



## Monitoring and Reporting Attendance Policy & Procedure

### Purpose:

Sunshine Coast international College (SCIC) safeguards the integrity of Australia's migration laws by supporting overseas students to complete their course within the required duration and fulfil their student visa requirements for satisfactory attendance.

This Policy and Procedure is designed to meet the requirements of

- *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018*, Standard 8

### Policy Statement:

To address the requirements of Standard 8 of *National Code 2018*, SCIC monitors overseas student's attendance for each course which the student is enrolled to ensure that the expected duration of study specified in the student's CoE does not exceed the CRICOS registered duration through effective recording, monitoring, and reporting attendance processes.

SCIC is responsible for monitoring student attendance records. Students whose attendance falls below 80% and it is clear that the student will not be able to reach 80% by the end of a study period must be reported on PRISMS.

To ensure that students and staff understand their responsibilities in relation to these requirements and the consequences of poor attendance, the following procedures outline the steps the SCIC will take to monitor and report attendance. The procedure also indicates the appeals process available to students whose attendance has been identified as unsatisfactory.

SCIC has processes to **identify, notify, and assist** an overseas student at risk of not meeting attendance requirements, where there is evidence that the overseas student is not attending classes.

This policy outlines SCIC's requirements for the following:

- a) Requirements for achieving satisfactory attendance under Standard 8.
- b) Informing students of attendance requirements.
- c) Attendance Recording.
- d) Calculation of attendance records.
- e) Non-commencement.
- f) Identifying students at risk.
- g) Intervention strategies to identify and offer support to those students at risk of not meeting attendance requirements.
- h) Reporting unsatisfactory attendance including student right to appeal.
- i) Reporting and appeals procedure.
- j) Outcomes of the appeals procedure.
- k) External appeals.
- l) Notification of reporting to DHA.
- m) Allowable extensions of course duration.

## **Procedures:**

### **a) Requirements for achieving satisfactory attendance under Standard 8**

SCIC monitors and records the attendance of overseas students specifying:

- Students are required to achieve satisfactory attendance for a course(s) which is set at a minimum of 80% of scheduled contact hours.
- Systematic methods in place for working out minimum attendance under Standard 8.
- documented processes for recording attendance.
- How it identifies if a student is at risk of presenting unsatisfactory attendance, before either situation occurs.
- Support and intervention strategies in place to identify, notify and assist overseas students who:
  - Have been absent for more than five (5) consecutive days without approval.
  - Who are at risk of not meeting attendance requirements before the overseas students' attendance drops below 80%.
- Processes for determining the point at which the overseas student has failed to meet satisfactory course attendance.

### **b) Informing students of attendance requirements.**

SCIC clearly outlines and informs overseas students before commencement about the requirements to achieve satisfactory attendance requirements for each study period through:

- Attendance information from the website, flyers, prospectus.
- Terms and conditions itemised in the student's written agreement.
- Student Handbook.
- Orientation program - the Academic Manager providing a verbal explanation of the importance of attendance and the consequences of poor attendance during the Orientation Session.
- Classroom teacher/ trainer notifications.

### **c) Attendance recording.**

- The teacher records the student attendance every class on the attendance roll.
- Attendance is recorded at designated marking times
- Teacher records student attendance for each session as follows:
  - Present: insert value = 1
  - Absent: insert value = 0
- If a student is absent from classes for any reason, the student will be marked absent on the roll.
- Students absent due to illness including with medical certificate evidence are marked absent.
- If a student is ill, the student must notify SCIC. A Doctor's certificate must be submitted when the student resumes the class if absent for two or more days.
- At the end of each week, each teacher submits the completed attendance roll for that week to Student Services.
- Student Services finishes inputting attendance records for the previous week in the Student Management System, RTO Manager (RTOM) on the Monday of each week.
- Students Services maintains and stores attendance roll hard copies in designated and safe storage room.

**d) Calculation of attendance records.**

- Student Services staff reconciles and inputs students' attendance into RTOM on a weekly basis.
- RTOM calculates student's attendance in two different formats:
  - *Current/ actual attendance* represents the student's percentage based on his attendance from the commencement of the term to the current date.
  - *Projected attendance*: represents the maximum percentage, which a student can reach throughout a study period. **For example:** When a student has two hundred (200) contact hours in a study period and is absent for twenty (20) hours in the first week, then their projected attendance is recorded at 90%, i.e., if the student maintains full attendance until the end of the term, their projected attendance will be 90%.
- SCIC calculates attendance based upon projected attendance.
- SCIC implements intervention strategies and reports students based on their attendance over a Study Period. For attendance monitoring purposes, SCIC defines a Study Period as the student's entire period of enrolment, e.g., eight (8) weeks, fifty-two (52) weeks, etc.

