RCDC Course Progress Policy and Procedure

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Distribution List

To: All RCDC Staff
Associate Colleges, College Directors
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Cc: Chair, Council
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1 Policy Statement

The purpose of this document is to outline the minimum standard of academic performance for students at RCDC. The policy provides the guidelines that RCDC uses to identify students who are at risk of making unsatisfactory course progression and the measures that will be employed to assist such students to complete their studies. In the case of international students, this policy outlines the aforementioned measures to complete their studies within the specified duration of their student visa. This document is particularly important to international students in that it also describes the process whereby an international student’s enrolment can be cancelled as a result of unsatisfactory course progression, thus, affecting their student visa status.

This document is to be read in conjunction with the following documents:

a. Monitoring Course Progress (ESOS Framework, National Code part D, Standard 10)
   b. Intervention Strategy Recommendations and Approval form
   c. Course Progress Policy Procedures Flowchart

2 Scope

This policy applies to all RCDC students enrolled in RCDC award courses, with particular importance to international students on a student visa enrolled in an award course at RCDC.

3 Definition of Terms

Award course: a set of requirements and subjects which, when satisfactorily completed by a student, normally qualifies the student to receive a formal award from the College.

International student: refers to a student studying in Australia on a student visa who is not an Australian citizen or permanent resident.

CoE: A Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) is issued by RCDC to an international student to confirm the student’s eligibility to enrol in an RCDC award course.

Cancellation of enrolment: in the context of this policy, it refers to the permanent cancellation of an international student’s award course enrolment when an international student has made unsatisfactory course progress.

Study period: two consecutive study terms at RCDC (one semester).

TPS: The Australian Government’s Tuition Protection Service

4 Course Progress Policy and Procedure

4.1 Policy

RCDC will be proactive in notifying and counselling all students who are at risk of failing to meet their course progress requirements. RCDC has established minimum satisfactory academic performance standards that must be met by all enrolled students. RCDC will take particular notice of international students in this endeavour. An international student who fails to meet the satisfactory academic performance standard, or whose academic performance puts him/her at risk of not being able to complete his/her award course in the standard terms of study stated in his/her CoE, is considered to be at risk of not making satisfactory course progress.

4.1.2 Satisfactory Academic Performance

A student is regarded as having made satisfactory performance when s/he has passed at least 50% of attempted credits in a study period and is able to complete his/her studies in the expected duration of the
award course. The former also applies to an international student when s/he is able to complete his/her studies in the duration stated in the student’s CoE for the award course.

4.1.3 ‘At Risk’

A student is considered to be at risk of not making satisfactory course progress if s/he:

- has not been regarded as having met satisfactory academic performance as defined in this policy; or
- has met satisfactory academic performance as defined in this policy but has failed more than 50% attempted credits in a study period, and as a result is at risk of being unable to complete her/his program in the standard terms of study for the award course (in the case of international students, in the terms stated in the student’s CoE for the award course).

4.1.3.1 International Students At Risk

International students who have been notified that they are at risk of not making satisfactory course progress are required to participate in the academic intervention strategy described in this policy. This process enables RCDC to assist international students who are having difficulty with their studies and to support international students to ensure that they will complete their studies in the duration stated on their CoE for their award course.

4.1.4 Satisfactory Course Progression

A student is regarded as having made satisfactory course progression when s/he has passed at least 50% of all attempted credits in a standard semester of academic study stipulated for his/her award course, which is two (2) consecutive terms (a study period) at RCDC.

4.1.5 Unsatisfactory Course Progression

A student is regarded as having made unsatisfactory course progression if s/he has:

Not attained a final grade of a pass or higher in at least 50% of his/her credits attempted across a study period at RCDC; or fails the same subject, or its equivalent, two (2) times.

For international students, unsatisfactory course progression could lead to the international student being reported (via PRISMS) to the relevant Australian Government Departments, including the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training, Department of Immigration and Boarder Protection (DIBP) and Director of the Australian Government’s Tuition Protection Scheme (TPS), which could result in cancellation of his/her student visa, depending on the outcome of any appeals processes, as described in this policy.

