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STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND PROGRESS POLICY HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) ACADEMIC PROGRESS FAQ'S

Prepared by the Student Advocacy Service 2014

1. What is the University's Student Assessment and Progress Policy?

The University's Student Assessment and Progress Policy is an official policy of the University. As a student, it aims to provide support for your academic progress and ensure that you successfully complete your studies.

2. I've heard about Academic Standing Levels. What are they and what do they mean?

The academic standing levels as outlined in the Student Assessment and Progress Policy are a four level standard designed to measure your academic progress. The levels assist the University and students in their progress through their course. Also, each level requires your College to adopt a particular course of action.

Level 1 **At Risk**

This means that you have been identified as being 'at risk' of unsatisfactory progress by your Unit Coordinator following an appropriate level of formative assessment. You will be contacted by your College and asked to attend an informal meeting with your Unit Coordinator to work out an action plan that will outline the specific support and assistance that is needed to assist you in your studies. You also may be referred for close monitoring, support and review of your progress.

This is a very important stage in the Student Assessment and Progress Policy.

At this stage you have not made unsatisfactory progress, but may do so. It is important that you take on board the assistance and advice provided to you at this stage to prevent you from failing. It is recommended that if you have any issues that are affecting your ability to study that you make them known to your College through your Unit or Course Coordinator as soon as possible and take the opportunity to raise these issues when you are called to discuss your progress. You can also gain support from various VU student services:

<http://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/services-for-current-students>.

Level 2 **Referral One**

This means that you are not making satisfactory progress in your course for the first time in the same course. You will be sent a letter by your College requesting you to attend a formal, mandatory meeting with your designated Academic Advisor or Course Coordinator to discuss your progress. At this point your Course Coordinator or Academic Advisor will work with you to devise a work plan with a clear plan of action, which you will sign up to. The work plan is there to assist you. If you do not follow the plan agreed to by yourself and your College, you will be asked to explain your unsatisfactory progress at the next level.

Level 3 **Referral Two**

This means that you are **not making satisfactory progress** in your course for the **second time** and you will be called up for a second formal meeting to explain to your Academic Advisor or Course Coordinator why you have not been making satisfactory progress. Bring your first work plan to this meeting as it will include a review of why your first work plan didn't work. The outcome of this meeting may result in a 'conditional enrolment' that you must comply with to continue in your course. Examples are: an undertaking that you pass all enrolled units of study; reduce your

study load or accept advice to attend learning support. You will then create a second work plan which will include new or revised solutions.

Level 4 Referral Three

At this level **you are not making satisfactory progress** and will be called to attend a **third** formal, mandatory meeting with a Student Progress Committee as constituted by your College. This is the final and most serious level of the progress policy. You can influence the outcome/s of this meeting but the committee will make the final decision as to what will happen with respect to your future studies.

3. What does unsatisfactory progress mean?

A coursework student can be held to be making unsatisfactory progress if, whilst enrolled in the same course of study, the student:

- a) fails the same unit of study on more than one occasion; and/or
- b) fails 50% or more of the enrolled course load for the relevant teaching period; and/or
- c) fails to comply with a conditional enrolment agreement set by the Academic Advisor/Course-co-ordinator, Progress Committee or the College Board of Studies.

4. If I have been failing/not doing well, whom do I explain my circumstances to?

If you have been making unsatisfactory progress as listed above you will be notified by your College to speak with your designated Academic Advisor or Course Coordinator.

5. I have been called to meet with my College Progress Committee what do I do?

If you are called to a Progress Committee Hearing, it means that you have made **unsatisfactory progress** in your course **for the third and/or more** times in the same course. It is very important that complete the Attendance Response Form which will be included with the letter from your College and return it by the date requested. Failure to do so could result in exclusion from your course. It is recommended that you also respond in writing as to why you should not be excluded or suspended from your course and include any documentary evidence.

[See Page 5: 'Guide to Writing a Letter to the Progress Committee']

6. Preparation of the written response

In the written response you should outline the factors that have impacted upon your academic studies. At this stage of the academic progress review the reasons that are normally provided are those that were beyond the student's control or unforeseen events. These are listed below:

- **Health issues** - It is a good idea to provide a medical certificate or medical report confirming how your health issues prevented you from studying effectively.
- **Financial issues** – If your work commitments impacted on your study consider providing an outline of your work commitments from your employer. If you have financial issues in the form of debts, it is advisable to provide evidence.
- **Relationship** – At times we experience relationship breakdowns or tensions, if possible submit a counselling report or doctor's letter of support.
- **Academic** – If you have had problems with your unit of study and sought help from external sources, like tutoring, then provide evidence of the help you have received.
- **Other (disability, cultural, home circumstances)** – If you have a disability or ongoing medical condition and/or your progress has been hampered by cultural or home circumstances, list these with supporting documentation, for example, a letter from VU's student Disability Support.