**e) Non-commencement**

- New students are required to attend the Orientation Session and start their course on the first day of their course.
- If a student does not show up on the first day of their enrolment, they will be notified as 'not commenced'.
- If the student has not commenced their course within five (5) working days of the scheduled commencement date, a *Notification of Intention to Report for Non-commencement* will be sent to the student, reminding them of the attendance requirements and advising to commence the course as early as possible.
- CoEs of students who have not commenced their studies will be cancelled within thirty (30) days from the scheduled commencement date.

**f) Identifying and Notifying Students at Risk:**

- Identifying at risk students:
  - At risk students are initially identified as having failed to meet satisfactory attendance requirements if they have been absent from class for more than five (5) consecutive days without approval.
  - Student Services generates a weekly report from RTOM to monitor students' attendance and to send notification letters accordingly.
  - Student Services sends notification/warning letters for attendance to students who are at risk of not meeting requirements weekly.
  - The process of notification/warning letters and intervention strategy is detailed below.
- **Consecutive Absence Warning Letter**
  - When a student is absent for five (5) or more consecutive days, they will be sent a '*Five Days Consecutive Absence Warning Letter*'.
  - In this letter, students will be reminded attendance requirements and advised to attend a meeting with the Academic Manager or Student Services Officer to discuss possible reasons and actions for their absence.
  - If students do not contact SCIC regarding the absence, further action will be taken to contact the student.

- **First Warning Letter - Attendance**

- When a student's projected attendance in a study period reaches 90%, the '*First Warning Letter Unsatisfactory Attendance*' will be emailed to the student's registered email address informing them of their current level of attendance, reminding them of their visa conditions and the need to see the Student Services/Academic Manager for possible intervention.
- In this letter, the student is advised to schedule a meeting the Student Services Officer/Academic Manager to discuss the situation and possible outcomes.
- The student and Student Services Officer/Academic Manager will address the reasons for non-attendance and put in place an intervention strategy to improve the student's attendance.
- The Student Services Officer/Academic Manager will complete the *Intervention Support Plan* and note the details of the interview and negotiated intervention plan. The student and the Student Service Officer/Academic Manager will sign and date the plan.
- The copies of the warning letter and Intervention Support Plan will be maintained in the student's files on RTOM.

- **Final Warning Letter – Attendance.**

- When projected attendance reaches 85%, the '*Final Warning Letter of Attendance*' will be emailed to students' registered email address informing them of their current level of attendance, reminding them their visa conditions and that they are at risk of not meeting attendance requirements of their visa.
- In this letter, the student is advised to schedule a meeting the Student Services Officer/Academic Manager to discuss the situation and possible outcomes.
- The student and Student Services Officer/Academic Manager will address the reasons for non-attendance and put in place an intervention strategy to improve the student's attendance. The Student Services Officer/Academic Manager will complete the Intervention Support Plan and note the details of the interview and negotiated intervention plan. The student and the Student Service Officer/Academic Manager will sign and date the plan.
- The copies of the warning letter and Intervention Support Plan will be maintained in the student's files on RTOM.

- **Notification of Intention to Report – Attendance.**

- Students with a projected attendance rate below 80% in a study period will be sent the '*Intention to Report – Unsatisfactory Attendance*' for breaching their visa conditions in accordance with the procedures in this policy and the SCIC's intention to report the student on PRISMS for unsatisfactory attendance.
- The notification will include advice that the student may appeal to the decision within twenty (20) working days as specified in the letter.
- The notification will also advise:
  - Who to contact if the student wishes to discuss the implications of their breach of the attendance requirements and the appeals process, for example, the Academic Manager or Student Services Officer.
  - That if lodging an appeal, it is the student's responsibility to clearly identify all the information they hold or are aware of in support of their appeal.
- A copy of Letter of Intention to Report will be retained in the student file and sent to the Student Services Department.

