Academic Progress - Academic Progress Procedure (HE)

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Procedure outlines the process by which Victoria University (VU) will monitor and manage academic progress for students enrolled in higher education coursework.

Section 2 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(2) HESF: Standard 1.3 Orientation and Progression

(3) ESOS National Code of Practice 2018: Standard 6.1.7 Overseas Student Support Services; Standard 8 Overseas Student Visa Requirements.

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This Procedure applies to:

a. all onshore and offshore VU students enrolled in higher education coursework courses (subject to any alternative arrangements within VU agreements with offshore partners).

(5) This Procedure does not apply to:

a. students enrolled in higher degrees by research courses;
b. students enrolled in Vocational Education courses;
c. students enrolled in Further Education, including English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS);
d. students enrolled in non-award courses;
e. students enrolled in in-bound study abroad and exchange units.

Section 4 - Definitions

(6) Block

(7) Exclude - The termination of a student's enrolment.

(8) Notice in Writing

(9) Satisfactory Progress - Completion of all the requirements of a course in normal duration, not exceeding maximum course duration.

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Section 5 - Policy/Regulation

(10) Academic Progress Regulations 2016

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

Roles	Responsibilities
Student Administration (Assessments and Completions)	Identify students making (or at risk of) unsatisfactory progress and issue notifications to students. Process any changes to individual student's enrolments as determined by the Procedure or the Show Cause Panel.
Student Administration(Enrolments)	Report unsatisfactory progress in accordance with the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (Cth) (ESOS) requirements. Lift unit restrictions when approved by student advisor.
Support person	Provides support to the student but does not advocate nor participate in the process.
Student Advocate (Student Services)	Provides advocacy, advice and assistance to the student throughout the process.
Student Advisor (Student Services)	A professional staff member who provides advice and referrals to support student success.

Part B - Unsatisfactory Progress Process

(11) The University will regularly assess students' academic results to determine whether they are making satisfactory progress.

(12) A student will be deemed to be not making satisfactory progress if they fail a certain number of units in their course, in any sequence or study period. The following criteria are used to assess whether a student is not making satisfactory progress:

a. Level 1 – at risk of making unsatisfactory progress: Student fails any two or three units within a course.
b. Level 2 – failure to maintain satisfactory progress: Student fails any four or five units within a course.
c. Level 3 – unsatisfactory progress: Student fails any six or seven units within a course OR fails the same unit three times.

(13) It is possible to skip progression levels (for example move from level 1 to level 3) because all failed units are taken into account during each progression period.

(14) If a student fails the same unit twice they will be prevented from re-enrolling into that unit unless they meet with a student advisor to develop an Academic Action Plan.

(15) If a student exceeds the maximum time allowed to complete a course they will be excluded in accordance with the Enrolments - Maximum Course Duration (HE) Procedure regardless of their academic progress level.

First Time – Notification of being at Risk of Unsatisfactory Progress

(16) When a student reaches Level 1 they will be considered to be "at risk" of making unsatisfactory progress. Students at risk of unsatisfactory progress will be offered a range of academic support options, including the

implementation of an academic action plan.

(17) Students will be advised in writing via their VU email address that they are at risk of making unsatisfactory progress in their course. The purpose of the letter is to:

a. Advise the student they are at risk of making unsatisfactory progress;
b. Ensure that students are provided with information about learning supports, resources and assistance – in particular advice about accessibility plans and wellbeing support (such as counselling);
c. Inform students of their responsibility to make an appointment to see a Student Advisor to develop an academic action plan;
d. Remind the student of the University's unsatisfactory progress procedures and consequences of further unsatisfactory progress;
e. Students who have not booked into a Progress meeting will be sent a Progress Follow Up Notification by email, where the information in this letter will be considered an Academic Action Plan.

(18) If a student is sponsored by a third party, the sponsor will receive a copy of correspondence that is sent to the student in relation to unsatisfactory progress.

(19) Note that students of Australian Aboriginal background or heritage will be encouraged to contact Moondani Balluk for support and guidance.

Second Time – Failure to Maintain Satisfactory Progress

(20) Where a student fails to maintain satisfactory progress (Level 2), they will be advised in writing that they are at Level 2 and, where a student has failed the same unit for a second time, the student will be not be allowed to re-enrol in that unit unless an academic action plan has been developed.

(21) The same information as provided for Level 1 will be provided (see clause 16 & 19).

(22) In addition to providing advice in writing, VU will attempt to contact the student via SMS.

Third Time – Failure to Maintain Satisfactory Progress – Exclusion from Course

(23) Where a student is deemed to have made unsatisfactory progress (Level 3) they will be notified in writing that they may be excluded from their course. In addition to providing advice in writing, VU will attempt to contact the student via SMS and telephone.

(24) Before a decision to exclude a student for unsatisfactory progress is made, students will be given an opportunity to explain (i.e. "show cause") why this should not occur. If a student does not elect to show cause, a Panel will not convene to consider their circumstances.

