

<b>POLICY</b>	<b>RMIT ENGLISH WORLDWIDE ATTENDANCE POLICY</b>
<b>POLICY GROUP:</b>	REW Student Services; REW Teachers
<b>POLICY STATEMENT</b>	
<b>INTENT</b>	To define the policy and procedures for monitoring attendance and counselling students at risk of failing to meet attendance requirements, in compliance with Standard 8 of the National Code 2018.
<b>SCOPE</b>	All student visa holders enrolled in accredited English language programs and teaching and administrative staff employed at RMIT English Worldwide
<b>EXCLUSIONS</b>	Students on non-student visas.
<b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<p>To provide policy and procedures which comply with the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timely identification of students at risk of non-compliance</li> <li>Proactive intervention and counselling</li> <li>Accurate guidelines for compassionate and compelling reasons for attendance below 80%.</li> <li>Student access to REW complaints and appeals process.</li> <li>Reporting to the Department of Home Affairs for non-compliance when appropriate.</li> </ul>
<b>POLICY PROVISIONS</b>	<p><b>1. Advising students of their responsibilities</b></p> <p>a) All student visa holders are required by law to maintain a minimum attendance rate of 80% and attendance will be monitored for the duration of the eCOE. All course extensions for student visa holders require a new eCOE. Attendance is calculated for the new eCOE duration.</p> <p>b) If students take a leave of absence of 5 weeks or more during their eCoE, their attendance will be monitored in 2 separate study periods; the period before their leave of absence and the period after.</p> <p>c) Information about attendance requirements will be provided to students at enrolment in the form of a declaration to be signed on the enrolment form.</p> <p>d) Further information will be provided during the compulsory Orientation session prior to program commencement and at the Orientation session scheduled for late-enrolling students during Week 1.</p> <p>e) Students are also provided with information in the Student Handbook issued to all students on enrolment.</p> <p>f) Students view their class timetable on the REW noticeboards on Levels 6 and 9 of Building 108 at 235 – 251 Bourke St, Melbourne. It can also be found on Canvas (online classroom) at HOTSPOT.</p> <p>g) The Attendance Policy is available on Canvas (online classroom) at HOTSPOT and on the REW website.</p> <p>h) Students can check their attendance on the REW student noticeboards (Levels 6 &amp; 9) each week. Student's current attendance and projected attendance is shown. Projected attendance assumes the student will attend all classes until the end of the student's CoE.</p> <p><b>2. Marking the roll and late arrival</b></p> <p>a) Students are expected to attend all scheduled class hours in order to be able to participate and progress satisfactorily.</p>

- b) REW will establish and maintain an official timetable of contact hours for each accredited program in accordance with program requirements.
- c) Prior to the commencement of teaching an accredited program, REW will establish a formal roll of students for each class.
- d) The roll is marked online twice daily by the class teacher in each session. Class teachers will ensure the attendance roll is completed accurately for each study session as specified in the official timetable.
- e) Lateness is included in the attendance percentage calculations in increments of 10, 20 and 30 minutes. If a student is late, she/he is marked present for the session and the number of minutes late ie. 10, 20 or 30 minutes should be selected from the drop down box in the student's attendance records. If a student is 5 minutes late this can be noted in the adjacent comments box.
- The same applies if a student leaves before the class finishes or takes unscheduled breaks.
- f) A student will be considered and recorded as "absent" for an entire session if he/she misses more than 30 minutes of the duration of that session. Teaching staff have discretion to consider and record a student as "present" when the student misses more than 30 minutes from the class, provided that: The reason for the student's absence was outside the student's control and the student can provide documented evidence (eg. public transport disruption announced on Public Transport Victoria website/media). *Please refer to paragraph (h) for students leaving class **only** for prayer time.*
- The student has responsibility to ensure that any missed component of study is covered.
- g) Students with a legitimate reason for not attending class (i.e. driving test, religious observance, and national day) should inform their teacher prior to their absence. The teacher will pass on this information to Student Services by email. The Compliance Officer may request evidence of appointments.
- h) If a student leaves class only for prayer time the student is marked present and the duration of the absence is added to the comments box.
- i) It is primarily the responsibility of teachers to counsel any student who is habitually late.

