

RMIT University Pathways (RMIT UP) Leave of Absence Instruction

Supports the RMIT UP Enrolment and Enrolment Variation Procedure by setting out the instructions for processing leave of absence applications at RMIT UP.

What is it?

This instruction provides the steps for processing an RMIT UP student's application for leave of absence from the English Language Intensive Course for Overseas Students (ELICOS) program.

Who is this for?

RMIT UP ELICOS students who wish to apply for leave of absence and RMIT staff who are involved in processing the application for leave of absence.

1. Eligibility Requirements

- 1.1. Students must be currently enrolled in an RMIT UP ELICOS program to be eligible to apply for a Leave of Absence (LOA).
- 1.2. For international students studying in Australia on a student visa, LOA can only be granted on compassionate or compelling grounds and students must have documentary evidence to support their application. Examples of such grounds, and required evidence are detailed below.

2. Application Process

- 2.1. RMIT UP students wishing to have leave of absence at any time during their enrolment must first seek administrative approval from the RMIT UP Senior Student Services Advisor – Compliance.
- 2.2. A student will normally be granted a maximum of 6 months LOA during their RMIT UP program.
- 2.3. Students can apply for leave of absence by completing the RMIT UP Leave of Absence Request form and submitting it to the RMIT UP Student Services reception or via email to pathways.compliance@rmit.edu.au. Supporting documentation, examples of which are outlined below in *More Information*, must be attached to the application.
 - a) Students are advised on the application form that:
 - taking a leave of absence may affect their student visa, and that they should contact the Department of Home Affairs about the implications for their visa before submitting a request for a leave of absence
 - they may need to defer their RMIT formal program
 - they may be required to leave Australia if the gap between their courses is more than 8 weeks, and they should seek advice from the Department of Home Affairs.
 - b) The completed application form and supporting documentation are saved into a diary entry on the student's record in the IQ student database.
- 2.4. The RMIT UP Senior Student Services Advisor – Compliance will review the request for LOA and the outcome will be provided in writing to the student's RMIT student email account within 10

business days, except if still awaiting additional approval from a student's sponsor or a parent/legal guardian (for students under 18 years of age).

- a) For sponsored students, if the LOA request is approved by RMIT UP, it will then be forwarded by the RMIT UP Senior Student Services Advisor – Compliance to the RMIT Sponsored Student Coordinator at isscholarships@rmit.edu.au who will forward the application to the student's sponsor for approval.
- b) For students under 18 years of age, RMIT UP will seek written parental consent from the parents or legal guardian, via the email address listed on Studylink, before approving the LOA.

3. Approved Leave of Absence request

3.1. If the LOA is approved, the student will receive an email to their student email account, and the personal email account that is listed in the IQ student database, with the following information:

- a) confirmation of the period of approved absence
- b) advice that if they fail to return on the approved date they may forfeit their tuition fees
- c) advice to contact Student Services if they are unable to return on the approved date and need an extension to the LOA period
- d) advice to contact the Department of Home Affairs regarding the impact of LOA on the student visa (if the student is studying at RMIT UP on a student visa)
- e) information regarding the student's class placement on return from the LOA
- f) if the LOA impacts on the entry date to their RMIT formal program, students are advised they will need to contact the International Admissions team to defer the commencement of their formal program.

3.2. The period of approved LOA is recorded on the RMIT UP student database (IQ) and thereby excluded from the calculation of the student's attendance.

3.3. If the student is under 18, the RMIT UP Senior Student Services Advisor – Compliance, or delegate, will:

- upload all of the approval documents to the student's file on Studylink
- inform RMIT International Compliance (U18 International Student Management) via email to isunder18@rmit.edu.au of the approved LOA. RMIT International Compliance (U18 International Student Management) will manage any matters related to the Confirmation of Appropriate Accommodation and Welfare (CAAW) that are impacted by the enrolment variation.

3.4. If the student is studying on a student visa, the approved LOA is reported to the Department of Home Affairs via PRISMS by the RMIT UP Senior Student Services Advisor – Compliance or delegate.

- a) Reporting the LOA may affect the student's visa.
- b) Reporting the LOA may have the effect that the student must leave Australia while they are not enrolled in class.

3.5. If the LOA is approved for a period of:

- a) more than one week of a 5-week module, then the student will be required to repeat the module

- b) three weeks or more of a 5-week module, then
 - RMIT UP administrative staff withdraw the student from all courses in the period
 - the student is not liable for tuition fees for that 5-week module
 - the amount of pre-paid tuition for the period of the leave of absence is treated as payment towards the required extension of the student's enrolment
 - sponsored students are required to provide a new financial guarantee letter for any required extension of the student's enrolment.
 - c) less than three weeks of a 5-week module, then the student remains liable for the tuition fees for that 5-week module.
- 3.6. If a leave of absence of any duration causes the student to miss required assessments, the student is advised to apply for Special Consideration, but may be required to repeat the module.
- 3.7. The student's class placement on return from the LOA will be determined as follows:
- a) If the student has completed module A, and has a LOA of no more than 10 weeks, they will be placed in module B. If the LOA is more than 10 weeks, they will be required to repeat module A.
 - b) If the student has completed module B, but not achieved the level, the student can take a LOA of up to 5 weeks before repeating module B. If the LOA is more than 5 weeks, they will be required to return to and repeat module A.
 - c) If the LOA is 6 months or more, the student will need to undertake a placement test to determine their English level upon returning to study. This may require a student to repeat a level they have already passed.
- 3.8. Students seeking an extension to the approved period of leave must submit a new LOA request together with supporting documentation.