**g) Intervention Strategy to identify and offer support to those students at risk of not meeting attendance requirements.**

- Assisting students: Intervention meetings will be initially managed by Student Services staff.
- The student might be referred to the Academic Manager for counselling if required.
- The intervention strategy consists of the following:
  - Identifying the reason underlying poor attendance including, but not limited to:
    - Why have the students been absent and what support may be offered.
    - Compelling or compassionate circumstances (refer to Appendix 1 Compassionate or Compelling Circumstances considerations).
    - Illness
    - Issues with adjusting to Australian life
    - Part time work in Australia is impacting on the student's attendance
    - Any other reason including social issues
  - Support actions include but are not limited to:
    - Developing an individual learning contract with the class teacher in order to assist the student with attendance.
    - Arranging individual sessions with the class teacher for the student to catch up on missed work at an additional cost to the student.
    - Assigning additional study for the student to undertake to study missed class work.
    - Identify required support services as per issues raised.
- Monitoring students:
  - Following agreement on the terms of the intervention plan, student attendance will be monitored in line with attendance monitoring procedure.
  - When an intervention student's attendance falls below thresholds mentioned previously, he/she will receive warning letters and/or notification of intention to report.
  - If required, Student Services might schedule regular meetings with the students.
- Recording intervention:
  - SCIC maintains records of all contact and counselling undertaken with overseas students who have been absent for five (5) consecutive days or at risk of not attending at least 80% of the course contact hours to monitor and report unsatisfactory attendance on the student file and RTOM.
  - Documentation includes but is not limited to:
    - Formal notifications.
    - Interview notes.
    - Emails.
    - The Intervention Support Plan.

**h) Reporting unsatisfactory attendance including student right to appeal**

SCIC complies with the requirements to report unsatisfactory attendance as follows:



- Where SCIC has assessed an overseas student as not meeting satisfactory attendance requirements, the student is provided with a written notice within five (5) days which:
  - Notifies the overseas student that SCIC intends to report the overseas student for unsatisfactory attendance.
  - Informs the overseas student of the reasons for the intention to report.
  - Advises the student of their right to access SCIC's Complaints and Appeals processes, in accordance with Standard 10 (Complaints and Appeals) within twenty (20) working days.
- SCIC will only report unsatisfactory attendance in PRISMS in accordance with Section 19(2) of the ESOS Act and Standard 8 of the National Code 2018 if:
  - The internal and external complaints processes have been completed and the decision or the recommendation supports SCIC, or
  - The overseas student has chosen not to access the internal complaints and appeals processes within the twenty (20) working day period, or
  - The overseas student has chosen not to access the external complaints and appeals process, or
  - The overseas student withdraws from the internal or external appeals processes by notifying SCIC in writing.
- SCIC may decide not to report an overseas student for falling below 80% attendance where the overseas student is still attending at least 70% of the scheduled course contact hours and the student is:
  - Provides genuine evidence of compassionate or compelling circumstances as per Appendix 1 - Compassionate and Compelling Considerations

**i) Reporting and Appeals Procedure.**

- A student has twenty (20) working days from the date of receipt of the Intention to Report – Unsatisfactory Attendance to lodge an appeal to SCIC.
- Appeals must be made in writing to SCIC using the *Appeals Form* available from Student Services and must include:
  - The reasons for non-attendance (supported by documentary evidence).
  - Any additional information in support of their case.
- Students who are lodging an appeal can request to appear before the Appeals Review Committee.
- Students may bring a support person with them to appeals meetings.
- The Appeals Review Committee will meet within ten (10) working days after the end of the appeal period. All reasonable measures will be taken to finalise the process as soon as practicable.
- The Committee will consider:
  - Whether the decision to report the student for unsatisfactory attendance was based on the correct procedures.
  - Any mitigating circumstances advanced by or on behalf of the student; and
  - Whether the appeal should be upheld or dismissed.
- During the internal appeals process the student will remain enrolled in all courses and is required to continue to attend classes.
- Where the student has chosen not to access the appeals processes within the twenty (20) working day period, or withdraws from the process, the Student Service Department will be notified, and the student's CoE will be cancelled on PRISMS.

**j) Outcomes of the Appeals Procedures.**

The student will be notified of the outcome of the internal appeals process within ten (10) working days after hearing the appeal.