### **3. Sickness**

- a) Students will be marked absent on the roll when they are sick. It is the student's responsibility to obtain a medical certificate from a registered health provider to cover the period of illness. A medical certificate explains an absence but does not cancel it.
- b) Backdated medical certificates where the student tells a health practitioner he has been sick but the student has not been examined by that health practitioner during the period of absence will not be accepted.
- c) Teachers must not accept medical certificates from a student. The student must take the medical certificate to REW Student Services. Student Services will make a copy of the certificate and place it on the student's file and record it in the student database. The original will be returned to the student.
- d) Students should retain all original medical certificates in case their overall attendance falls below 80% and they need to explain their poor attendance record to the Department of Home Affairs.

### **4. Monitoring Attendance**

- a) Student attendance will be monitored on a daily basis using the online student database system by the delegated staff in the REW Student Services team to ensure students are attending class for the required contact hours.

- b) The Student Services Compliance Administrator or delegate will contact any student that is absent for 3-5 consecutive days without prior approval or notice. Contact may be initially undertaken by email, phone or SMS.
- c) Details of attempted contact, any information or evidence (e.g. medical certificates) and notes of the action taken are recorded electronically in the IQ diary.
- d) If REW still cannot make contact within 10 working days then the agent and/or next of kin will be contacted to assist with locating the student as outlined in the agreement with the student on the REW enrolment form.
- e) When all avenues to contact the student have failed and if there is evidence to suggest the student may be missing, the Director, REW Melbourne Centre must be notified immediately. The Director will take action as described in the Critical Incident Policy. This may include police involvement.

### **5. Attendance Warnings and Counselling**

Students who are identified as not maintaining projected attendance above 90% will receive formal warning letters from REW Student Services as follows and these will be kept on file. The letters will be sent to the student's recorded personal email address (if provided) and their RMIT student email address.

#### Warning Letter 1 (Projected in class attendance 90% - 86%)

The student is instructed to come to Student Services for a meeting about their attendance situation. At the meeting with the Student Services Compliance Administrator/Officer, the student is reminded of the student visa attendance requirement and offered support and advice if there are problems preventing the student's satisfactory attendance. The meeting is recorded on the student database.

#### Warning Letter 2 (Projected in class attendance between 85% - 80%)

Student advised again of their responsibilities and requested to provide any medical certificates within 2 working days of the date of the letter. They are also instructed to make an appointment with the Student Services Compliance Administrator/Officer to discuss their attendance. The letter will be sent to the student's recorded personal email address and their RMIT student email address.

At the meeting with the Student Services Compliance Administrator/Officer, the student is reminded of the student visa requirement and advised of the procedure if their attendance falls below 80% at or before the completion of the reporting period. It will be considered and decided whether the student would benefit from deferring their course at this stage. Any relevant documentation (detailed in Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances under Definitions section of this procedure) will be requested from the student, to be submitted to REW Student Services within 5 working days. The Student Services Compliance Officer may request the student sign the Attendance Confirmation and Counselling letter and the original will be given to the student at the meeting. A copy will be placed on the student's file and the meeting recorded on the student's file. No further attempt will be made to contact the student with regard to the warning letters.

#### Students with 5-week attendance monitoring periods

All students with 5-week eCOEs are considered 'at risk' of not being able to maintain satisfactory attendance. Such students (usually those extending their course) are required to sign an agreement before their 5-week course commences. This serves as an attendance warning and counselling session. Only one attendance warning letter will be issued during the 5-week monitoring period when projected attendance falls between 80% - 90%.

NOTE: Students with a 5-week eCOE are advised that an absence of 6 consecutive

days will result in unsatisfactory attendance and a Notice of Intention to Report will be issued prior to REW issuing any warnings other than the initial attendance agreement.

