

Deferral, Suspension and Withdrawal Policy and Procedure		
Code: E2.09	Area: Non-Academic E	
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#### VERSION HISTORY

Version	Updated by	Approval Date	Details
1.0	EMG	4 Sep 2019	Document creation.
1.1	PRG	24 Mar 2020	Appeals process clarified: appeals to expulsions for academic reasons follow the <i>Academic Grievance Policy</i> and for non-academic reasons follow the <i>Non-Academic Grievance Policy</i> .
1.2	EMG	17 Mar 2021	Registrar approves deferral requests for first semester students, removed <i>Release Request Form</i> , renamed <i>Request for Discontinuation Form</i> .
1.3	EMG	13 Apr 2022	Updated to distinguish between deferrals and withdrawals.
1.4	EMG	17 Aug 2022	Clarified the process for obtaining a grade of Withdraw without Failure.
1.5	EMG	17 Nov 2023	Specified that records of international student transfer requests are kept for at least 2 years.
1.6	EMG	17 May 2024	Permitted leaves of absence for five or six semesters in exceptional circumstances.

#### PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The aim of this policy is to:

- Outline how a student can defer the start of a course.
- Outline how a student can suspend their studies in a course.
- Outline how a student can withdraw from a course.
- Outline how SITCM can withdraw a student from a course.
- Outline how a student can withdraw from a unit of study.
- Provide specific guidance to international students about deferrals, suspensions and withdrawals.

This policy applies to all students at the Sydney Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine (SITCM).

## 1 OVERVIEW

The Sydney Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine (SITCM) is committed to providing students with accurate information about deferrals, suspensions and withdrawals.

This policy has been informed by the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021*, particularly Section 1.3 Orientation and Progression, and the *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018*, particularly Standards 7 and 9.

## 2 POLICY

### 2.1 DEFERRALS AND SUSPENSIONS

#### 2.1.1 DEFERRALS

- 1) A deferral occurs when a student has received an offer of study in a course and is approved to delay starting the course by between:
  - a. For a higher education (HE) student, one and two semesters.
  - b. For a vocational education and training (VET) student, one and four terms.
- 2) Students must apply to defer the start of the course before the first Census Date.
- 3) Deferral applications must be submitted to the Registrar ([registrar@sitcm.edu.au](mailto:registrar@sitcm.edu.au)) using the *Request to Defer or Suspend Form*, which is available from the Administration Office, website and Moodle.
  - a. The *Request to Defer or Suspend Form* informs international students of the need to seek advice from the Department of Home Affairs on the potential impact of the deferral on their visa.
  - b. If approved, the effective date of deferral will be the date on which SITCM receives the *Request to Defer or Suspend Form* from the student.
- 4) SITCM will approve an international student's deferral application if it believes there are compassionate or compelling reasons to do so (e.g., illness or bereavement).
- 5) All deferral applications are processed in accordance with Section 3.1 (Deferral and Suspension Procedure) of this document.
- 6) Students who defer their studies may be eligible for a refund of any tuition fees paid towards a unit of study or course in accordance with the *Refund Policy*.

#### 2.1.2 SUSPENSIONS

- 1) A suspension occurs when a student, who has commenced a course, is approved to take a leave of absence from the course for between one and four semesters.
  - a. A student may be approved to take a leave of absence for five or six semesters in total if exceptional circumstances of hardship apply, as demonstrated by documented evidence and as approved by the Dean.
- 2) Suspension applications must be submitted to the Registrar ([registrar@sitcm.edu.au](mailto:registrar@sitcm.edu.au)) on the *Request to Defer or Suspend Form*, which is available from the Administration Office, website and Moodle.
  - a. The *Request to Defer or Suspend Form* informs international students of the need to seek advice from the Department of Home Affairs on the potential impact of the suspension on their visa.
  - b. If approved, the effective date of suspension will be the date on which SITCM receives the *Request to Defer or Suspend Form* from the student.
- 3) SITCM will approve an international student's suspension application if it believes there are compassionate or compelling reasons to do so (e.g., illness or bereavement).
- 4) All suspension applications are processed in accordance with Section 3.1 (Deferral and Suspension Procedure) of this document.
- 5) Students who suspend their studies may be eligible for a refund of any tuition fees paid towards a unit of study or course in accordance with the *Refund Policy*.