- If the Appeals Review Committee determines that processes have not been appropriately followed, or that circumstances (e.g., extended illness) have prevented the student from attending, and if attendance has not fallen below the discretionary minimum allowed under Standard 8 of the National Code and the ESOS Act, it may uphold the appeal and not report the student's non-attendance on PRISMS. The student will be notified in writing that the appeal has been upheld.
- If the Appeals Review Committee determines that due process has been followed and that there are no mitigating circumstances, it will dismiss the appeal and advises the Student Services Department to issue the student with an '*Unsuccessful Appeal letter*'.
- This final letter will outline the options to access SCIC's Complaints & Appeals procedures, specifically to engage the External Student Appeals agent, the Commonwealth Ombudsman, to lodge an external appeal.

**k) External Appeals.**

- If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Appeals Review Committee, the student has the right to refer his/her complaint through an external complaints process such as the **Commonwealth Ombudsman** within ten (10) working days from the date advised in the 'Unsuccessful Appeal Letter' and must advise the Student Services Department in writing that the student has lodged an appeal.
- The use of the **Commonwealth Ombudsman is a free service for overseas students.**
- Students may choose their own external Student Appeals agent if they wish. Students should inquire about current fees when they contact the agent.
- After ten (10) working days, if the student has not lodged an external appeal or if the Student Services Department has not been notified of an external appeal, the student will then be reported through PRISMS.
- If the external complaint handling and/or appeal process results in a decision that supports the student, SCIC will immediately implement any decision and/or corrective and preventative action required and advise the student of the outcome in writing.

**l) Notification of Reporting to DHA**

- SCIC will report the student to DHA using PRISMS if:
  - The overseas student has chosen not to access the internal complaints and appeals processes within the twenty (20) working day period.
  - The overseas student has chosen not to access the external complaints and appeals process.
  - The overseas student withdraws from the internal or external appeals processes by notifying SCIC in writing.
  - The internal and/ or external appeals process has been completed and the outcome is in SCIC's favour.
- Following reporting of the student on PRISMS, Student Services will issue the student with a '*Notification of reporting to DHA - Unsatisfactory Attendance*'.
- This letter will advise the student to contact the Department of Home Affairs to seek advice on any potential impacts to their visa, including the need to obtain a new visa.



**m) Allowable extensions of course duration.**

- SCIC will not extend the duration of the overseas student's enrolment if the overseas student is unable to complete the course within expected duration, unless:
  - There are compassionate or compelling circumstances, as assessed by SCIC on the basis of demonstrable evidence (refer to Appendix 1), or
  - SCIC has implemented, or is in the process of implementing, an intervention strategy for the overseas student because the overseas student is at risk of not meeting attendance requirements.
  - An approved deferral or suspension of the overseas student enrolment has occurred under Standard 9 (deferring, suspending, or cancelling a student's enrolment).
- If SCIC extends the duration of the student's enrolment, it will advise the student to contact the Department of Home Affairs to seek advice on any potential impacts to their visa, including the need to obtain a new visa.

**Pro-forma and supporting documents:**

- Notification of Intention to Report for Non-commencement.
- 5 Days Consecutive Absence Warning Letter'.
- Intervention Support Plan.
- First Warning Letter - Unsatisfactory Attendance.
- Final Warning Letter for Attendance.
- Notification of Intention to Report - Unsatisfactory Attendance.
- Unsuccessful Appeal Letter.
- Complaints & Appeals Policy & Procedure.
- Appeal Form.
- Unsuccessful Appeal Letter.
- Notification of Reporting - Unsatisfactory Attendance.

**Version Control:**

Title	Monitoring and Reporting Attendance Policy & Procedure			
Description	Describes processes used by SCIC to meet Standard 8 attendance requirements			
Created By	Ashley Fank			
Date Created	20.02.2019			
Maintained By	Joe Lynch			
Version Number	Modified By	Modifications Made	Date Modified	Status
V1.0		Created		
V2.0	Joe Lynch	Updated to clarify warning letter trigger dates and definition of 'Study Period'	08.04.2024	
V3.0	Joe Lynch	Updated to include information about compassionate/ compelling considerations	03.05.2024	
V4.0	Joe Lynch	Adjustments to attendance marking times	03.06.2024	
V4.1	Joe Lynch	Update minor typos	13.06.2024	Current

## Appendix 1

### Compassionate or Compelling Circumstances Considerations

SCIC considers whether compassionate or compelling circumstances exist in a limited number of circumstances relating to an overseas student's enrolment including:

- A request to transfer to another provider (National Code 2017, Standard 7)
- SCIC has determined that the student had not demonstrated satisfactory attendance or course progress and intends to report the student for breach of their student visa conditions (National Code 2017, Standard 8)
- A request to defer or suspend studies (National Code 2017, Standard 9).