4.2 Procedure

4.2.1 Monitoring of Satisfactory Course Progression

RCDC will monitor the academic performance of students at the conclusion of each term, following the ratification of student’s results by the Assessment Review Committee, to identify students who are at risk of making unsatisfactory course progression. This process enables RCDC to assist international students who are having difficulty with their studies, and to support international students to ensure that they will complete their studies in the duration stated on the CoE for the award course.

Responsibility for monitoring and recording the academic performance of students lies with the Student Services Director, who can delegate certain responsibilities to appropriate staff members as required.

4.2.2 Notification(s) issued to students identified as at risk

If a student has been identified as being at risk of making unsatisfactory course progression, s/he will be sent, via email, a written notification by the Student Services Director (or the delegated representative) within the first two weeks of the following term.

This Notification will include the following information (at a minimum):
Firstly, it will make clear why the student has been identified as at risk, and the student’s individual obligations as an identified at risk student. These obligations include the student being required to liaise with RCDC to agree on academic intervention strategy with the Student Services Director and enter into a Learning Contract with his/her Program Director and/or Academic Director within 20 working days of the date on the notification.

Secondly, it will provide information about RCDC’s at risk academic intervention strategy and associated academic support and counselling services.

Thirdly, it will outline the student’s right to appeal within 20 working days of the date of the Notice, should the student believe that s/he has been identified as at risk unjustly, or that compassionate or compelling circumstances apply.

Fourthly, it will inform the student of the consequences of their not participating in the academic intervention strategy and entering into a Learning Contract as described in this policy, and of not making satisfactory course progress, which could lead, if it is the case of an international student, to the student being reported to relevant Australian Government Departments and cancellation of his/her student visa.

The Student Services Director (or the delegated representative) is responsible for notifying the Academic Director and the respective Program Director of the students who have been identified as at risk.

The Student Services Director (or delegated representative) is responsible for liaison with the identified at risk student(s) to arrange a suitable time to discuss the academic intervention strategy and the formation and entering into the Learning Contract.

The Student Services Director (or delegated representative) must change the student’s status from Monitor to Intervention.

4.2.3 Academic Intervention Strategy

As the first step of RCDC’s academic intervention strategy, at risk students are required to meet with the Student Services Director within 20 working days of being issued notification that they are to undertake RCDC’s academic intervention strategy. The student is allowed to appeal against this action in the same 20 working days. In this case, the student can refer to RCDC’s Student Grievance and Appeals Policy and Procedures to be informed about his/her available options to appeal.

International students who have been notified that they have been identified as at risk of making unsatisfactory course progress who fail to meet with a representative from Student Services within 20 working days of being issued notification (without prior written agreement for a later meeting time with the Student Services Director), and/or who fail to enter into the Learning Contract, are considered to have breached this Policy, and the matter will be handled by the Student Services Director in accordance with RCDC’s Misconduct Policy and principles of procedural fairness.

4.2.3.1 Appeal

If the student does not appeal, or if the appeal is unsuccessful, the Student Services Director is responsible for ensuring that this strategy is activated within the first four weeks of the current study term, and monitoring the student’s progress, in conjunction with the Program Director and/or Academic Director, throughout the study period.

A successful appeal will require the Program Director and Academic Director to re-evaluate the student’s position, to determine a more suitable course of action.

4.2.3.2 Implementation

The Student Services Director (in consultation with relevant academic staff) and the student will then work together to identify strategies to assist the student in achieving a more satisfactory level of academic performance.
Strategies that could be employed to assist the student will differ, depending on the specific situation, and could include, but are not limited to:

- Increased monitoring
- Academic skills support
- Personal counselling
- A reduction of study load
- Probationary enrolment
- Placement in a more suitable course
- Opportunities for reassessment
- Any combination of the above

By the end of this initial meeting the Student Services Director and the student will agree on an academic intervention strategy and the student will be asked to agree to it by signing the Intervention Strategy Recommendations and Approval Form. This academic intervention strategy will be referred to the respective Program Director and/or the Academic Director to hold a meeting with the student to agree on a Learning Contract. The Learning Contract will detail the specific conditions that the at risk student will be required to satisfy.

While the Learning Contract may contain a number of specific requirements, such as attendance at additional English language classes, or 100% attendance at class, the minimum requirements of the Learning Contract will be as follows:

- Attain a final grade of a Pass or higher in at least 50% of all credits attempted in the next term.
- Comply with RCDC attendance policy strictly.

