

STUDENT DEFERMENT, SUSPENSION AND CANCELLATION OF STUDY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. Overview

Astra Institute of Higher Education (“the Institute”) places student well-being at the centre of teaching and learning. While the Institute recommends that students undertake their studies in a continuous and regular sequence, it also recognises that there are circumstances where a student may need to defer or suspend their studies to deal with personal issues. Alternatively, a student’s enrolment in a course of study may be suspended or cancelled by the Institute as an outcome of a student disciplinary matter.

For international students, deferment, suspension or cancellation of enrolment may affect their student visa and the Institute is required to advise students of this fact and the circumstances under which their enrolment may be deferred, suspended or cancelled prior to students’ enrolment in any course with the Institute.

2. Student study load

The expected duration of any course is the expected minimum time required to complete the course based on a full-time equivalent study load. For courses with international student enrolments, the expected course duration will be as registered on the Australian Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS). The expected duration for domestic and international students should be equal.

Over the course of an academic year a normal full-time study load will be enrolment:

- i. in 1.00 EFTSL in a whole year (three consecutive trimesters); or
- ii. in 80 Credit Points in a whole year; or
- iii. for 288 hours in a whole year.

For students to maintain a full-time study load they must be enrolled in and undertaking, or intending to enroll in at least 75% of the normal amount of full-time study. This equates to enrolment at least:

- i. in 0.75 EFTSL in a whole year (three consecutive trimesters); or
- ii. in 60 Credit Points in a whole year; or
- iii. for 216 hours in a whole year.

Subject to meeting the maximum time to completion for a course, domestic students may choose to study less than an equivalent full-time load by enrolling in fewer than 60 Credit Points in a whole year. A domestic student’s study load may also be reduced on recommendation of their Course Coordinator as part of the Institute’s student intervention strategy.

2.1 International student study load

International students will only be permitted to study less than an equivalent full-time load with the written authorisation of their Course Coordinator (for academic reasons) or the Student Welfare Officer (for compassionate reasons). Authorisation for an international student to enrol in less than an equivalent full-time study load in any study period can only be granted if:

- i. there are compassionate or compelling reasons for reducing the load;
- ii. the reduced load is part of the Institute's student intervention strategy;
- iii. the student has studied, or plans to study, extra units in another study period
- iv. the student has only a few units left to complete and these do not constitute a full-time load; or
- v. the pre-requisite units are not available in that study period.

3. Deferral of enrolment

Deferral relates to delaying the start date for commencing study in a course. Any commencing student may apply to defer their start date any time up until the census date of their first trimester of study in a course. After the census date of their first trimester of study, any continuing student intending to take a break from study may apply for their enrolment to be temporarily suspended.

Commencing students may apply to the Institute to defer their commencement date for compassionate or compelling circumstances that are beyond the control of the student. Compassionate or compelling circumstances may include and are not limited to:

- i. serious illness or injury prior to commencing study; or
- ii. bereavement of close family members prior to commencing study.

For international students, compassionate or compelling circumstances may also include:

- i. major political upheaval or natural disaster in the student's home country prior to commencing study;
- ii. involvement in, or witnessing of a serious accident or crime prior to commencing study; or
- iii. delay in receiving a student visa.

3.1 Deferment procedure

Any commencing student who wishes to defer the start date for their course must complete a Request for Course Variation form and submit in accordance with the instructions on the form.

The Registrar will review the application and will advise the student in writing within 10 working days of receipt, notifying the student if their application for a deferment has been granted.

If granted, the advice to the student will include that deferment may affect the student's ability to complete the course within the maximum duration. Where a deferment has not been granted, the reason(s) will be included in the response to the student.

The application for a deferment and its outcome will also be recorded on the student record held by the Institute.

3.2 International student deferment procedure

In addition to the above deferment procedure, upon receipt and approval of an application from a commencing international student to defer the start date for their course the Registrar will also notify the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) through the Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS) that it is deferring the student's enrolment for a period which will affect the end date of the student's Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE).

4. Suspension of study

Suspension, also known as Leave of Absence, refers to the temporary cancellation of a current student's enrolment in their course.

Withdrawing from all units or failing to enrol in units for the current teaching period does not constitute a temporary suspension of enrolment.

Any current student may apply to the Institute to temporarily suspend their enrolment for compassionate or compelling circumstances that are beyond the control of the student. Compassionate or compelling circumstances may include and are not limited to:

- i. serious illness or injury;
- ii. bereavement of close family members.

For international students, compassionate or compelling circumstances may also include:

- i. major political upheaval or natural disaster in the student's home country requiring emergency return travel home;
- ii. involvement in, or witnessing of a serious accident or crime; or
- iii. unavailability of unit(s) required to complete the course.

The Institute may also choose to temporarily suspend a student's enrolment as the outcome of a disciplinary matter including the student not paying fees, misconduct or other misbehaviour. In the case of international students, the Institute may also choose to temporarily suspend a student's enrolment for a breach of student visa conditions.

Where a student's enrolment is temporarily suspended as the outcome of student misconduct or misbehaviour, the Registrar will inform the student of the Institute's intention to suspend student's enrolment and will refer the student to the Institute's *Student Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure*.