SCIC follows guidance about compassionate or compelling circumstances from the two government sources below:

- The Commonwealth Ombudsman's factsheet, *Assessing Compassionate or Compelling Circumstances, June 2023* available at: [https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0030/298911/OSO-providers\\_Assessing-Compassionate-or-Compelling-Circumstances-A2297580.pdf](https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0030/298911/OSO-providers_Assessing-Compassionate-or-Compelling-Circumstances-A2297580.pdf)
- The Commonwealth Department of Education's factsheets, Standard 7 to 9 available at: <https://www.education.gov.au/esos-framework/national-code-practice-providers-education-and-training-overseas-students-2018>

*What is meant by compassionate or compelling?*

- Neither term is defined in relevant legislation, therefore, SCIC considers the normal meanings of these two words as suggested by the Commonwealth Ombudsman:
  - **Compassionate circumstances:** *circumstances that produce a feeling of sympathy for the student's troubles.*
  - **Compelling circumstances:** *circumstances that are powerfully convincing.*
- SCIC also considers that compassionate or compelling circumstances are generally those beyond the control of the student and which have an impact upon the overseas student's course attendance, course progress or wellbeing. These could include, but are not limited to:
  - Serious illness or injury
  - Bereavement of close family members such as parents or grandparents (where possible a death certificate should be provided).
  - Major political upheaval or natural disaster in the home country requiring emergency travel and this has impacted on the overseas student's studies; or
  - A traumatic experience, which could include:
    - Involvement in, or witnessing of a serious accident
    - Witnessing or being the victim of a serious crime which has impacted on the overseas student (these cases should be supported by police or psychologists' reports)
- When determining if compassionate or compelling circumstances exist, SCIC only requires the circumstances to be assessed as either compassionate or compelling.
- SCIC does not require a student to demonstrate their circumstances are both compassionate and compelling while also taking into consideration that some circumstances may naturally meet both definitions.

*Supporting documentation:*

- SCIC always needs to be in a position to substantiate a decision to accept a student's claim of compassionate or compelling circumstances. This means that SCIC needs to be able to provide evidence to support and justify the decision that it has made.
- SCIC follows the guidance of the Federal Department of Education (National Code Factsheets for Standards 7-9) with regard to the need for the student to present documentary evidence to support their claim of compassionate or compelling circumstances which states:



- *When determining whether compassionate or compelling circumstances exist, registered providers should consider documentary evidence provided to support the claim, and*
- *should keep copies of these documents in the overseas student's file.*
- SCIC will always request supporting documentation from a student who wishes to make a claim of compassionate or compelling circumstances.
- Generally, SCIC will not determine that compassionate or compelling circumstances exist based solely on written statements presented by students (usually on the Student Appeal Form when citing compassionate or compelling circumstances as the reason for contesting a decision made by SCIC).

#### *The nature of supporting evidence*

- SCIC will always request a student to submit a claim of compassionate or compelling circumstances in writing. Generally, this written claim will be part of SCIC's appeals processes and will use the Student Appeal Form to record in writing details of the student's claim to compassionate or compelling circumstances.
- SCIC will also accept other mechanisms to submit a claim of compassionate or compelling circumstances, for example, via email.
- SCIC will always request supporting evidence from a student to support their claim of compassionate or compelling circumstances.
- SCIC will not impose overly onerous requirements for the amount or type of evidence students must provide to support their claim, however, the evidence presented must clearly support the written compassionate or compelling claim made by the student.

#### *Medical certificates*

- Medical certificates are often presented by students who wish to make a compassionate or compelling circumstances claim.
- SCIC does not expect applying students to present medical evidence from specialists; SCIC is satisfied by medical evidence issued by General Practitioners.
- SCIC will always accept a medical practitioner's professional opinion provided in written medical evidence.
- SCIC reserves the right to verify a medical certificate presented by a student: This usually takes the form of making contact with the medical practitioner's practice/location in writing.
- Medical evidence does not need to specify a specific medical condition; however, it must meet the following requirements:
  - To address unsatisfactory course progress: It must state that the medical condition negatively affects the student's ability to meet academic progress requirements.
  - To address unsatisfactory attendance: It must specify the time period (for example, from date to date) for which the student was unable/unfit to attend their studies.