

Withdrawal, Deferral and Leave of Absence Policy (GC)

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Document

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| Document Name | Withdrawal, Deferral and Leave of Absence Policy (GC) |
| Brief Description | <p>This Policy outlines the conditions and circumstances for when a student requests to withdraw, defer, take a leave of absence from their program of study at Griffith College.</p> <p>This Policy applies to all students undertaking Foundation, Diploma or Associate Degree level studies. It does not apply to students undertaking non-award studies.</p> |
| Responsibility | Director, Student and Academic Services |
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| Authorising Body | Management Committee |

Version Control

| Date | Version No. | Summary of Changes | Reviewer Name and Department/Office |
|-----------|-------------|--|---|
| 23/2/2023 | 4 | Revised to ensure International Students understand the maximum allowable LOA, and to clearly define Deferral rules for both domestics and international students seeking medical grounds (Compassionate or Compelling reasons). The process has been revised to ensure PRISMS and Navigate information aligns and is consistent when applying CoE variations. | Carina Carmody, Student and Academic Services |

Related Documents

| Name | Location |
|--|------------------------------|
| Program Progression Policy | Policy HUB |
| Change to Enrolment Policy | Policy HUB |
| Welfare Arrangements for Under 18 International Students studying at Griffith College Policy | Policy HUB |
| Refund Policy | Policy HUB |
| Withdrawal from Program Before Enrolment Policy | Policy HUB |
| FEE-Help Loan Policy | Policy HUB |
| Deferral of Offer Policy | Policy HUB |
| Withdrawal or Deferral Procedure | Procedure |
| Program Withdrawal, Defer Your Studies for Next Trimester or Medical / Compassionate Leave of Absence Form | Online Forms |

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1 Purpose and Scope

1.1 Purpose

This Policy sets out the approach of Griffith College relating to the management of students requesting to withdraw, defer or take a leave of absence from their program of study.

1.2 Scope

The Policy has been prepared in accordance with Griffith College's Program Progression Policy; Welfare Arrangements for Under 18 International Students studying at Griffith College Policy; Refund Policy and Change to Enrolment Policy.

The Policy applies to all students undertaking Foundation, Diploma or Associate Degree level studies. It does not apply to students undertaking non-award studies confirm that Griffith College.

1.3 Definitions

| Word/Term | Definition |
|--|---|
| Withdrawal from Program | Formal withdrawal from the primary award in which the student is enrolled. |
| Deferral of Studies (Domestic only) | Temporarily put studies on hold (adjourn, delay, postpone) from the primary program in which the student is enrolled, after the student's first census. |
| Cancellation of Studies | Formal cancellation from the primary program in which the student is enrolled, prior to the student's first census. |
| Leave of Absence | An approved postponement of a student's studies from the primary program in which the student is enrolled, as a result of compassionate or compelling circumstances. |
| Compassionate or Compelling Circumstances | Circumstances beyond the control of the student that have occurred since the student accepted an offer at Griffith College and have significantly impacted on the student's health and well-being, and the ability to successfully undertake their studies. |
| New Student | A student who has accepted their offer and has not yet passed their first census date. The student may or may not have enrolled in courses for the trimester. |
| Continuing Student | A student who has passed their first census date and remains enrolled in their program(s) of study. |
| Domestic student | A student who is a citizen of Australia or New Zealand, or holders of an Australian permanent visa. |
| International student | A student or applicant for admission to an academic program who is not a citizen of Australia or New Zealand, or who does not hold Permanent Residency status in Australia. |
| Retrospective Approval | Approval of a change to a student's enrolment conditions after a key academic calendar date, eg, Census or Academic Penalty, where terms and penalties relating to the change are backdated to prior to the key academic date. |

2 Policy Statement

2.1 Withdrawal from Program

- 2.1.1 A student who has passed their first census, may request to withdraw from their program of study at any time prior to the end of the final teaching week for the Trimester from which they intend to withdraw.
- 2.1.2 Depending upon the timing of the request, academic and financial penalties will be applied as outlined in the [Refund Policy](#) and [Change to Enrolment Policy](#). A student who wishes to withdraw from their program of study must complete a [Request to Withdraw from Studies Form](#) and make an appointment with the Student Learning Advisor to discuss your reasons for withdrawal and assist you with completing relevant forms.
- 2.1.3 Where a student requests to withdraw from their program of studies after the final teaching week has concluded for a Trimester, the student is expected to remain enrolled to the conclusion of trimester, including attendance at exams. The withdrawal will be processed and applied to the following Trimester.
- 2.1.4 International Students will not be approved to withdraw unless the student is leaving Australia. International students withdrawing from their studies and leaving Australia must provide evidence demonstrating their departure from Australia together with their [Request to Withdraw from Studies Form](#). International Students are required to submit an airline ticket that meets the following requirements:
- Evidence of full payment of the flight (e.g. receipt);
 - Booked one-way, return tickets will not be accepted, except where the student has applied to return to studies in a future Trimester;
 - Presented in English, or together with an official translation;
 - Date of departure is within 28 days from the date of withdrawal.