The Intervention Strategy Recommendations and Approval Form and the Learning Contract are signed by the student, the Student Services Director, Academic Director and the respective Program Director. A copy is given to the student and a copy is also kept on the student’s file.

The Academic Director, Program Director or Student Services Director may choose to implement the academic intervention strategy before the study period ends if there is evidence to indicate that the student is not expected to pass at least 50% of the credits studied in that period.

Records of interventions, appeals processes and reporting will be maintained on the student database and copies of all documents relating to the intervention will be stored in the student’s file. For example, written correspondence with the student and Intervention Strategy Recommendations and Approval Forms.

A representative from Student Services monitors the student’s progress in meeting the requirements of their Learning Contract. Should the student meet the requirements of their Learning Contract then the representative from Student Services can recommend to the Student Services Director that the student no longer be considered to be at risk, and if approved, can change the student’s status from Intervention to Active.

4.2.3.3 Warning letter

Students who fail to contact Student Services throughout the term in which they have been identified at risk and placed under an academic intervention strategy are issued a warning letter by the Student Services Director (or a delegated representative) before the cancellation of the student’s enrolment. This also applies to students who fail to improve their academic performance and other requirements as set in their Academic Intervention Strategy and Learning Contract.

First warning letter:

This is issued after the term in which the student was under an academic intervention strategy ends, if:
• There has been no response from the student; or
• The student has failed to improve his/her academic performance and other requirements as set in his/her Academic Intervention Strategy and Learning Contract.

The first warning letter will include the following information (at a minimum):

• Firstly, it will make clear the specific reasons why the student has been issued this letter.
• Secondly, it will outline the student’s right to appeal within 20 working days of the date of the letter, should the student believe that the warning is unjust or that compassionate or compelling circumstances apply.
• Thirdly, it will remind the student of his/her options, such as deferring and withdrawing, as well as it will remind the student of the available academic and administrative staff that s/he can approach for advice.
• Fourthly, it will inform the student that at the end of the 20 working day timeframe, his/her enrolment will be cancelled, unless the student appeals according to the Student Grievance and Appeals Policy and Procedure and his/her appeal is upheld, and stating the exact date for this procedure.
• Fifthly, if it is the case of an international student, it will inform the student of the consequences of the cancellation of enrolment, such as the student being reported to relevant Australian Government Departments and the immediate cancellation of his/her student visa.

If the student appeals within the 20 working day timeframe and s/he is successful, the Student Services Director will determine a suitable course of action.

If the student appeals and s/he is not successful, or if s/he does not appeal to the first warning letter and has failed to contact Student Services, the Student Services Director will cancel the student’s enrolment as stated in the letter, and will send a letter to student on cancellation of enrolment to inform him/her of this action and its consequences.

Letter to student on cancellation of enrolment:

This will include the following information (at a minimum):

• Firstly, it will refer to the first warning letter and outline the reasons why it was sent.
• Secondly, it will refer to the student’s lack of response to the first warning letter or failed appeal process.
• Thirdly, it will notify the student that his/her enrolment has been cancelled.
• Fourthly, if the student is an international student, the letter will state that s/he has 28 days to see the DIBP.

4.2.4 Notification issued to international students with unsatisfactory course progression

International students who are identified as having made unsatisfactory course progression are issued a ‘Notification of Intention to Report’ notice via email in addition to the first warning letter.

The ‘Notification of Intention to Report International Students’ will make clear that the student has breached their visa condition in relation to course progression requirements. It will also make clear that once RCDC has notified the relevant Australian Government Department(s) via PRISMS of the intended cancellation of the student’s enrolment due to unsatisfactory course progression, that the student has 28 days in which to leave Australia or to provide to the DIBP his or her new Confirmation of Enrolment or evidence that s/he has accessed an external appeals process. This notice will also advise the student that s/he has 20 working days in which to appeal this decision through RCDC’s Student Grievance and Appeals Policy and Procedures.

In the event that a student accesses RCDC’s student grievances and appeals process, within the required 20 working day timeframe, RCDC will maintain a student’s enrolment throughout the internal and external appeals process and will not report the student to the relevant Australian Government Department(s) for unsatisfactory course progression until the appeals process is complete and has supported RCDC’s decision to report.
Whether or not RCDC continues to offer learning opportunities to the student throughout the internal and/or external appeals process will be determined on a case by case basis. (For further details refer to RCDC’s Student Grievance and Appeals Policy and Procedures).