(25) If a student does not elect to show cause in the required timeframe (see clause 27), Assessments and Completions team will notify the student that:

a. they have made unsatisfactory progress in their course;
b. that VU will exclude them from their course; in the case of international students studying on a student visa, that VU will report them to the Commonwealth Government for unsatisfactory progress;
c. when the exclusion will take effect; and
d. they have a right to access the appeal process described below.

(26) Where the student being excluded is an international student, the student's sponsor (if applicable) and the enrolment team must be notified as well.

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Show Cause Panel Meetings

(27) A student may elect to explain why they should not be excluded from a course by attending a 'Show Cause Panel' (SCP) meeting (referred to as the Unsatisfactory Progress Panel in the Academic Progress Regulations 2016). A student will have five calendar days from the date exclusion letters are sent to advise the University that they wish to attend the SCP.

(28) Students will be given the option of participating in the SCP meeting via telephone, teleconference (e.g. Zoom) or by lodging a written submission if they are unable to attend in person.

(29) The SCP must consider the student's submissions and confirm or set aside the proposed exclusion decision.

(30) Where the SCP does not consider exclusion to be appropriate, the SCP may:

a. Allow the student to continue without conditions if this is justified; or
b. Impose a condition or conditions on the student's continued enrolment, such as:
    i. A direction for the student to reduce their study load or take intermission (domestic students only); or
    ii. A direction that the student enrol in a more suitable specialisation or major; or
    iii. A direction that the student engages in appropriate strategies to support the student's progress.

(31) If the SCP grants permission for the student to continue with study in the same course, the following conditions apply:

a. If the student fails again (i.e. seven or eight units in total, or the same unit four times) they will reach Level 3 again;
b. The maximum number of times a student can elect to show cause for the same course is twice – that is, if a student fails 10 or more units they will be automatically excluded from the course with a right to access the appeal process.

Show Cause Notification

(32) Students will be notified in writing of the outcome of their review by the SCP within five working days of the SCP meeting, including any options for appeal. The notification will be provided to the student's VU email address.

(33) A student's enrolment record must continue to have a status of inactive or enrolled until the end of the internal and external appeal processes.

(34) Where the SCP confirms a decision of exclusion, Assessments and Completions will be informed to enact the changes to the student's enrolment, once the internal and external appeal timeframes have elapsed.

(35) The enrolment team must also be informed of which international students are to be excluded so they can report enrolment changes/exclusions to the Commonwealth Government.

(36) Where exclusion is the final decision the student will be informed that, should they wish to return to study at VU, they will not normally be re-admitted into the same course for at least one academic year, in accordance with the Admissions Procedure.

(37) If the outcome of the SCP process is not finalised before the census date of any subsequent teaching period(s), the student's cancellation will have the unit withdrawn so they do not appear on their academic record and, where eligible, receive a refund for the unit(s).

(38) If a student has failed any units while awaiting the outcome of an appeal the student will be given the option to

retain the units on their academic record or have the unit withdrawn so they do not appear on their academic record and, where eligible, receive a refund for the unit(s).

Composition of Show Cause Panel

(39) SCPs will consist of at least two members: two academics/teaching staff from the relevant college.

(40) College Deans (or equivalent) will nominate a pool of senior academic/teaching staff to represent the college on SCPs. Panel nominees should be senior staff with knowledge of the course. In the case of a student studying a double degree or units from the First Year College, the Panel must have representation from both Colleges. In the case of VU Sydney, the panel should include the Sydney-based course coordinator.

(41) Offshore Panels should consist of the Discipline Leader or the equivalent person in the offshore institution nominated by the Dean of the relevant VU College, and a senior academic from VU or the VU Site Coordinator.

Training for Show Cause Panel

(42) SCP members must have completed training before participating in panel meetings. Student Administration will ensure that training is available prior to each Progress round.

(43) If nominated panel members have not completed training Student Administration will ask the College Dean to nominate staff who have been trained.

Appeals

(44) A student who has been excluded for unsatisfactory progress and who meets the prescribed grounds in the Student Appeals Regulations 2019 may lodge an appeal through the University's appeal process.

(45) Student exclusions will come into effect after the allowable period for lodging an appeal (20 University business days) has lapsed, or after the conclusion of the appeal process if an appeal is lodged.

International Reporting Obligations

(46) VU will only report unsatisfactory course progress or unsatisfactory course attendance to the Australian Government in accordance with section 19(2) of the ESOS Act – when:

a. The internal and external complaints processes have been completed and the decision or recommendation supports exclusion, or
b. The international student has chosen not to access the internal complaints and appeals process within the 20 working day period, or
c. The international student has chosen not to access the external complaints and appeals process (as per the Student Appeals Regulations 2019) or
d. The student withdraws from the internal or external appeals processes by notifying VU in writing.

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Status and Details

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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Block" - A delivery period in which all learning activities and assessments, moderation and result release in units of study are completed within: Four-weeks for all undergraduate units, and postgraduate units in the Colleges of Arts & Education, Health & Biomedicine, Law & Justice and Sport & Exercise Science; or Eight-weeks for postgraduate units in the VU Business School and College of Engineering & Science and units/courses delivered through VU Online.

"Notice in Writing" - Notice in writing will include sending an email to a student's VU email address.

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