### **6. Reporting to the Department of Home Affairs for unsatisfactory attendance**

a) When a student's projected attendance falls below 80% REW will begin the process of reporting the student's unsatisfactory attendance to the Department of Home Affairs.

b) If a student's projected attendance is below 80%, REW may choose not to report the student for attending less than 80% if both the following conditions are met:

- the student is attending at least 70% of the scheduled course contact hours(i.e. current attendance percentage is greater than 70%)  
and
- the student produces documentary evidence demonstrating that compassionate or compelling circumstances apply (refer to Definitions section of this procedure);

c) If a student's projected attendance is below 80%, and

- i) no compassionate or compelling circumstances apply **and/or**;
- ii) the student's current attendance is less than 70% **and/or**;
- iii) a deferral of the student's course is not approved or warranted

the Student Services Compliance Officer will issue the student with a Notice of Intention to Report via their recorded personal email address (if provided) and their RMIT student email address. This letter notifies the student in writing of REW's intention to report the student to the Department of Home Affairs through PRISMS for unsatisfactory attendance.

d) The student will be advised in their formal Notice of Intention to Report of the procedure for accessing both the internal and external appeals process.

A copy of the Appeals policy and procedures and a pro-forma for appeal will be attached to the email. A copy of the letter will be kept on the student's file.

e) Where the student is sponsored, a copy of the email is forwarded to IS Scholarships at RMIT International to forward to the sponsor.

### **7. Appeals**

a) Students are entitled to appeal the decision to report them to the Department of Home Affairs for non-attendance within 20 days, where they believe one or more of the following grounds exist:

- there is evidence that the data on the student's attendance record is incorrect; and/or
- that the attendance procedure has not been followed correctly; and/or
- serious circumstances of a compelling or compassionate nature have not been taken into account, and/or
- there is new, relevant evidence that was not available at the time of the decision

b) The Student Services Manager, REW Melbourne Centre or delegate will commence the appeal process within 10 days. Internal and/or external complaints handling processes can be accessed at minimal or no cost to the student.

If the submission is deemed to have addressed the grounds, then the student will be advised in writing, via student email, that the appeal will be upheld.

If the appeal is dismissed, the student will be advised in writing, via their student

email address and their recorded personal email (if provided) that they may appeal the decision externally through the Overseas Students Ombudsman.

c) Students who choose to appeal further to the Overseas Students Ombudsman must do so within 10 working days of the date of the letter and must notify REW Student Services of their lodgement reference number in order to avoid being reported to the Department of Home Affairs.

d) The student must continue to attend classes as scheduled until the completion of all internal and external appeals processes. **If the student's program finishes during this time, REW reserves the right not to make a further offer of ELICOS (ie. the student may not extend his program until the appeal process is finalised and the result is in favour of the student).**

e) Students will not be reported to the Department of Home Affairs until such time as internal and external appeals processes have been finalised and the finding is against the student.

f) Written advice of the outcome of any appeal process will be held on the Student's Administration File.

g) If the student

- fails to lodge a written appeal within the timeframe specified above, or
- withdraws from the appeals process, or
- the outcome of the appeal supports the decision to report the student for breach of attendance and the student accepts the decision

REW will report to the Department of Home Affairs through the PRISMS website that the student has unsatisfactory attendance.

h) REW reserves the right not to make any further offers to the student.

i) A student whose course is not finished but who has been reported to the Department of Home Affairs for unsatisfactory attendance will be provided with a new eCOE to cover the remaining study period. A new attendance monitoring period commences.

#### **10. Students under 18**

a) Attendance is discussed during regular sessions with the Student Services Compliance Officer or delegate.

b) All communication to the student is copied to the caregiver.

c) When reporting unsatisfactory course attendance on PRISMS for a student under 18 years of age, the Department of Home Affairs must also to be notified of the issue. Email [vic.general.cancellations@border.gov.au](mailto:vic.general.cancellations@border.gov.au)

#### **11. Leave of Absence/Deferment and Attendance Calculation**

a) Leave of Absence and Deferment can only be granted for International ELICOS students on compassionate or compelling grounds (see definition below) and students must have documentary evidence to support their application.

b) Students wishing to have leave of absence at any time during their program must first seek administrative approval from the Student Services Manager. Sponsored students will have their applications forwarded by RMIT International to their sponsor for approval.

