



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

Prepared by the Student Advisory Service  
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### 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 five level standard to measure your satisfactory or unsatisfactory progress. The levels assist the University and students in their progress through their study or programs. Also, each academic standing level requires your Faculty/School to adopt a particular course of action.

#### Level 1 **Good Standing**

When every student begins their course they are deemed by the University to be at academic standing level 1 – 'Good Standing'. This means you are making good or satisfactory progress and you may continue your studies.

#### Level 2 **At Risk**

This means that you are **'at risk'** of unsatisfactory progress. You have been identified as being 'at risk' by your Unit Coordinator following an appropriate level of formative assessment. You may continue with your studies, following an informal meeting with your Academic Adviser or Program / Course Coordinator, but may require explicit learning support and assistance.

#### **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 if you continue to experience difficulty with your studies. 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 Faculty/School through your Program / Course Coordinator as soon as possible and take the opportunity to raise these issues when you are called to discuss your progress.

#### Level 3 **Referral One**

This means that you are **not making satisfactory progress** in your course for the **first time** in the same course and you will be sent a letter by your Faculty/School requesting you to attend a formal, mandatory meeting with your designated Academic Adviser or Program / Course Coordinator to discuss your progress. At this point your Program / Course Coordinator or Academic Adviser will devise a **work plan** for you to follow, which you will sign. The work plan is there to assist you. If you do not follow this learning support, agreed to by yourself and your Faculty/School you will be called upon to explain your unsatisfactory progress at the next level.

#### Level 4 **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 Program / Course Coordinator why you have not been making satisfactory progress.



The outcome of the meeting will normally result in you being given a condition that you must comply with to continue in your course. For example, this may include an undertaking that you pass all listed units of study or reduce your study load. You will then create a second **work plan**.

#### **Level 5 Referral Three**

At this level **you are not making satisfactory progress** and you will be called to attend a **third** formal, mandatory meeting with a Student Progress Committee, as constituted by your Faculty/School.

### **3. What does unsatisfactory progress mean?**

A 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 program load for the relevant teaching period; and/or
- c) fails to comply with a conditional enrolment agreement set by the Academic Adviser, Program / Course-co-ordinator, Progress Committee or the Faculty 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 Faculty/School to speak with your designated Academic Advisor or Course Coordinator.

#### **5. I have been called to meet with my Faculty/School 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 you complete the Attendance Response Form which will be included with the letter from your Faculty/School 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 4: '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 it is a good idea to provide 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 of those.
- **Relationship** – At times we experience relationship breakdowns or tensions, so it is a good idea to submit a counselling report or doctor's letter if possible.
- **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 your progress has been hampered by cultural or home circumstances, list these with supporting documentation, for example, a letter from the University's Student Disability Support.



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

It is important to include in your written submission how you plan to overcome the events that have hampered your studies. You also need to stress that you wish to continue with your course and outline to the Faculty/ School how you plan to continue, for example seek counselling, receive extra tutoring and so on.

**7. What happens if I get a letter about my academic progress and don't respond?**

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. You will be informed in writing. Failure to attend a mandatory meeting may be interpreted by the University that you have 'unofficially discontinued' with your course and may result in you being given a 12 months Leave of Absence. **Therefore, do not ignore any correspondence you receive from your Faculty about your unsatisfactory progress.**

**8. If I am called to discuss my progress with a Course Coordinator or Student Progress Committee, can I bring someone with me to the meeting?**

Yes you can. At any time, either during the informal (meeting with your Course Coordinator/ Academic Advisor) or formal phase (Student Progress Committee) a student may be accompanied by a Student Advisor from the Student Services Department and/or any other person you nominate.

**9. I am 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 Hearing meeting?**

It depends on what academic level you are on, and your particular academic or personal circumstances. But 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 (called conditional enrolment);
- recommendation/ permission that you take a leave of absence (this applies to Higher Education students only);
- 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 Faculty/School/Department;
- suspension from the course;
- exclusion from the course.

**11. I have heard the term 'workplan' mentioned. What is 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 faculty, 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 allocate time to meet with the tutor. (see attached workplan).

**12. I have received the letter from my Faculty/School and have not been able to attend the Progress Information Sessions run by the Student Advisory 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 think about possible solutions as to how you can get back on track with your studies. Then if you have any further questions contact the Student Advisory Service: phone 9919 4360 or email [studentadvisors@vu.edu.au](mailto:studentadvisors@vu.edu.au).



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

### Date

### Address to

Chairperson or Course Coordinator  
School of ....  
Faculty 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://tls.vu.edu.au/students.cfm> or on 9919 4744.
- 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.