4. Leave of Absence request not approved

- 4.1. If the LOA request is not approved, the RMIT UP Senior Student Services Advisor – Compliance, or delegate will send an email to the student's RMIT email account, and personal email account as listed on the IQ student database, advising them:
- a) the reasons why the application was not approved
 - b) that if they do not attend class without an approved LOA, they will be marked absent and this may have implications for those studying on a student visa if they do not maintain satisfactory attendance
 - c) of the availability to seek a review of the outcome and the time-frame for doing so.
- 4.2. Students who take unauthorised LOA, including not returning to study by the date specified in any approved LOA period, will forfeit the tuition fees for any modules of study they do not attend.
- 4.3. Students who take unapproved leave will be considered absent and the period of absence will be included in the calculations of the student's overall attendance. This may result in the student being reported to the Australian government for unsatisfactory attendance.
- 4.4. A student's enrolment may lapse if they do not return to study by the date specified for an approved LOA, and this may lead to enrolment cancellation as described in the RMIT UP Enrolment and Enrolment Variation Procedure.

5. Records

- 5.1. Records of the LOA application and decision are digitally recorded in the student's file in the online student database, including:
- a) the application form and supporting documentation
 - b) the email informing the student of the outcome of the initial request
 - c) any internal appeal submission and corresponding outcome.

6. Appeal

- 6.1. A student may seek an internal review of a decision to reject their application for LOA or to approve LOA for a different period than that requested.
- a) The student must request such a review within 20 working days that the email notifying them of the decision was sent, by email to the RMIT UP Chief Executive Officer at pathways.compliance@rmit.edu.au.
 - b) The email will be saved into the student's file in the online student database and then forwarded to the RMIT UP Chief Executive Officer.
 - c) The RMIT UP Chief Executive Officer (or delegate) will commence review of the LOA request within 10 working days and decide on the outcome as soon as practicable.
 - d) At the conclusion of the internal review, the student will be notified within 10 working days of the outcome via email to their RMIT student email account. The email will include reasons for the outcome and information about the external review process. The email informing the student of the outcome will be copied and saved in the student's file in the online student database (IQ).
- 6.2. Students who are not satisfied with the outcome of a review of the decision to deny their application for LOA or approval of LOA for a different period may apply for an external review of the decision:
- a) For student visa holders, the student may contact the Commonwealth Ombudsman for an external review of the decision at <https://www.ombudsman.gov.au/How-we-can-help/overseas-students>
 - b) If the student is not a student visa holder, they may contact the Victorian Ombudsman for an external review of the decision at <https://www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au/>
- 6.3. Students are expected to continue to attend class during the appeal process.

More information

Examples of Evidence Required for Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances in the application for a Leave of Absence

Compassionate or Compelling Circumstances are generally beyond the control of the student and have an impact on the student's academic progress and/or wellbeing.

Examples of such circumstances, and the acceptable documented evidence, that may require a student to take a Leave of Absence include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *Illness or injury*

- medical certificate from a registered medical practitioner, psychiatrist or psychologist which states the student was/is unable to attend classes or is recommended to take study leave
- *Bereavement of close family members*
 - Evidence required: death certificates and evidence of relationship
- *Major political upheaval or natural disaster in the home country requiring emergency travel which has impacted on the student's studies*
 - Evidence required: media reports of civil war/significant political unrest or natural disaster plus evidence of student's residency in the specific affected area, and letter from counsellor/psychologist assessing that stress has/will prevent student from studying
- *Permanent or temporary disability*
 - Evidence required: letter from RMIT Disability Liaison Unit recommending a break from study
- *Incident or issue causing distress to student impacting on their capacity for study e.g, involvement in a serious accident, witnessing or being the victim of a serious crime*
 - Evidence required: police or counsellor/psychologists' reports
- *Military Service obligations*
 - Evidence required: Correspondence from military organisation
- *Other*
 - Evidence required: any relevant certified document attesting that the situation is outside the student's control and affects their ability to study.

Document history

Authority	Author	Register reference
RMIT UP Enrolment and Enrolment Variation Procedure	RMIT UP Business Reporting and Policy Specialist	TPOL/2020/00007

Version	Last updated	Changes
V1.0	Nov 2020	
V1.1	Aug 2024	Brand and role title changes