When you apply to withdraw from your program/s your Confirmation of Enrolments (CoE's) will be cancelled and the College will notify the Department of Home Affairs that you have ceased your studies. If you are already in Australia holding a student visa and withdraw from your program, you have 28 days to:

- leave Australia;
 - enrol in an alternative program; or,
 - apply for a different visa.
 - If you choose to leave Australia your student visa will be subject to cancellation.
- 2.1.5 Written approval from the relevant sponsoring body is required for sponsored students.
- 2.1.6 Where an international student under the age of 18 withdraws from their program of study, Griffith College will continue care arrangements for that student until they commence with the new provider or depart from Australia to their home country. Refer to the [Welfare Arrangements for Under 18 International Students studying at Griffith College Policy](#) for further details.
- 2.1.7 Griffith College is obliged to notify the Australian Government Department of Education via PRISMS to cancel your Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE). This is required under section 19 of the ESOS Act where a student has withdrawn or from their study. In the report Griffith College will include the following details for all international students granted withdrawal:
- Reasons for withdrawal
 - Details of documentary evidence provided to support the student's application.
- 2.1.8 Students are deemed to have withdrawn their enrolment if they fail to re-enrol in any trimester, including after a period of Deferral or Leave of Absence. Under these circumstances a student will need to apply for re-admission.

- 2.1.9 A student who has withdrawn from their program of study should refer to the [Admissions Policy](#) if they wish to return to study.

2.2 Deferral of Studies (Domestic students)

- 2.2.1 Domestic students only who have passed their first census, may request a deferral for any reason. International students are not eligible for a deferral of study.
- 2.2.2 A Deferral may be granted at any point of trimester.

If the deferral is granted post-census, financial penalties will remain. The cost of tuition will not be refunded. Any FEE-Help loan support will remain, unless the student can provide evidence of compassionate and/or compelling reasons to support a retrospective deferral.

Where deferral from studies results in an Academic Penalty, the Withdraw-Fail result will contribute to the student's GPA, and will remain permanently on the student's record unless the student can provide evidence of compassionate and/or completing reasons to support a retrospective deferral.

Academic and Financial Penalties will be applied per the following structure:

| Diploma of Health Care | Financial Penalty | Academic Penalty |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Pre-Census (weeks 1 – 3) | No financial penalty* | No academic penalty |
| Pre-Academic Penalty deadline (weeks 4 – 8) | Financial penalty applied | Withdraw |
| Post – Academic Penalty deadline (weeks 9 – 10) | Financial penalty applied | Withdraw - Fail |
| All Other Programs | Financial Penalty | Academic Penalty |
| Pre-Census (weeks 1 – 4) | No financial penalty* | No academic penalty |
| Pre-Academic Penalty deadline (weeks 5 – 9) | Financial penalty applied | Withdraw |
| Post – Academic Penalty deadline (weeks 10 – 12) | Financial penalty applied | Withdraw - Fail |

*Deferral applies to Domestic students only. Therefore, per Refund Policy, no financial penalty will be incurred if a student defers before census.

- 2.2.3 A deferral will be granted one (1) trimester at a time. An additional deferral application must be made if the student wishes to defer for a subsequent trimester.

In the instance where there are no course offerings for 1 or more trimesters following a deferral, and where there are no alternative study options, the duration of the leave will be determined by the next trimester in which courses are offered that the student is required to study. The full duration of the leave will be applied at the point of initial processing (max. 2 trimesters).

- 2.2.4 Students are deemed to have withdrawn their enrolment if they fail to re-enrol in any trimester, including after a period of Deferral or Leave of Absence. Under these circumstances a student will need to apply for re-admission.