If Leave of Absence is approved:

- the student will receive an email confirming the period of absence and the period of absence is recorded on the student database and excluded from the calculation of the student's overall attendance

- the student must leave Australia within 28 days unless supported by a medical

	<p>certificate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student deferrals will be reported to the Department of Home Affairs via the PRISMS system.</li> </ul> <p>If Leave of Absence is not approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the student is informed by email that the period of absence will be calculated with the student's overall attendance and it may cause the student to drop below 80%.</li> <li>- Students are advised to contact the Department of Home Affairs for advice on visa requirements.</li> <li>- Students whose leave impacts on the entry date to their RMIT program are advised to defer their RMIT program.</li> <li>- Students must be informed that this absence may affect their student visa.</li> <li>- Students who take unauthorised Leave of Absence will forfeit their tuition fees for the period of absence.</li> </ul>
<p><b>DEFINITIONS</b></p>	<p><b>Attendance</b> - Appearance in class during scheduled class time</p> <p><b>Compassionate or Compelling Circumstances</b> - are generally beyond the control of the student and have an impact on the student's academic progress or wellbeing. These could include but are not limited to:</p> <p><b>Illness or injury</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Evidence required: medical certificate which states the student was/is unable to attend classes for an extended period of time or break from study</li> </ul> <p><b>Bereavement of close family members</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Evidence required: death certificates and evidence of relationship</li> </ul> <p><b>Major political upheaval or natural disaster in the home country which has impacted on the student's ability to study</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 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</li> </ul> <p><b>Permanent or temporary disability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Evidence required: letter from RMIT Disability Liaison Unit recommending a break from study</li> </ul> <p><b>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</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Evidence required: police or counsellor/psychologists' reports</li> </ul> <p><b>Delay in receiving a student visa requiring student to travel offshore</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Evidence required: correspondence from the Department of Home Affairs</li> </ul> <p><b>Military Service obligations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Evidence required: Correspondence from military organisation</li> </ul> <p><b>Other</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Evidence required: any relevant certified document attesting that situation is outside student's control and affects their ability to study.</li> </ul> <p><b>DoE</b> - Department of Education.</p> <p><b>Deferment</b> – a break in the program of study which will result in the student needing to extend their study plan and meet the compassionate/compelling criteria.</p> <p><b>Department of Home Affairs</b> – Previously known as <b>DIBP</b> - Department of Immigration and Border Protection.</p> <p><b>eCOE</b> – Electronic Confirmation of Enrolment. A document produced from the PRISMS system required for visa application.</p> <p><b>Leave of Absence</b> – a break in the program of study which will not affect the study plan and which meets the compassionate/compelling criteria.</p>

	<p><b>Medical Certificate</b> – a letter from a registered health practitioner who has made a diagnosis of illness or physical or mental incapacity of a student and their ability to attend class.</p> <p><b>PRISMS</b> - a computer system developed by the Department of Education (DoE) in association with the Department of Home Affairs for the purpose of receiving and storing information about accepted students that is given to the Secretary under section 19 of the Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000 (The ESOS Act).</p> <p><b>Program</b> – the total duration of the eCOE.</p>		
<b>SUPPORTING PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES</b>	<p>REW Appeals - unsatisfactory attendance or progress - student.doc</p> <p>National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students (the National Code 2007)</p> <p>Department of Education and Training, National Code 2007 Explanatory Code</p>		
<b>POLICY FURTHER INFORMATION</b>			
<b>Commencement date</b>	January 2018	Review date:	December 2018
<b>ACCOUNTABILITIES</b>			
<b>Implementation:</b>	REW Student Services		
<b>Compliance:</b>	All staff responsible for monitoring attendance		
<b>Monitoring and evaluation:</b>	Director, Client and Partner Support, RMIT Training Client Services		
<b>Interpretation and advice</b>	Student Services Manager/ Student Services Compliance Administrator		
<b>WHO SHOULD KNOW THIS POLICY?</b>			
All REW teaching, program management and support staff.			

