Elite Sport and Performer Policy

Section 1 - Summary

(1) This Policy outlines the support available to students and prospective students classified as Elite Sportspersons and Performers studying at Victoria University (VU). It aligns with the foundational pillars of the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) Elite Sport Education Network, ensuring sustained assistance for elite athletes, coaches and officials throughout their studies. Elite performers are equally supported, acknowledging the demands of high-level artistic engagement alongside academic commitments.

Section 2 - Scope

(2) This Policy applies to all domestic and international students and prospective students in TAFE and Higher Education awards, classified as elite sportspersons and performers by recognised Australian or international bodies. Individuals not formally classified may be considered for recognition based on supporting documentation received from national or state sport and arts bodies, emerging and development pathway programs, or advice from AIS or Creative Australia (formerly Australia Council for the Arts).

Section 3 - Policy Statement

Part A - Principles

(3) VU acknowledges the unique challenges faced by elite sportspersons and performers in balancing academic commitments with training, rehearsal, competition, and performance.

(4) In line with VU's values of equity, inclusion and excellence, the University is committed to supporting these students in achieving both academic and performance goals without disadvantage.

(5) The ESP Program facilitates academic flexibility, tailored support services and access to specialised benefits. Elite status is verified with Admissions and recorded in VU's student management system.

(6) VU recognises that students may not commence their studies with elite status but become eligible for ESP Program support as their sporting or performance trajectory develops. Upon successful application, eligible students are welcomed into the program and provided timely access to academic flexibility, wellbeing services and tailored support.

(7) VU recognises that a student's engagement with the ESP Program may evolve during their studies. The University supports students transitioning from elite status by ensuring continued access to academic and wellbeing services and encouraging ongoing connection to the VU community through events, co-curricular activities, and alumni networks.

Part B - Support Services

(8) Support for ESP students is guided by VU policy and procedures and strategic framework and may include:

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a. Admission Support:
    i. ESP prospective students apply for courses through the standard Admissions Procedure. Eligibility for Academic Credit (HE) or Skills Recognition (VET) is determined in accordance with the Credit - Academic Credit Procedure (HE) or Credit - Skills Recognition Procedure (VET).
    ii. ATAR adjustment factors where applicable, subject to study score requirements being met.
    iii. Direct entry to eligible applicants with relevant work and life experience who have the capacity to succeed in their course of study.
    iv. Pathways to success which may include TAFE awards, Foundations programs , Diplomas and pathway courses.
    v. Recognition of status as part of Pre-Training Review (PTR) for TAFE applicants.

b. Enrolment Adjustments
    i. Access to tailored academic programs, including reduced study loads, extended course durations (within allowable limits), deferment, cross-institutional study, and approved leave of absence in accordance with the Enrolments Procedure.
    ii. Priority or optimised timetabling to accommodate elite sport and performance commitments.
    iii. Recognition of prior learning and study credit may be granted in accordance with the Credit - Skills Recognition Procedure (VET) and Credit - Academic Credit Procedure (HE).
    iv. Tailored Patterns of Study for Higher Education students.
    v. Flexible use of the Block Model may be maximised to support course progression alongside elite commitments.

c. Assessment Adjustments
    i. Eligibility for short extensions, special consideration, or reasonable adjustments where elite commitments affect completion of in-class assessments, as per Assessment for Learning - Adjustments to Assessment Procedure (HE) and Assessment for Learning - Assessment Procedure (VET).
    ii. Use of L grade where deadlines are impacted by known elite schedule commitments, in accordance with the Assessment for Learning Policy and procedures.
    iii. ESP students may collaborate with teaching College to explore alternative assessment tasks that demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes.

d. Flexible Study
    i. Patterns of Study in HE may be varied to accommodate regular training, rehearsals, competitions, and performances.
    ii. Additional flexibility and special consideration may be granted in cases of injury, mandatory external commitments, or participation in national/international events, under the Block Model (HE) or aligned arrangements in VU TAFE.

e. Inclusive Support Services
    i. VU is committed to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment that supports the retention and success of all ESP students. VU recognises that some students may face additional barriers to participation and achievement, including those from equity cohorts such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, women, students with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTIQ+ communities, and others who may require tailored support.
    ii. Specialised services available include:
        - Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Unit – providing culturally safe support, advocacy, and engagement for First Nations students.
        - Disability and Accessibility Services – offering study adjustments, inclusive learning, and advocacy for students with disability.
    iii. VU's commitment to equity is embedded across all areas of the university and supported by dedicated

teams including Disability and Accessibility Services, Moondani Balluk, Equity Inclusion and Belonging, with oversight from senior leadership.

f. Financial Assistance
ESP students are eligible to apply for financial assistance, which may include:
   i. Free access to VU fitness centres, studios and performance spaces.
   ii. Complimentary or discounted services at VU allied health clinics.
   iii. Scholarships, awards, and bursaries.
   iv. Travel grants for major elite competitions or performances.
   v. Subsidies for representing VU at UniSport Australia-endorsed events.

