



Overseas Students Attendance Monitoring Policy & Procedure

1. PURPOSE

This policy supports Standard 8 of National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 and ELICOS Standards 2018.

Under the Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) legislation, international students must attend a minimum of 80% of their scheduled hours in a course. If student's overall attendance drops below 80% of their scheduled hours during any course study period, it will constitute a visa breach.

For the purpose of monitoring attendance Melbourne Education Institute (MEI) defines a study period as 2 weeks/ 10 consecutive sessions.

Melbourne Education Institute (MEI) students must be reported to Department of Home Affairs through PRISMS, under the ESOS Framework and their visa conditions, if their overall attendance falls below 80% of their scheduled course contact hours during any study period.

The College believes good attendance is important in order to achieve the desired educational outcomes. International students should attend all classes (100%) of their course contact hours to gain optimum learning.

The College is responsible for maintaining and monitoring accurate attendance records.

ELICOS students must be monitored and reported on attendance while all international students must attend full time study as a requirement of their visa.

In instances where the records indicate that students are deemed at risk of not meeting course progress requirements due to their low attendance, the College's academic intervention strategy will be triggered. *Refer to our Course Progress Policy and Procedure.*

We monitor both the course progress and attendance of overseas ELICOS students. These requirements are provided to the students before they commence their course.

2. SCOPE

The scope of this policy extends to cover all ELICOS students

3. RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

CEO

Training Manager



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ELICOS Academic Manager/ ELICOS Course Coordinator

4. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

ELICOS – English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students

DHA – Department of Home Affairs.

PRISMS – Provider Registration and international Students Management System

ESOS – Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000

Current Attendance – Students attendance averaged to date from commencement

Overall Attendance – The maximum possible attendance a student can achieve, if they are present for every single class moving forward

Compassionate or compelling circumstances – *are generally those beyond the control of the student and which have an impact upon the student's course progress or wellbeing. These could include, but are not limited to:*

- *serious illness or injury, where a medical certificate states that the student was unable to attend classes*
- *bereavement of close family members such as parents or grandparents*
- *major political upheaval or natural disaster in the home country requiring emergency travel and this has impacted on the student's studies;*
or
- *a traumatic experience which could include:*
involvement in, or witnessing of a serious accident; and
witnessing or being the victim of a serious crime, and
this has impacted on the student (these cases should be supported by police or psychologists' reports).
Any other circumstance would require evidence to be considered as
compassionate or compelling.

Session- Each session is made up of 4 hours of contact hours, 20 hours per week.

Medical Certificate - a certificate issued by a registered medical provider such as hospitals, doctors, dentists, physiotherapists, chiropractors, optometrists, ophthalmologists, psychiatrists and psychologists. Melbourne Education Institute (MEI) does not accept certificates from alternative medical practitioners such as herbal practitioners, acupuncturists, Chinese therapists, massage therapists, iridologists, psychics etc.

Satisfactory course attendance – attendance of at least 80% of scheduled course contact hours for the overall course.

Study period – 2 weeks/ 10 consecutive sessions

SMS – Student Management System



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5. APPLICATION

Monitoring the student's attendance assists the College to identify early and offer support to those at risk of not meeting course progress requirements or completing their studies within the expected duration of their COE and who are also at risk of failing to meet attendance requirements.

Students must contact the College every time they will be absent prior to the regular class time, via email, phone or SMS to a member of staff. Students who do not advise the College of absences will be contacted/counselled by the Intervention Officer or another staff member.

All absences due to illness should be accompanied by a medical certificate, however students are still to be marked as absent.

Regular class attendance is essential in order for students to progress satisfactorily in their course and to be deemed as a genuine student.

Melbourne Education Institute (MEI) will report students for non-attendance via PRISMS as per the conditions outlined in this policy. An outcome of reporting a student for non-attendance is the student's visa may be cancelled.

After intervention and the appeals process, the College will report students who are not meeting satisfactory course attendance to Department of Home Affairs, under Section 19 of the ESOS Act and as a breach of their student visa conditions.

The following rules will be applied to ensure compliance with the legislation.

6. RULES & PROCEDURES

- Trainers/teachers are to mark the roll a minimum of once per training session
- Each session is made up of 4 hours of contact hours. Students are expected to attend 5 sessions each week.
- Student Support Officer/Intervention Officer/ trainer/teacher or delegated staff member is to call or email all students who do not notify the College of their absence before close of business on the day of absence.
- Summary of the calls made to the student by the intervention officer/trainer.
- Copy of the emails made to the students for follow up or for any assistance will also be placed in the student's file.