## APPENDIX A: NOTICE TO STUDENTS – HOW ATTENDANCE IS MONITORED

1. It is a requirement of the ESOS Act 2000 that REW monitors the attendance of all student visa holders. REW will monitor attendance for the duration of the eCOE and may report students whose attendance falls below 80%. This is done in accordance with Standard 8 of the National Code of Practice 2018, established under the ESOS Act 2000.
2. The REW Attendance Policy is explained to you at the orientation program, in meetings with Student Services and is available to you in the Student Handbook, on Canvas at HOTSPOT and on the REW website <http://www.rmitenglishworldwide.com/policiesandprocedures.html>. A summary is available in The Student Handbook issued at enrolment.
3. All course extensions for student visa holders require a new eCOE and attendance will be monitored for the duration of the new eCOE.
4. If you take a leave of absence of 5 weeks or more, your attendance will be monitored in 2 study periods; before your leave of absence, and after it.
5. Each week an attendance report is put on the noticeboards on Levels 6 and 9 at REW (Building 108). The attendance shown is both the current attendance and the projected attendance. Satisfactory attendance is a minimum of 80% (projected attendance), over the monitoring /reporting period.

6. REW EAP programs are generally 20 hours per week. Some variation may occur during assessment periods.
7. Attendance is recorded by the class teachers for each session (twice per day) online. Lateness is included in the attendance percentage calculations in increments of 10, 20 and 30 minutes. If you are late, you may be marked 'present' for the session; however, the number of minutes late ie. 10, 20 or 30 minutes will be recorded in your attendance records, and **will** have an impact in the calculation of your attendance percentage.

If you are 5 minutes late it will be noted by the class teacher in your attendance records. The same applies if you leave before the class finishes, or take unscheduled breaks.

You will be considered and recorded as 'absent' for an entire session if you miss more than **30 minutes** of the duration of that session.

It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that any missed component of study is covered.

8. If you are absent from class due to illness you should see a doctor as soon as possible and ask for a medical certificate. A medical certificate explains an absence but **does not** cancel it
9. REW **cannot** accept backdated medical certificates where the student tells a doctor he/she has been sick but has not been examined by that doctor during the period of absence.
10. You must take your medical certificate to the REW Student Services Reception in Building 108, Level 10. Reception staff will make a copy of the original certificate and place it on your file. The original will be returned to you.
11. Only medical certificates approved by REW will be taken into consideration during any appeal.
12. You can make an appointment with staff from the Student Services Compliance team to discuss your absences from class. Meetings are confidential.
13. If you receive Warning Letter 1 you should attend a meeting with the Student Services Compliance Administrator/Officer to ensure you understand the Attendance Policy.
14. If you receive Warning Letter 2 you are required to meet with the Student Services Compliance Administrator/Officer to explain your absences and discuss strategies for regular attendance.
15. If your attendance falls below 80% and you have been issued with a Notice of Intention to Report, you have 20 days to access the REW appeal process.
16. If you receive a Notice of Intention to Report and wish to appeal, the process is outlined in your letter and can be found on the REW website.
17. If you receive a Notice of Intention to Report and your English program has not finished it is very important that you continue to attend class.
18. If you finish your course with unsatisfactory attendance REW reserves the right not to extend your program.
19. If your appeal to REW is not successful you have the right of an external appeal if you feel you have not been treated fairly or you are not satisfied with the appeals process. You can contact the Overseas Students Ombudsman at [www.oso.gov.au](http://www.oso.gov.au)



20. REW is required to report you to the Department of Home Affairs for breaching attendance regulations if, at the conclusion of the appeal process, your appeal is unsuccessful or if you do not lodge an appeal.
21. Reporting your unsatisfactory attendance to the Department of Home Affairs may result in cancellation of your student visa.
22. If your unsatisfactory attendance is reported to the Department of Home Affairs, you may not be approved to extend your English course.
23. REW will correspond with you via your RMIT student email address. It is essential that you check your email account regularly.