## 2.2 WITHDRAWALS

- 1) A student withdrawal may occur at any time after enrolment in a course, or in the case of international students after issuance of a Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE), and prior to the designated course end date.
  - a. Students who withdraw from any unit on or prior to the unit Census Date may be eligible for a refund of any tuition fees paid towards that unit in accordance with the *Refund Policy*.
  - b. Students who withdraw from any unit after the Census Date will not receive any refund of tuition fees paid towards that unit unless special circumstances apply, as defined in the *Special Circumstances Refund Policy and Procedure*.
  - c. Specific consideration is given to refunds for students in circumstances where SITCM defaults or a student default, as described in the *Refund Policy*.
    - i. Such refunds apply irrespective of when a withdrawal takes place (i.e., prior to, on or after the Census Date).

### 2.2.1 SITCM-INITIATED WITHDRAWALS

- 1) SITCM can withdraw a student from a course by terminating their enrolment for academic or non-academic reasons.
  - a. Academic reasons for termination include:
    - i. Failure to maintain minimum academic standards as described in the *Student Progression Policy and Procedure*; and/or
    - ii. Academic misconduct as defined in the *Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure*.
  - b. Non-academic reasons for termination include:
    - i. Non-Academic Misconduct as defined in the *Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure* (which includes breach of the *Student Manual's Code of Conduct*); and/or
    - ii. Failure to make required payments for their studies in accordance with the *Fees Policy and Procedure*.
- 2) The process for termination is specified in Section 3.2 (SITCM-Initiated Withdrawal Procedure) of this document.
- 3) An SITCM-initiated withdrawal from a unit is denoted on an academic transcript with the grade of Withdraw with Failure.

### 2.2.2 STUDENT-INITIATED WITHDRAWALS

- 1) Withdrawal applications must be submitted to the Registrar ([registrar@sitcm.edu.au](mailto:registrar@sitcm.edu.au)) using the *Request to Withdraw Form*, which is available from the Administration Office, website and Moodle.
  - a. The *Request to Withdraw Form* informs international students of the need to seek advice from the Department of Home Affairs on the potential impact of the withdrawal on their visa.
  - b. The effective date of withdrawal will be the date on which SITCM receives the *Request to Withdraw Form* from the student.
- 2) All student-initiated withdrawals are processed in accordance with Section 3.3 (Student-Initiated Procedure for Withdrawals) of this document, unless Section 2.2.2.1 (Applications for Withdrawal without Failure) applies.
- 3) A student-initiated withdrawal from a unit is denoted on an academic transcript with the grade of Withdraw with Failure, unless Section 2.2.2.1 (Applications for Withdrawal without Failure) applies.

**2.2.2.1 Applications for Withdrawal without Failure**

- 1) The *Request to Withdraw Form* contains a “Withdrawal without Failure” section that students must complete, and attach supporting evidence for, if they wish to apply to withdraw from a unit without any academic penalty.
- 2) A Withdrawal without Failure result can only be approved when the student encountered special circumstances that:
  - a. Are beyond the student’s control;
  - b. Do not make their full impact on the student until after the unit Census Date; and
  - c. Make it impracticable for the student to complete the requirements for the unit during their study period.
- 3) Special circumstances must relate to one or more of the following:
  - a. The student suffers from serious illness or injury, as evidenced by a letter from a General Practitioner or a medical specialist on an official letterhead.
  - b. A parent, sibling, child or spouse of the student passes away, as evidenced by a death certificate.
  - c. A family member of the student suffers from a serious medical condition that requires the student to provide them with full-time care, as evidenced by either a letter from a specialist practitioner on letterhead or government documentation confirming the student’s status as carer.
  - d. The student is Domestic, and they or the person who finances their studies experiences a sudden and drastic change in financial circumstances, as evidenced by a bankruptcy notice or similar documentation.
  - e. The student is employed out of necessity and the employer either increases their hours of employment or transfers them to a location more than 100km outside Sydney, and:
    - i. It is not possible for the student to refuse or otherwise prevent this change to their employment circumstances; and
    - ii. The change makes it impossible for the student to continue their studies in the unit; and
    - iii. This change is evidenced by a signed letter from the employer confirming that it is impossible for the student to refuse or otherwise prevent this change.
  - f. The unit is delivered in a way that deviates from what was specified in the unit guide to the extent that it is no longer possible for the student to achieve the unit learning outcomes.
- 4) Circumstances do not make their full impact on a student until on or after the Census Date if the circumstances occur:
  - a. Before the Census Date but worsen after that day;
  - b. Before the Census Date but the full effect does not become apparent until the Census Date; or
  - c. Only after the Census Date.
- 5) In determining whether circumstances make it impracticable for the student to complete the requirements of the unit in the period during which the student undertook or was to undertake the unit, SITCM must have regard to:
  - a. Whether the student could do enough private study/attending training sessions and other activities to meet course requirements;
  - b. Whether the student could complete alternative assessments to demonstrate the competencies required; and
  - c. Whether the student could complete any other requirements arising because of the student’s inability to do things described in (a) and (b).