If the outcome of the student’s appeal shows that there was an error in calculation, and that s/he actually made satisfactory course progress, RCDC will not report the student to the relevant Australian Government Department(s).

If the outcome of the student’s appeal shows that s/he has not made satisfactory progress, but there are compassionate or compelling reasons for the lack of progress, RCDC will provide ongoing support to the student through the academic intervention strategy, and will not report the student to the relevant Australian Government Department(s).

If the outcome of the student’s appeal supports the College’s decision to report, or in the event that a student does not access RCDC’s student grievances and appeals processes within the required 20 working day time frame stated above, or if the student withdraws from the grievances and appeals process, the Student Services Director will, within 5 working days of this outcome, notify the relevant Australian Government Department (via PRISMS) that the student has failed to meet satisfactory course progress requirements, and as such will not complete his/her studies within the specified duration of the CoE for the award course.

4.3 Other relevant information for international students

4.3.1 Extension of duration of an international student’s CoE

Where an international student is identified as unable to complete their course within the expected course duration specified on the student’s CoE for the award course, RCDC may only extend the duration of the student’s CoE for the award course as the result of:

a) compassionate or compelling circumstances (for example, illness where a medical certificate states that the student was unable to attend classes, or where RCDC was unable to offer a pre-requisite subject);

b) RCDC implementing its academic intervention strategy for international students who were at risk of not meeting satisfactory course progress as described in this policy; or

c) an approved deferment or suspension of study has been granted by RCDC.

The Student Services Director is authorised to approve an extension variation to the international student’s CoE for the award course, where RCDC is able to do so as identified above.

The Student Services Director is responsible for ensuring the approved variation is reported to the relevant Australian Government Department(s) (via PRISMS) and issuing the international student a new CoE for the award course that reflects the approved extension variation in required regulatory timeframes.

4.4 Other relevant notifications to students

4.4.1 Low attendance warning letter

If a student has been absent for the first two weeks of the term, s/he has a high possibility of failing his/her credits due to low attendance (refer to RCDC’s attendance policy), increasing the student’s probability of being identified as at risk of making unsatisfactory course progression.

RCDC takes a proactive approach to warn students of the consequences of their low attendance. Program Directors are responsible to collect the attendance rolls at the end of the second week of that term and to send them to Student Services.

A Student Services representative will issue a low attendance warning letter to all such students as described above after the census date of the current term.
The low attendance warning letter will include the following information (at a minimum):

- Firstly, it will make clear why the student has been issued this letter, and s/he will be referred to RCDC’s attendance policy.

- Secondly, it will outline the student’s right to appeal within 20 working days of the date of the letter, should the student believe that the warning is unjust or that compassionate or compelling circumstances apply.

- Thirdly, it will inform the student of the consequences of their not complying with RCDC’s attendance policy, including the risk of not making satisfactory course progress which could lead, if it is the case of an international student, to the student being reported to relevant Australian Government Departments and cancellation of his/her student visa.

If the student appeals within the 20 working day timeframe, and s/he is successful, the Student Services Director will determine a suitable course of action.

If the student appeals within the 20 working day timeframe and s/he is not successful, or if the student does not appeal, a Student Services representative will liaise with the Program Director and/or lecturers to monitor the student’s attendance throughout the term to identify at risk students as soon as possible.

The Student Services representative will change the student status from Active to Monitor.

5 Record Keeping

The Student Services Director is responsible for ensuring all records associated with this policy are kept on the student’s file in accordance with RCDC Document and Records Management Policy. This includes records in connection with RCDC monitoring of the academic performance and course progression of students at the conclusion of each study term; written and email correspondences including at risk notification letters, ‘Notification of Decision of Intention to Report’ letters; records of signed academic intervention strategy, Learning Contracts; records of administrative changes made to PRISMS; records of evidences relating to CoE variation approvals; and records in connection with associated disciplinary or grievance and appeals processes.

6 References

- International Student Course Progression Policy, Navitas Professional Institute http://www.acap.edu.au/current-students/new-students/international-students/