1 Purpose

To define the circumstances under which suspension of studies applications may be approved.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all ELICOS on international student visas.

3 Preamble

ELICOS students need to attend classes 20 hours per week.

If a student’s attendance is below 80%, the student may be in breach of their student visa conditions and risks being reported to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

However, if attendance is between 79% and 70%, visa conditions are not breached if the student demonstrates that compassionate or compelling circumstances prevented the student from attending classes.

Students demonstrate that compassionate or compelling circumstances prevented class attendance by:

a. Submitting a suspension of studies application to Student Services
b. Providing documented evidence of the compassionate or compelling circumstances that prevented class attendance

4 Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances

Compassionate or compelling circumstances are beyond the student’s control and impact upon the student’s attendance or course progress. Such circumstances, and documented evidence required, include but are not limited to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circumstance</th>
<th>Acceptable evidence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serious illness or injury</td>
<td>Medical certificate¹</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death of close family members such as parents or grandparents</td>
<td>Death certificate and evidence of relationship²</td>
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<td>Major political upheaval or natural disaster in the home country requiring emergency travel</td>
<td>Australian Government official advice³ or other reliable source and; evidence of residency in affected area²</td>
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<tr>
<td>Death of close family members such as parents or grandparents</td>
<td>Death certificates and evidence of relationship²</td>
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<tr>
<td>Witnessing or being the victim of a serious crime</td>
<td>Police report outlining involvement in a serious crime or accident; or medical reports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Involvement in, or witnessing of a serious accident</td>
<td>Police report outlining involvement in a serious crime or accident; or medical reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other traumatic experience</td>
<td>Police report outlining involvement in a serious crime or accident; or medical reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RGIT was unable to offer a pre-requisite unit</td>
<td>No evidence required from student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Delay in visa processing</td>
<td>Correspondence from relevant Australian Government Department responsible for immigration regarding delay in student visa processing</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

FOOTNOTES:

1. Medical documentation or a psychological report to include health professional's opinion regarding the student's ability to attend classes for an extended period of time or recommendation of a reduced study load or break from study. Documentation must include the practitioner's name and contact details on official letterhead, the consultation date, student's details and the health professional's clinical opinion as to the approximate dates (specific where possible) of the student's inability to study.

   Medical certificates and reports may include doctor, dentist, psychologist or counsellor reports appropriate to the medical condition cited.

2. Evidence of relationship: this may include a letter from a highly regarded, independent member of the community that supports the relationship claims.

3. Evidence sourced from the relevant Australian Government Department responsible for Foreign Affairs of civil war/significant political unrest; or current media articles covering the event.

4. Statutory Declarations will be accepted in certain circumstances. However, such evidence will be scrutinised within the context of the student’s overall academic history, progress and attendance. For students with poor progress and/or attendance, statutory declarations will not be accepted.

   If it is found that a student is repeatedly requesting suspensions of studies on the basis of statutory declarations which cast doubt on the genuineness of such declarations, the student will no longer be permitted to use statutory declarations as supporting evidence.
5 Additional Notes

Inability to provide supporting documentation will result in requests for a suspension of studies being denied. All documentation must be provided at the time of request.

In assessing suspension of studies applications, RGIT may also consider the student’s:

- Previous requests for a suspension of studies
- Academic progress history
- Attendance history
- Teacher reports
- Other relevant evidence that assists the institute in assessing the application.

RGIT keeps records of documents submitted, as well as outcomes of decisions made. These records and outcomes are kept in the student file.

Students may appeal the final decision following the usual process.

6 Circumstances not considered Compassionate and Compelling

The following circumstances will not be considered as compassionate and compelling:

1. Circumstances which are considered to be within the control of a student or which are to be expected in the normal course of the student’s academic life.
2. Claims unable to be supported by documented evidence. For example, student claim that they were confused about a term end date and went on holiday early.
3. Claim that the student did not know about RGIT policy and procedures unless the student demonstrates that policy and procedures were never made available to the student.
4. Inability to pay tuition fees and financial hardship are not considered compassionate/compelling circumstances as it is a student visa condition to have sufficient funds for study and living purposes. Students who experience financial strain that results negatively on their studies should contact Student Services for support in the first instance.
5. Work schedule conflicts with class schedule resulting in student not attending classes. This is not regarded as a circumstance beyond a student’s control. International student visa holders must not rely on the proceeds of paid employment in Australia to support their studies or living costs.

7 Retrospective Suspension of Studies Applications

A retrospective suspension of studies application is one submitted after the student has taken unapproved leave. Unapproved leave is defined as leave taken without the student being granted a formal suspension of studies.
Backdating of suspension of studies applications will not be accepted except in special circumstances beyond student control. For example, a student who is in a coma as a result of a trauma and unable to contact the school may apply for a retrospective suspension of studies upon their recovery. On the other hand, a student who goes overseas for a holiday without approval and applies for a suspension of studies upon their return will have their application rejected.