The more written evidence you can provide with your letter the better.

Once you have outlined the **reasons** why you have been making unsatisfactory progress you need to offer **solutions** as to why you wish to continue in your course. This includes outlining to the College how you plan to continue successfully: for example seek counselling, reduce working hours, and receive extra tutoring. Evidence can be signed letters on letterhead or copies of scanned documents.

7. What happens when I receive a letter about my academic progress and don't respond?

It is important that you respond to any correspondence you receive from your College about your unsatisfactory progress. The policy states that once formally notified it is mandatory for a student to attend the scheduled meeting with the appropriate authority (be it individual or committee) to discuss his/her progress. Failure to do so may be interpreted by the University that you have 'unofficially discontinued' and may result in you being given a 12 months Intermission or losing your place in the course. In your absence a decision can be made regarding your enrolment status to change from full time to part time and /or be given a 'conditional enrolment' (for example that you must pass all units of study in the following semester). If you do not agree with the decision then you can appeal within 10 working days from the date of the letter sent (after the scheduled meeting) which outlines the College's decision.

8. If I am called to discuss my progress with a Course Coordinator or Student Progress Committee, am I able to bring along a support person to the meeting?

Yes. At any time, either during the informal (meeting with your Course Coordinator/ Academic Advisor) or formal phase (Student Progress Committee) you may be accompanied by a Student Advocate from the Student Wellbeing Department and/or a support person of your choice .

9. As an international student; does the Student Assessment and Progress Policy apply to me?

Yes. The Student Assessment and Progress Policy applies to all enrolled students at Victoria University including international and offshore students.

10. What type of outcomes can I expect to receive from any Progress Committee Hearing?

The committee will make a decision taking into account factors relating to your particular academic or personal circumstances. The types of outcomes that would normally be recommended are as follows:

- recommendation that you reduce your enrolment load;
- recommended program of study over a specified period of time to assist your progress (conditional enrolment);
- recommendation/ permission that you take an Intermission
- recommendation that you enrol in a more suitable course, deemed a 'better fit';
- identification of support strategies to enhance your progress;
- recommendation that you seek appropriate personal or academic support from within or outside of the College;
- suspension from the course;
- exclusion from the course.

11. What is the purpose of a workplan?

A workplan assists you with completing your course. It documents a list of what you have agreed to do to improve your studies. A workplan is a contract with you and your College, which you sign, goes on file, and you should keep a copy. When you commit to do something, make sure you really can complete it. For example, if you agree to seek help from a tutor ensure that you follow through with this commitment.

12. I have received the letter from my College and have not been able to attend one of the Progress Information Seminars run by the Student Advocacy Service. What do I do next?

Prepare for your meeting as outlined in these FAQs. Write down the reasons why you have been making unsatisfactory progress and reflect and write solutions as to how you can get back on track with your studies. Then if you have any further questions contact the Student Advocacy Service, email: advocacy@vu.edu.au or phone 9919 5400.

Guide to Writing a Letter to the Progress Committee/Academic Advisor/Course Coordinator

Date

Address to

Chairperson, Progress Committee or Course Coordinator
College of
Victoria University
PO Box 14428
Melbourne City MC, VIC 8001

Introduction

Student Name: ...ID No.: ...

To Whom It May Concern / Dear Chairperson,

In reference to your recent letter dated...concerning my unsatisfactory progress, I am writing to ask that I be allowed to continue with my course.

Reasons

My academic performance during the semester was affected by the following factors...

- List the reasons for your unsatisfactory progress in dot points with a few sentences to describe each.
- Keep them clear and brief.

Solutions

- Next write what you are (and will be) doing to resolve the issues contributing to your unsatisfactory progress.
- Make sure you formulate solutions to all the problems you've identified at the beginning of your letter. eg If work hours are a problem, will you be suggesting becoming a part-time student or reducing your work hours?
- Possible solutions are meeting your lecturers on a regular basis. You might also arrange to pay for tutoring assistance (refer document *How to Find a Tutor?*) Some students need to improve their language and learning skills. VU provides a free language and study skills support service Student Learning Unit at <http://learningandteaching.vu.edu.au/> or on 9919 6100.
- Overall, this section should be detailed and specific and demonstrate study and life style changes that will assist you to manage your work and study balance.
- **NOTE:** The **Academic Advisor** at the meeting will have read your letter and be expecting you to speak and answer questions from it. Therefore, don't leave any discrepancies or things you can't justify – you will be expected to speak about your progress in an informed and systematic manner using your substantiating documents to back you up. Also, you can use your letter as a checklist to talk and refer to.

Conclusion

- Finally, sign the letter and include your contact details.
- You will have a chance to explain the problems in detail at the **Progress Meeting/Hearing**.
- Attach your substantiating documents to your letter.
- Keep a copy of all your documentation.