## **APPENDIX B: NOTICE FOR CLASS TEACHERS – HOW ATTENDANCE IS MONITORED**

REW teachers are required to record each student's attendance for each session (twice per day) online. This must be done during the class by calling each student's name. Teachers are expected to mark attendance accurately as it is a legal requirement used to determine whether a student's attendance meets student visa requirements and can be used in evidence in legal proceedings.

**Instructions for recording student attendance in iQ may be found in the class administration folder and on Canvas.**

### **Late Arrival**

Lateness is included in the attendance percentage calculations in increments of 10, 20 and 30 minutes.

If a student is late, the teacher will mark the student 'present' for the session and the number of minutes late ie. 10, 20 or 30 minutes should be selected from the drop down box in the student's attendance records.

If a student is 5 minutes late this can be noted in the adjacent comments box.

The same applies if a student leaves before the class finishes or takes unscheduled breaks.

*If a student leaves class **only** for prayer time the student is marked 'present' and the duration of the absence is added to the comments box.*

The teacher should record a student 'absent' for an entire session if he/she misses more than 30 minutes of the duration of that session.

Teaching staff have discretion to consider and record a student as 'present' when the student misses more than 30 minutes from the class, provided that: The reason for the student's absence was outside the student's control and the student can provide documented evidence (eg. public transport disruption announced on Public Transport Victoria website/media).

The student has responsibility to ensure that any missed component of study is covered.

It is the responsibility of the class teacher to counsel any student who is habitually late. Frequent late arrival should be addressed by the teacher and is supported by Unacceptable Behaviour procedure.

### **Sickness**

Students will be marked absent even if they are sick. It is the student's responsibility to get a medical certificate to explain the period of absence.

### **Medical Certificates**

Teachers must not accept medical certificates from a student. Teachers must send the student with the original medical certificate to the Student Services office. The certificate is copied and put on the student's file. The original is returned to the student.

Students are advised to retain all original medical certificates in case their overall attendance falls below 80% and they need to explain their unsatisfactory attendance record to the Department of Home Affairs.

### **Attendance Report on the Noticeboards**

Each week an attendance report is put on the noticeboards on Levels 6 and 9 of Building 108. The attendance shown is both the current attendance and the projected attendance. Students should be in no doubt about their attendance situation.

### **Warnings and Counselling**

Students receive the following warnings which are recorded electronically:

Warning Letter 1 (projected attendance 86% - 90%) student requested to see the Student Services Compliance Administrator/Officer, or delegate to ensure they understand their obligations.

Warning Letter 2 (projected attendance 80% - 85%) student required to meet the Student Services Compliance Administrator/Officer to explain absences and discuss strategies for regular attendance. Students may also be asked to sign an Attendance Confirmation and Counselling letter.

A letter outlining our intention to report the student to the Department of Home Affairs is issued when the student's projected attendance falls below 80%. The letter explains REW's intention to report the student which may, in turn result in cancellation of their visa. The student has 20 days to access the REW appeal process if they believe due process has not been followed or crucial information has not been considered.

If a student's projected attendance falls below 80% then the consideration of medical certificates becomes critical. If the projected attendance percentage can be restored to 80% (or above) with medical certificates explaining the absence/s and the student is currently attending at least 70% of their classes then no further action is taken.

If a student's current attendance falls below 70%, and their projected attendance falls below 80% then, regardless of the number of medical certificates, REW is obliged to report the a student to the Department of Home Affairs for unsatisfactory attendance. This may result in visa cancellation, as well as the cancellation or non-extension of enrolment at REW.

### **Going home during the course**

Students planning to go home at any time during their course **must first get approval from Student Services.**

Approval can only be granted on medical grounds as evidenced by a medical certificate or compelling or compassionate grounds in situations beyond the student's control. Students who take approved leave will be reported to the Department of Home Affairs via the PRISMS system. 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 Department of Home Affairs for unsatisfactory attendance.