- 6) Withdrawals without failure must be approved by the Course Coordinator.
- 7) A student may appeal a Course Coordinator's decision to not grant Withdrawal without Failure in accordance with Stage 3 (Internal Appeal) of the *Academic Grievance Policy and Procedure*.
- 8) All applications for withdrawal without failure are processed in accordance with Section 3.4 (Student-Initiated Procedure for Withdrawals without Failure) of this document.

#### 2.2.2.2 International Student Transfers to Other Institutions

- 1) International students may transfer from SITCM to another registered provider (see *National Code of Practice for Providers of Educations and Training to Overseas Students 2018* (National Code) Standard 7).
- 2) If the international student has completed at least six (6) months of the SITCM course, the Registrar will grant a release within five (5) business days to the student.
- 3) If the international student has NOT completed at least six (6) months of the SITCM course, they must apply to the Registrar for a release.
  - a. A release cannot be granted if any of the following apply:
    - i. The student does not have an unconditional/full offer from another institution (a Conditional Offer is accepted where the only condition is the requirement of a release from SITCM).
    - ii. The transfer would result in a breach of the student's mandatory or discretionary visa condition.
    - iii. The transfer is considered detrimental to the student, because:
      1. The student has not, or only recently, started studying the course and the full range of SITCM's support services are yet to be provided or offered to the student.
      2. The student is not genuinely engaging with an intervention strategy.
      3. The transfer may jeopardise the student's progression through a package of courses.
      4. The student is changing their principal course of study to a lower AQF level or a non-AQF level.
    - iv. The student is unable to achieve satisfactory course progress but does not accept the academic support offered in accordance with the *Student Support Policy and Procedure*.
  - b. The Registrar will only grant a release if at least one of the following applies:
    - i. SITCM ceases to be registered.
    - ii. The international student cannot continue their course at SITCM because the ESOS agency has imposed a sanction on SITCM.
    - iii. The Registrar concludes that the transfer is in the student's best interests because one or more of the items in Section 2.2.2.2(3)(c) apply.
    - iv. A government sponsor of the international student has provided written support stating that they consider the change to be in the student's best interests.
  - c. The Registrar will conclude that the transfer is in the student's best interests if one or more of the following apply:
    - i. The student will be reported because they are unable to achieve satisfactory course progress at the level they are studying even after receiving academic support in accordance with the *Student Support Policy and Procedure*.

- ii. The Registrar judges that compassionate or compelling circumstances apply that are outside the student's control and impact on their course progress or wellbeing, such as:
    1. Serious illness or injury as evidenced by a medical certificate.
    2. Bereavement of close family members, such as parents or grandparents, as evidenced by a death certificate.
    3. Witnessing or being the victim of a serious crime, whose impact on the student is evidenced by a police report or psychologist's report.
    4. Witnessing or being involved in a serious accident whose impact on the student is evidenced by a psychologist's report.
    5. Major political upheaval or natural disaster in their home country that require emergency travel.
    6. Being unable to take a full-time study load due to a shortage of units for which they are eligible to enrol.
  - iii. SITCM fails to deliver the course as outlined in the written agreement.
  - iv. There is evidence that the student's reasonable expectations about their current course are not being met.
  - v. There is evidence that the student was misled by SITCM or an education agent regarding SITCM and/or its course, and the course is therefore unsuitable to their needs and/or study objectives.
  - vi. An appeal (internal or external) related to a separate matter results in a decision or recommendation to release the student.
- d. The Registrar processes transfer requests from international students in accordance with Section 3.4 (International Student Transfer Procedure).
- 4) There are no charges associated with SITCM granting a release.
  - 5) The Registrar maintains records of all requests from international students for a release (and the assessment of, and decision regarding, the request) for at least two years after the international student ceases to be enrolled.

### 2.3 MONITORING

- 1) All deferrals, suspensions and withdrawals are recorded in the *Deferral, Suspension and Withdrawal Register* by the Registrar.
- 2) At each Executive Management Group meeting, all updates to the *Deferral, Suspension and Withdrawal Register* must be presented for review.