Roles and Responsibilities

(9) The ESP Coordinator is responsible for:

a. Serving as the initial point of contact for elite sportspersons, performers and internal and external stakeholders.
b. Assessing and confirming eligibility of students and prospective students for elite status and ESP Program support.
c. Liaising with admissions, academic and teaching staff, and administrative units to verify status and support for ESP students.
d. Providing accurate, timely and useful information and referrals regarding student supports, services and processes.
e. Maintaining an accurate register of ESP students and ensure identification in the student management system.
f. Facilitating flexible study support aligned with AIS Elite Sport Education Network guiding principles.
g. Administering elite travel grants, sport and performance facility and allied health services access and other program benefits.
h. Supporting ESP students with cross-institutional study arrangements when needed.
i. Supporting ESP student's social engagement and connection to VU services including orientation, career development and wellbeing initiatives
j. Providing referral for additional supports; including access to assistance from Moondani Balluk Indigenous Unit and Disability and Accessibility Services, where appropriate.

(10) ESP Students are responsible for:

a. Submitting an online application with supporting evidence for ESP Program recognition.
b. Applying for support services following University procedures.
c. Meeting ESP Program requirements, including attending induction.
d. Maintaining regular communication with the ESP Coordinator regarding:
   i. Achievements and events
   ii. Training and rehearsal schedules
   iii. Academic planning and progress
   iv. ESP Program benefits and services
   v. Changes to sport or performance status
e. Representing VU in UniSport events and ESP Program activities where appropriate.
f. Demonstrating respectful and responsible behaviour by adhering to the VU Student Charter and Student Conduct Policy.

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Section 4 - Procedures

(11) Nil.

Section 5 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(12) HESF: Standards 1.3 Orientation and Progression (specifically 1.3.2, 1.3.6); 1.4 Learning Outcomes and Assessment; 2.2 Diversity and Equity; 2.3.1 Wellbeing and Safety.

(13) Outcome Standards for NVR Registered Training Organisations 2025: Standards 2.3 & 2.4 Training Support; 2.5 Diversity and Inclusion; 2.6 Wellbeing.

(14) National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students: Standard 6 Overseas Student Support Services.

Section 6 - Definitions

(15) Elite Sportsperson: An individual participating at national or international level in sport including:
Athletes: Recognised by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC), Australian Institute of Sport (AIS), State Institutes or Academies of Sport, national or state sporting organisations or player associations such as: Australian Athletics; Netball Australia; Cricket Australia; Professional Footballers Association; Victorian Institute of Sport; AFL Players Association.
Coaches: Senior or Head coaches operating at national or international levels.
Officials: Referees or umpires officiating at national or international levels.
Emerging Talent: Individuals engaged in elite development or pathway programs with relevant sporting bodies.

(16) Elite Performer: An individual actively engaged in national or international performances across the fields of art, culture, music, dance, acrobatics, theatre, film, television or related disciplines. Includes participation in major productions, installations, competitions, events and organisations supported under the Major Performing Arts Framework administered by Creative Australia such as:
- ABC Concerts
- Actors Equity Australia
- Australian Dance Council
- Australian Dance Theatre
- Melbourne Theatre Company
- Opera Australia
- Symphony Australia Orchestras
- Victorian Opera

Also includes demonstrated independent success, such as a signed contract with a recognised Australian record label or equivalent professional engagement.

(17) Elite Sport and Performer (ESP) Program: Mechanism to assist and facilitate flexible study, academic support, services and benefits for elite sportspersons and performers.

(18) ESP Coordinator: Staff member(s) designated to implement and facilitate the ESP Program and be the point of contact for elite sportspersons, performers and internal/external stakeholders.

(19) Elite Sport Education Network: An ASC initiative delivered by the AIS designed to support Australia’s elite sportspersons to achieve academic excellence while pursuing a sporting career.

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