4.1 International student suspension of study

International students who have not been granted a temporary suspension of enrolment and who fail to enrol in at least one unit in a teaching period may be reported to DESE and to the Department of Home Affairs for a breach of visa conditions related to course progress and/or attendance.

4.2 Duration of suspension

Temporary suspension of enrolment for compassionate or compelling circumstances will normally be granted for a maximum period of 12-months. Where more than one suspension is requested during the duration of a course the cumulative period should not be more than 12-months.

Temporary suspension of enrolment initiated by the Institute as the outcome of a disciplinary matter will normally be for a one study period (semester).

4.3 Suspension procedure

A current student who wishes to temporarily suspend their enrolment in a course must complete the Request for Course Variation form and submit in accordance with the instructions on the form.

The Registrar will review the application and will advise the student in writing within 10 working days of receipt, notifying the student if their application for a temporary suspension of enrolment has been granted.

If granted, the advice to the student will include that suspension may affect the student's ability to complete the course within the maximum duration. Where suspension has not been granted, the reason(s) will be included in the response to the student.

The application for suspension and its outcome will also be recorded on the student record held by the Institute.

4.4 International student suspension procedure

It is highly recommended that if an international student is thinking of suspending their enrolment, they speak to a Student Support Officer so that they are fully informed about their options.

In addition to the above suspension procedure, upon receipt and approval of an application from a current international student for suspension, the Registrar will also notify the DESE through PRISMS that it is temporarily suspending the student's enrolment for a period which will/will not affect the end date of the student's CoE as appropriate.

5. Cancellation of study

Cancellation refers to the permanent termination of a student's enrolment in their course and of their rights and privileges as a student of the Institute, including their right to re-apply for admission to any course.

The Institute may cancel a commencing or current student's enrolment on grounds including and not limited to continuing failure to paying fees, serious misconduct, and the in the case of international students, serious breach(es) of visa conditions.

In the case where a student had been granted a deferment of the start date for their enrolment in a course or a temporary suspension of their current enrolment, the student's enrolment may also may also be cancelled if:

- i. the deferment or suspension was granted for reasons other than compassionate or compelling circumstances;
- ii. compassionate or compelling circumstances which warranted the deferral or suspension of studies cease to exist; or
- iii. the deferment or suspension was granted based on fraudulent evidence or documents given to the Institute.

5.1 Cancellation procedure

The Registrar will inform the student of the Institute's intention to cancel their enrolment including the reasons(s) why it is taking the action and will refer the student to the Institute's *Student Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure*.

5.2 International student cancellation procedure

In addition to the above cancellation procedure the Registrar will also notify the DESE through PRISMS that it wishes to permanently cancel (terminate) the international student's enrolment.

6. Review of decision

Any student may request a Review of Decision of a decision made under this policy on the basis of procedural fairness. Requests must be made in writing and lodged with the CEO within 20 working days of the student receiving written notification of any action taken under this policy. The CEO will respond in writing to the request for review within 20 working days and may confirm or vary the decision. All decisions of the CEO in regards to requests for a Review of Decision made under this policy will be reported to the Board of Directors.

If a student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their request for Review of Decision regarding a decision made under this policy, they may lodge a formal grievance in writing to the Registrar: registrar@astra.edu.au within 20 working days, in accordance with the Institute's *Student Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure*.

7. Definitions

Term	Definition
<i>Cancellation</i>	Permanent cancellation of a current student's enrolment in their course and the termination of their rights and privileges as a student of the Institute, including their right to re-apply for admission.
<i>Census date</i>	The last date on which a student's enrolment requirements for the current study period must be finalised. Census is also the last date for a student to withdraw from a unit without incurring a financial liability and/or academic penalty.
<i>Commencing student</i>	Any student who is enrolled in a course at the Institute for the first time.
<i>Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE)</i>	A document issued by the Institute to intending international students that confirms the student's eligibility to enrol in a course at the Institute.
<i>Current student</i>	A student who has been admitted to the Institute and has been enrolled in a course at the Institute for at least one teaching period, and whose enrolment in the course has not been cancelled.
<i>Course</i>	A structured sequence of study leading to the award of a degree, or other recognized qualification, which when successfully completed is conferred on the graduate by the Board of Directors of Astra Institute of Higher Education.

<i>Deferment</i>	Temporary delay in the starting date of study for a commencing student.
<i>Domestic student</i>	A student who is an Australian citizen (including Australian citizens with dual citizenship), or a student who is a New Zealand citizen or a student who has Permanent Resident Status.
<i>(the) Institute</i>	Astra Institute of Higher Education.
<i>International student</i>	A holder of a student visa, who is not a citizen of Australia or New Zealand, or who is not an Australian permanent resident, or who is a temporary resident of Australia.
<i>Teaching period</i>	A specified period of time during which formal teaching is scheduled.
<i>Suspension</i>	Temporary cancellation of a current student’s enrolment in their course and the withdrawal for a specified time of their rights and privileges as a student of the Institute. Also known as ‘Leave of Absence’.

8. Related documents

- Student Grievance Handling Policy and Procedure

9. Version history

Version	Approved by	Approval Date	Details
1.0	Executive Management Committee	5 October 2021	Document creation
1.1	Executive Management Committee	19 June 2023	Amendments to ‘6. Review of decision’

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