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- All notes of calls and emails as journal entries by trainer /intervention staff to be entered on student management system which is wisenet. ELICOS Course coordinator/ Intervention officer to check all notes while analysing students who are at risk of falling behind the minimum course progress requirement. Student Support Officer/ Intervention Officer will record attendance in the Attendance Monitoring Database and analyse student absences fortnightly and take action as per below for students 'at risk'.
- All absences due to illness should be accompanied by a medical certificate. Intervention Officer is to follow up on medical certificates.
- a. Contacting students

Melbourne Education Institute (MEI) will at the minimum contact and counsel students who:

- have been absent for more than five consecutive days/ 10 consecutive sessions without approval; or
- are at risk of not attending for at least 80 per cent of the scheduled course contact hours

A record of all phone conversations, copies of letters, emails and notices relating to attendance will be kept on the student file.

- All communications to the student in regards to the course including letters related to attendance and warning will be communicated via emails or registered post only. It is the responsibility of the student to keep their contact details updated with the college whenever there is a change within 7 days of a change as per visa requirements. This information is provided to the student in the pre-enrolment process via agent/Student handbook. The copy of the handbook and this policy is available on the college website. This is further explained on the day of the induction prior to the start of the course.
- The Intervention Officer is made aware by the Records Officer of students who do not contact the college regarding their absences within the required timeframe of one study period.
- For students identified as at risk of not meeting attendance requirements, an appointment will be arranged with the Intervention Officer, where course attendance is discussed and students are reminded of their obligations to meet course attendance obligations. An assessment is undertaken and any support necessary to assist the student to meet their visa obligations. This support may include counselling or other required support. * At this time the Student will be again given another copy of the attendance Policy and procedure.
- All attempted communication with students must be recorded and saved against the students file in the College's student management system (SMS) and a copy placed in their intervention file.



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- If in the event that the student cannot be contacted within a study period, efforts are made to contact their next of kin to locate the student and ascertain the reason for their absence. A report to authorities e.g., police may need to be made in extreme circumstances.

b. Recording Student Attendance

All ELICOS Trainers are responsible for marking the hard copy roll for each teaching session. Records Officer is responsible for entering the attendance data into the Attendance sheet on weekly basis.

Students are marked absent for the days they are sick, including days for which they have medical certificates. Students are encouraged to make appointments for personal matters outside class hours. If students are absent, they must supply documentary evidence to support any absence. For absences due to an illness, students must:

- * Complete an Absence Request Form and present it to a Student Support Officer.
- * Submit an Absence Request Form with medical certificate attached.

If the student provides a medical certificate or another reasonable explanation for their absence in response to the communication with them, their absences are recorded as allowable absences and arrangements are made to make up for the classes/work they have missed so that their ability to achieve satisfactory course progress is not impaired. If any other support is required e.g., grievance counselling is needed, this is organised by the Student Support Officer.

c. Student Attendance Monitoring and Counselling

Melbourne Education Institute (MEI) staff will ensure that accurate attendance records are kept for all ELICOS students, and that they maintain a satisfactory attendance level while studying at the College.

At all times the aim is to ensure that the student is not suffering from any problems that may be causing the unsatisfactory attendance. The student's welfare is always the main concern.

A three-step process is undertaken to ensure that the student is given every opportunity to maintain their required course attendance.

Once a student's attendance drops in the defined levels below, the formal process must begin.

- I. **Notification letter**- A first notice of warning is sent out to students when their **current** attendance has fallen less than **80%** at the end of a study period (2 weeks/ 10 consecutive sessions). This initial warning (Notification Letter) is communicated via the student's personal email accounts, advising them of current attendance and suggesting that the



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student make an appointment with the Intervention Officer as soon as possible to discuss any issues which may be impacting on their ability to maintain a satisfactory rate of attendance. A copy of the

warning is saved and any communication logged on the student's file. Students may take along a support person.

- II. **Warning Letter 1-** If the student's attendance issues persist and their **overall forecast** attendance rate falls less than **90%** of the scheduled total course contact hours by the end of any study period, a notice of formal warning (Warning Letter 1) is sent out. This warning stresses the importance of maintaining course attendance and is communicated via the student's personal email accounts, advising them of overall attendance and requires that the student make an appointment with the Intervention Officer to discuss any issues which may be impacting on their ability to maintain a satisfactory rate of attendance. A copy of the warning is saved and any communication logged.

If the student's overall attendance drops below 80 %, students will be reported to DET/DHA via PRISMS unless compassionate or compelling grounds can be established

Where a student with low attendance is able to demonstrate (and provide evidence of) compassionate or compelling circumstances, the CEO will assess whether a temporary suspension of studies is in the best interest of the student. Refer *Deferment, Suspension and Cancellation Policy*.