- 2.2.5 A student who has withdrawn from their program of study should refer to the Admissions Policy if they wish to return to study.
- 2.2.6 A student who has deferred from their program of study will have automatic access to re-enrol in their returning trimester. Griffith College will contact the student four (4) weeks prior to the relevant trimester start date, reminding the student to enrol and giving them access to Orientation resources.
- 2.2.7 If a student fails to re-enrol at the end of their period of deferral, they will be considered to have withdrawn from Griffith College and their enrolment status will be altered accordingly. A cancellation fee will be payable in accordance with the Griffith College Refund Policy. Any FEE-Help loan debt will remain. If a student wishes to apply for FEE-Help loan debt remission they should refer to the [FEE-Help Loans Policy](#). For the purposes of calculating the cancellation fee, the student will be deemed to have withdrawn from the Trimester for which the initial deferral was granted. The effective date of the withdrawal will be deemed to be the day after the final day of enrolments (Friday week 1 for Diploma of Health Care and Masters Qualifying Program; Friday week 2 for all other programs), in the trimester in which the student was expected to return to study.

2.3 Leave of Absence (Domestic and International students)

- 2.3.1 A student may request to take a break from study due to compassionate or compelling reasons. Leave of Absence is available for compassionate and compelling reasons.
- 2.3.2 Griffith College will only approve a leave of absence request from for the following reasons:
 - a) Compassionate and/or compelling circumstances- such as death or serious illness of a close family member or close friend. Supporting evidence may include a medical certificate or letter (e.g. funeral notice or death certificate) from a registered medical practitioner, psychologist, counsellor, or other appropriate professional;
 - b) Hardship/Trauma- such as the sudden loss of employment, family breakdown, victim of crime/accident. Supporting evidence may include a medical certificate or letter from a registered medical practitioner, or other appropriate professional such as a psychologist, police officer or fire officer etc.

In the absence of documentary evidence, consideration may be given where the student provides a Statutory Declaration outlining full details of the exceptional circumstances. In exceptional cases a student may have their deferral approved conditional on the receipt of supporting documentation. In the event of a student not supplying the supporting documentation, they will be treated as a withdrawn student from the date of application and cancellation fees will apply.

Additionally, care arrangements for students under 18 will cease to apply until they commence with the new provider or upon return to their home country.
- 2.3.3 A leave of absence for *academic* reasons (i.e. no course offerings) will be allowable only for one (1) trimester of study. The approval will only be determined after consultation with the relevant Program Convenor/Advisor and the outcome will be communicated to the student. Where alternative arrangements can be made for study of courses not on offer at the College, these will be investigated and options discussed with the student. If a leave of absence is due to unavailable course offerings is approved an intervention strategy will be implemented details of which will be recorded in the Student Management System.
- 2.3.4 International Students will be counselled about returning to their home Country for appropriate medical support or equivalent.

- 2.3.5 All students submitting a leave of absence request for *medical* (compassionate or compelling) reasons must make an appointment with the **Student Counsellor** to discuss the circumstances of their case. The Student Counsellor may advocate on behalf of the student to waive any academic penalties and make a recommendation to the Director Student and Academic Services on the imposition of financial penalties. The Director Student and Academic Services will consider the student's case and Student Counsellor's recommendation and make a decision accordingly.
- 2.3.6 A leave of absence for *medical* (compassionate or compelling) reasons will be allowable for one (1) trimester of leave at a time. A subsequent leave of absence application must be made if the student wishes to take further leave, up to a maximum of two (2) trimesters of leave. International Students will be counselled about returning to their home Country for appropriate medical support or equivalent.
- 2.3.7 If a student's leave of absence application is approved, AND academic and/or financial penalties waived, those penalties will not apply for that Trimester in which the leave was approved.
- 2.3.8 A student's request for a leave of absence will normally be approved and noted on the student's record except where the program is being phased out by the College. In the instances where a student requires a Leave of Absence for a program which is being phased out, the Academic Director will determine a suitable return to study plan, either into the same program, or a suitable alternative.
- 2.3.9 Students should complete a Request to Withdraw or Defer from Studies Form indicating in full the reason for the application and submit this along with any supporting documentation to their appointment.
- 2.3.10 A student who has taken a Leave of Absence from their program of study will have automatic access to re-enrol in their returning trimester. Griffith College will contact the student four (4) weeks prior to the relevant trimester start date, reminding the student to enrol and giving them access to Orientation resources.

International Students:

- 2.3.11 Griffith College is obliged to notify the Secretary of the Federal Department of Education via PRISMS as required under section 19 of the ESOS Act where a student has taken a leave of absence from their study. In the report, Griffith College will include the following details for all international students granted Leave:

- Reasons for leave of absence;
- Duration of leave of absence; and
- Details of documentary evidence provided to support the student's application.

Griffith College will undertake to ensure that students are fully advised of the implications a leave of absence may have on their student visa.