## 3 PROCEDURES

### 3.1 DEFERRAL AND SUSPENSION PROCEDURE

- 1) The student provides the Registrar with a completed *Request to Defer or Suspend Form*.
  - a. If the student is requesting a fifth and/or sixth semester of suspension, the request must be supported by documented evidence.
- 2) If the request relates to a fifth and/or sixth semester of suspension:
  - a. Within two (2) business days of receiving the application from the student, the Registrar provides the application to the Dean.
  - b. Within three (3) business day of receiving the application from the Registrar, the Dean notifies the Registrar of their decision to approve or reject the student's application under Section 2.1 (Deferrals and Suspensions) of this document.

- c. Within three (3) business days of receiving the Dean's decision, the Registrar:
      - i. Processes the suspension (if applicable); and
      - ii. Provides the student with written notification of the outcome; and
      - iii. Records the case in the *Deferral, Suspension and Withdrawal Register*.
  - 3) In all other cases:
    - a. Within two (2) business days of receiving the application from the student, the Registrar provides the application to the Dean.
    - b. Within three (3) business day of receiving the application from the Registrar, the Dean notifies the Registrar of their decision to approve or reject the student's application under Section 2.1 (Deferrals and Suspensions) of this document.
    - c. Within three (3) business days of receiving the Dean's decision, the Registrar:
      - i. Processes the suspension (if applicable); and
      - ii. Provides the student with written notification of the outcome; and
      - iii. Records the case in the *Deferral, Suspension and Withdrawal Register*.
  - 4) A student who is granted a deferral or suspension may request a refund by submitting a *Refund Request Form* in accordance with the *Refund Policy and Procedure*.
  - 5) If an international student is granted a deferral or suspension, the Registrar notifies the Department of Home Affairs via PRISMS within 31 calendar days of the decision.

### 3.2 SITCM-INITIATED PROCEDURE FOR WITHDRAWALS

- 1) The Registrar determines that a student's enrolment should be terminated under Section 2.2.1 (SITCM-Initiated Withdrawals).
- 2) The Registrar provides the student with written notification of their intention and reasoning, and advises the student of their right to appeal.
  - a. Appeals must comply with Stage 3 (Internal Appeal) of the *Academic Grievance Policy and Procedure* if the withdrawal is on academic grounds.
  - b. Appeals must comply with Stage 3 (Internal Appeal) of the *Non-Academic Grievance Policy and Procedure* if the withdrawal is on non-academic grounds.
- 3) If the student does not submit a compliant appeal within 20 business days of receiving the Registrar's written notification, the Registrar then cancels their enrolment.
- 4) If the student submits a compliant appeal within 20 business days of receiving the Registrar's written notification, SITCM does not terminate the student's enrolment during the appeal process.
  - a. If the final outcome of the appeal process is to uphold the decision to terminate, the Registrar then cancels the student's enrolment.
- 5) Within three (3) business days of cancelling of a student's enrolment, the Registrar:
  - a. Provides the student with written notification of the cancellation;
    - i. If the student is an international student, the written notification informs the student of the need to seek advice from the Department of Home Affairs on the potential impact on their student visa; and
  - b. Records the case in the *Deferral, Suspension and Withdrawal Register*.
  - c. Records the grade "Withdraw with Failure" for each affected unit in the student's academic transcript.
- 6) If the unenrolled student is an international student:
  - a. Within 28 calendar days of the cancellation, the student:
    - i. Leaves Australia; or
    - ii. Enrols in an alternative program at another institution; or
    - iii. Applies for a different visa.
  - b. Within 31 calendar days of the cancellation, the Registrar notifies the Department of Home Affairs via PRISMS.



### 3.3 STUDENT-INITIATED PROCEDURE FOR WITHDRAWALS

- 1) The student provides the Registrar with a *Request to Withdraw Form*.
  - a. If the form is submitted before the Census Date, the student may also submit a *Refund Request Form* if the *Refund Policy and Procedure* is applicable.
- 2) The Registrar acknowledges receipt of the application in writing.
- 3) Within five (5) business days of receiving the *Request to Withdraw Form*, the Registrar:
  - a. Processes the withdrawal; and
  - b. Provides the student with written notification that the withdrawal has been processed; and
  - c. Records the case in the *Deferral, Suspension and Withdrawal Register*; and
  - d. If the withdrawal occurred after Census Date: records a grade of Withdraw with Failure for all relevant units on the student's academic transcript.
- 4) If the student withdraws after the Census Date, they are invited to have an exit interview with the Dean or other nominated SITCM representative.
- 5) Within 31 calendar days of a withdrawal:
  - a. If the student is an international student, the Registrar notifies the Department of Home Affairs via PRISMS.
  - b. The Registrar provides recognition for any units completed satisfactorily up to the date of withdrawal, as per the *Graduation and Awards Policy and Procedure*.