- III. **Intention to Report for Unsatisfactory Attendance Letter-** If the student's **overall forecast** attendance falls to 80% or below the overall course attendance requirement by the end of any study period, a letter informing the student that the College intends to report them to Department of Home Affairs, along with a copy of the College's Complaints and Appeals Process, is sent to the student. This letter will include all action and assistance provided to the student to date. The student will also be told that this may result in their visa being cancelled. Students will also be notified that they have 20 working days to appeal against the decision.
 - Notice of Intention to Report to DHA is sent to the student's:
 - Email address
 - Current postal address on SMS
 - The Intention to Cancel Letter advises the student of the potential breach of visa condition due to unsatisfactory attendance and their right to appeal within 20 working days
 - In case student appeals against the decision, the cancellation will be kept on hold and the student's appeal will be assessed in line with "Complaints and Appeal" policy. Please refer to the 'Complaints & Appeal policy & procedures' for further details.
 - This policy is a part of pre-enrolment & Induction / orientation process. Students can access it anytime from the college website or the Students Handbook. This policy in



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student's handbook must be read and understood by the student to make an informed decision and is provided to students prior to enrolment.

- Students are advised to provide evidence of compassionate and compelling circumstances (if any)
- If the review of compelling and compassionate circumstances is accepted, the student is provided an "appeal outcome letter" advising they will not be reported for Unsatisfactory Attendance for current course
- However, if no appeal and compelling or compassionate circumstances documentation is provided and accepted, then the student will be reported for Unsatisfactory Attendance via PRISMS
- If a student has submitted an appeal, which is deemed unsuccessful, the student is advised in the "appeal outcome letter" that their appeal is unsuccessful, and they have 10 days to externally appeal and provide evidence. Otherwise, the college will report the student for unsatisfactory attendance.
- If the student does externally appeal and evidence is provided, the college will place their decision to report on hold, until the external appeal process has reached an outcome.
- If a student is to be reported via PRISMS, the College will notify DHA of the student not achieving satisfactory course attendance as soon as practicable within 5 working days.

All documents listed above are to be stored in in the student's file.

d. Student Absence for a consecutive period of five days i.e., 10 sessions

If a student is absent without approval (e.g., without approved holidays) for more than five consecutive days or 10 consecutive sessions, the college will make every effort to contact the student, their next of kin, and or their agent to ensure their safety.

Any absences **longer than 5 consecutive days** without approval will be investigated as a matter of urgency.

- Intervention officer will attempt to contact the student
- If student is not able to be contacted their agent will be contacted.
- Intervention Officer will counsel student on the importance of notifying the College when absent.
- If contact cannot be made the Intervention Officer will discuss with CEO and the relevant authorities will be notified (e.g., police, DHA, next of kin)

Melbourne Education Institute (MEI) will *at the minimum* contact and counsel students who:

- have been absent for more than five consecutive days without approval; or
- are at risk of not attending for at least 80 percent of the scheduled course contact hours.



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e. Cease of Attendance after leave

If a student ceases attending a course or does not return from leave, and/or is unable to be contacted, under Section 19(1) of the ESOS Act, Melbourne Education Institute (MEI) will notify DHA via PRISMS of termination of the student's studies within 14 days of the event via a Student Course Variation. The College in this instance does not have to give students access to the appeals process. Students would not be entitled to a refund unless at the discretion of the CEO.

f. Notation of Students Attendance at completion of course

Students' attendance records are stated on their end of course Statement of Attainment as either Satisfactory or Unsatisfactory. Students who receive a satisfactory attendance comment must have attended more than 80% of classes.

Students who request an Attendance Certificate at any time are issued with one. The certificate shows the current attendance of students as a percentage of the total required attendance to that date. A note will be taken of the students who take approved holidays as a part of their total course duration on PRISMS and these periods will not be recorded as absences.

g. Monitoring Student Attendance

The Intervention Officer is responsible for monitoring the attendance on weekly basis and taking suitable action accordingly. The Intervention Officer then provides on-going support and advice to these students assessed as being at risk of not meeting attendance requirements, which is documented on the student's intervention strategy. Students are provided with the best opportunity to successfully meet and exceed these requirements and work towards a successful course outcome.

h. Monitoring Periods

Student attendance is monitored daily by teachers/trainers. Attendance is monitored and tracked on a weekly basis in the Attendance Monitoring Database but the action is only taken after the end of the study period.

For the purpose of attendance monitoring the calculation is based on a study period of 2 weeks.

i. Additional Strategies to assist identified students to achieve satisfactory attendance progress.

The Intervention Officer may recommend the following strategies for students to follow to improve their attendance progress:

- Referral to external a Counselling Centre for assistance with personal issues which are influencing attendance



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- Referral to the appropriate Health Service for assistance with medical issues which are influencing attendance
- A change in course load with approval from Training Coordinator, therefore implementing a formal intervention strategy.
- Attending an English Conversation Group to assist with language skills and social networking
- Individual Case Management for students

Records will be maintained on the student intervention file for audit.

j. Students excluded from class for misbehaviour

Melbourne Education Institute (MEI) will record any 'period of exclusion' from class as absence (where the enrolment is not officially suspended on PRISMS) and include this absence in attendance monitoring calculations (potentially putting a student with marginal attendance in danger of being reported for unsatisfactory attendance).

Also refer Standard *Deferring, suspending or cancelling the overseas student's enrolment Policy and Procedure*.