty (20) working days in which to lodge an appeal.

This appeal should outline the academic and personal circumstances that have impeded their course progress and include an explanation of how they intend to improve their academic performance.

The Appeals Committee exercises their professional judgement and assesses each appeal on its merits. When determining whether compassionate or compelling circumstances exist, all documentary evidence provided to support the claim is considered. Copies of these documents, together with a record of the decision and rationale for the decision, is retained on the student's file.

If the appeal is successful, unsatisfactory course progress for the student is not reported to the Department of Home Affairs.

If the appeal is unsuccessful, the student is advised of the external appeals process provided for in APAC's Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure.

If both appeals are unsuccessful, the Chief Executive Officer confirms, to the relevant administrative staff member, that the student's enrolment is to be cancelled and that the student is to be reported via PRISMS as "unsatisfactory course progress". The relevant administrative staff member advises the student that this cancellation has been processed and that their enrolment is terminated.

4. Responsibilities

4.1. The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- monitoring and overseeing formal complaints, allegations of misconduct, appeals processes for non-academic matters, breaches of academic or research integrity and critical incidents.
- assuring itself that there are effective systems in place for identifying students at risk, monitoring course progress, and developing and implementing appropriate interventions.

4.2. The Academic Board

The Academic Board is responsible for:

- reviewing and monitoring student performance, progress, and retention, and strategies to improve student success, including analyses of relevant data and student feedback to inform improvement activities.
- monitoring the implementation of this Policy and Procedure;
- ensuring the implementation of this Policy and Procedure is regularly reviewed to ensure compliance with mandated standards;
- to consider appropriate changes to this Policy and Procedure which improve academic quality;
- to issue formal Show Cause Notices;
- to consider, and make decisions regarding, student responses to Show Cause Notices.

4.3. Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for:

- confirming to the relevant administrative staff member, that a student's enrolment is to be cancelled and that the student is to be reported via PRISMS as “unsatisfactory course progress”.
- overseeing and monitoring student progress and success, making recommendations to the Academic Board to inform admissions criteria and approaches to course design, teaching, supervision, learning and academic support where required.

4.4. The Director of Higher Education

The Director of Higher Education is responsible for:

- the implementation of this Policy and Procedure.

4.5. Staff

Staff are responsible for:

- acting in accordance with this Policy and Procedure; and
- seeking advice as to their responsibilities or the appropriate courses of action as required.

5. Relevant Documents

- APAC Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure
- APAC Student Support Policy and Procedure
- APAC Students At Risk Register
- Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000
- Education Legislation Amendment (Provider Integrity and Other Measures) Act 2017
- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
- Higher Education Support Act (HESA) 2003
- National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018
- TEQSA Guidance Note: Monitoring and Analysis of Student Performance. January 2020

6. Definitions

- **Census Date** is the effective final enrolment date and charges liability date for a course or units, after which a student cannot withdraw without significant academic or financial penalties.
- **Domestic Student** is a student who is an Australian citizen (including Australian citizens with dual citizenship), a New Zealand citizen, an Australian permanent resident, or holds an Australian permanent humanitarian visa.
- **International Student** is a student who holds an Australian student visa which provides approval to study in an APAC course.
- **PRISMS** means Provider Registration and International Student Management System.
- **Show Cause** provides reasons as to why a particular prima facie justified decision should not be made.
- **Study Period** is a period of time, with a census date, over which a student is enrolled in a course, such as a semester or trimester.

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