### 3.4 STUDENT-INITIATED PROCEDURE FOR WITHDRAWALS WITHOUT FAILURE

- 1) The student provides the Registrar with a *Request to Withdraw Form* after Census Date, with a completed "Withdrawal without Failure" section and attached supporting evidence.
  - a. The student may also submit a *Fee Remission (Special Circumstances) Application* if the *Special Circumstances Refund Policy and Procedure* is applicable.
- 2) The Registrar acknowledges receipt of the application in writing.
- 3) Within three (3) business days of receiving the form, the Registrar provides the form and the supporting evidence to the Course Coordinator.
- 4) Within five (5) business days of receiving the form, the Course Coordinator determines whether the request should be approved under Section 2.2.2.1 (Student-Initiated Withdrawals without Failure) of this policy and provides the Registrar with written notification of the outcome with reasons.
- 5) Within five (5) business days of receiving the Course Coordinator's notification, the Registrar:
  - a. Provides the student with written notification of the outcome, with reasons, and informs them of their right to appeal;
  - b. Records the case in the *Deferral, Suspension and Withdrawal Register*; and
  - c. If the request is approved:
    - i. Records a grade of Withdraw without Failure for all relevant units on the student's academic transcript; and
    - ii. Informs the Finance Manager that the student must receive a refund of the unit's tuition fees within 28 days of the Course Coordinator's notification, in accordance with the *Special Circumstances Refund Policy and Procedure*.
- 6) If the student wishes to appeal the Course Coordinator's decision, they may do so by following Stage 3 (Internal Appeal) of the process outlined in the *Academic Grievance Policy and Procedure*.



- 7) Within 31 calendar days of a withdrawal:
  - a. If the student is an international student, the Registrar notifies the Department of Home Affairs via PRISMS.
  - b. The Registrar provides recognition for any units completed satisfactorily up to the date of withdrawal, as per the *Graduation and Awards Policy and Procedure*.

### 3.5 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT TRANSFER PROCEDURE

- 1) A student who has not yet completed their first six months of study at SITCM provides the Registrar with a completed *Request to Withdraw Form*.
  - a. Attached to the application must be a valid enrolment offer from another registered provider.
- 2) Within ten (10) business days of receiving the application, the Registrar:
  - a. Determines whether to accept or reject the application under Section 2.2.2.2 (International Student Transfers to Other Institutions) of this document; and
  - b. Provides the student with written notification of the outcome.
    - i. If approved, the notification includes a release that informs the student of the need to seek advice from the Department of Home Affairs on the potential impact on their student visa, including the need to obtain a new visa.
    - ii. If rejected, the notification advises the student of:
      1. The reasons for refusal;
      2. Their right to appeal the decision in accordance with SITCM's *Non-Academic Grievance Policy and Procedure* within 20 working days; and
      3. Their ability to freely transfer after completing six (6) calendar months of their principal course at SITCM.
- 3) If the application is approved, the Registrar notifies the Department of Home Affairs via PRISMS within 31 calendar days.

## 4 RELATED POLICY AND OTHER DOCUMENTATION

- 1) Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021.
- 2) National Code of Practice for Providers of Educations and Training to Overseas Students 2018.
- 3) Request to Withdraw Form.
- 4) Special Circumstances Refund Policy and Procedure.
- 5) Graduation and Awards Policy and Procedure.
- 6) Refund Policy and Procedure.
- 7) Student Progression Policy and Procedure.
- 8) Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure.
- 9) Non-Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure.
- 10) Student Manual.
- 11) Fees Policy and Procedure.
- 12) Academic Grievance Policy and Procedure.
- 13) Non-Academic Grievance Policy and Procedure.
- 14) ESOS Act 2000.
- 15) Request to Defer or Suspend Form.
- 16) Deferral, Suspension and Withdrawal Register.
- 17) Refund Request Form.
- 18) Fee Remission (Special Circumstances) Application.