- 2.3.12 The Department of Home Affairs (HA) does not consider such events as a wedding, a holiday, or financial difficulties as appropriate grounds for leave of absence. HA may also cancel a student visa where, for example, the student has obtained approval for leave of absence but does not leave Australia or does not return to their studies by the agreed date.
- 2.3.13 If a student fails to re-enrol at the end of their period of Leave, they will be considered to have **withdrawn** from Griffith College and their enrolment status will be altered accordingly. A cancellation fee will be payable in accordance with the Griffith College Refund Policy. For the purposes of calculating the cancellation fee, the student will be deemed to have withdrawn from the Trimester for which the Leave of Absence was granted. The effective date of the withdrawal will be deemed to be the day after the final day of enrolments, in the trimester in which the student was expected to return to study.

HA may cancel a student visa where, for example, an international student has obtained approval for deferral but does not return to their studies by the agreed date.

2.4 Retrospective Approval

A student has the right to request a retrospective Leave of Absence or Withdrawal due to compassionate or compelling reasons. In these cases, students must provide a written statement, with supporting evidence, detailing why they are asking for retrospective approval. In addition, the student must outline the reasons preventing them from making the application during the trimester the student was impacted. All requests should be directed to the Director Student and Academic Services for approval.

2.5 Summary of criteria for deferral, withdrawal or leave of absence

| Continuing students (after first trimester census) Use form: Request to Withdraw or Defer Studies | International | Domestic |
|--|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Withdrawing completely at any point, has no plan to return | Withdraw | Withdraw |
| Needs a break due to compassionate or compelling reasons. Any point of trimester. | Leave of Absence | Leave of Absence |
| Needs a break in study due to no course offerings | Leave of Absence | Leave of Absence |
| Needs a break for any reason other than compassionate/compelling (pre-census of following trimester) | Withdraw | Defer |
| Needs a break for any reason other than compassionate/compelling (post-census) | Withdraw | Defer |
| Failed to Re-Enrol – Either Current or Deferred student | Withdraw | Withdraw |
| Already on 1st Deferral + wants 2nd | n/a | Defer |
| Already on 2nd Deferral | Refer Leave of Absence | Withdraw |
| Already on deferral/leave of absence + wants to return to a different program | Change of Program | Change of Program |
| About to start deferral + wants to return to a different program | Change of Program | Change of Program + Deferral |

3 Responsibilities

| Responsibility | CDP | DSAS | FIN | MSAS | SASO | SLA | PC/PA | COUN |
|---|-----|------|-----|------|------|-----|-------|------|
| Maintain currency of policy | I | R | I | A | S | S | I | S |
| Determine a student's eligibility for withdrawal | I | A | S | S | I | S | R | R |
| Determine a student's eligibility for deferral | I | A | C | C | S | R | C | R |
| Determine a student's eligibility for Leave of Absence | I | A | C | C | S | S | R | R |
| Ensure permission received from guardians of U18 students | I | A | I | C | S | R | I | RA |
| Report student enrolment changes via PRISMs and to Dept of Higher Education | A | S | I | R | R | | | |
| Monitor students who do not re-enrol after break from study | I | I | I | A | R | I | | I |
| Apply correct cancellation fees/refunds | I | C | RA | C | I | I | | I |
| Determine a student's eligibility for retrospective approval | I | RA | S | S | S | C | | C |

CDP = College Director & Principal, QCM = Quality & Compliance Manager, AD = Academic Director, DSAS = Director, Student & Academic Services, PC/PA = Program Convenor/Advisor, MSAS = Manager, Student & Academic Services, SASO = Student and Academic Services Officer, SLA = Student Learning Advisor, COUN = Counsellor, FIN= Finance department
R = Responsible, A = Accountable, S = Supporting, C = Consulting, I = Informed

4 Compliance

4.1 General

Director of Student and Academic Services will ensure staff are informed about this Policy through staff meetings and communications.

Students will be made aware of this Policy through the College website, digital campus, communication and support from Student and Academic Services and Support teams.

4.2 Relevant Legislation

[HES 1.3 Orientation and Progression](#)

[National Code 5 – Under 18 students](#)

[National Code 6 – Support Services for International Students](#)

4.3 Review

This Policy is tested and reviewed at least every 24 months and when at the time of any changes to the regulatory compliance requirements, legislation, regulation and guidelines.

4.4 Records Management

All records in relation to this document will be managed as follows:

| Record type | Owner | Location | Retention | Disposal |
|--------------------|---|-----------------|---|--------------------|
| Policy | Director, Student and Academic Services | Policy Hub | Permanently with control in place for revisions | Policy Hub archive |