

## Student Study Load Policy

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|------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Policy Category</b> | Policy                        |                      |                          |
| <b>Review</b>          | 3 years from date of Approval |                      |                          |
| <b>Policy Code</b>     | POL111                        |                      |                          |
| <b>Contacts</b>        | policy@top.edu.au             |                      |                          |
| <b>Version</b>         | <b>Approval Authority</b>     | <b>Approval Date</b> | <b>Commencement Date</b> |
| 2018.10                | Academic Board                | 23 October 2018      | 23 October 2018          |

### 1 PURPOSE

Top Education Institute (TOP) is committed to achieving high academic standards and graduate outcomes. Courses are structured to facilitate appropriate student progression and this is generally attained by students completing studies according to the standard study loads. However, TOP endeavours to meet individual needs of students, and under particular circumstances, it is appropriate to facilitate variation to standard study loads.

The purpose of this policy is to provide information and guidance about study load requirements and the implications of reducing study loads and/or overloading. The policy outlines eligibility requirements, conditions of varying study loads, and processes for applying for study load variations.

### 2 SCOPE

This policy applies to students of TOP and all staff responsible for the management of academic progress and maintenance of academic standards.

### 3 DEFINITIONS

**Satisfactory academic progress** is the minimum level of progress required to maintain academic standards for a unit and/or course.

**Study load** is the number of credit points a student is enrolled in each semester.

**Overloading** is enrolling in more units than the standard study load for a course in a semester.

**Student visas** are temporary visas allowing overseas students to study at an Australian educational institution for a specified length of time.

**Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Legislation** is a body of legislation relevant to overseas students.

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## 4 PROCEDURE

### 4.1 General Study Load requirements

A standard study load is 4 units (of 24 credit points total) each semester. TOP highly recommends that students follow this guideline.

The standard study load:

- Is considered appropriate to enable satisfactory academic progress;
- Is based on recommended study hours for each unit of study;
- Informs the structure of courses, which allows a logical progression of study; and
- Facilitates compliance with professional accrediting standards and legislative requirements such as those of ESOS.

Notwithstanding the recommendation of the standard study load, there may be circumstances where it is appropriate for students to complete studies on either a reduced or increased load.

Note that due to the unique nature of a Summer Semester, students are not expected to complete a standard study load in a Summer Semester.

### 4.2 Reducing Study Load

In some circumstances, students can reduce study loads without negative ramifications to their study program so long as study is completed within the maximum required timeframe. Students considering reducing their study load should refer to TOP's *Student Progression, Exclusion and Graduation Policy and Procedures* for details on maximum candidature and other information relating to full-time and part-time study options.

Reduced loads may impact eligibility for government financial assistance. It is imperative that International students check visa implications of reducing their study load. TOP's *Student Handbook* and *TOP International Students Guidelines* both provide important information on study load requirements for International Students.

### 4.3 Overloading

Overloading refers to studying on a load over and above TOP's standard study load. Circumstances where TOP will consider applications for students to overload include but are not limited to circumstances where:

- A student has to overload in order to complete the course by the end of a given time period; or
- An additional unit of study (that causes the overload) is a prerequisite for a unit that must be completed in the following semester.

### 4.4 Eligibility for Overloading

To be eligible for overloading, students must have achieved at least a Credit average in the previous semester of study at TOP, and they must not have received Fail grades in any previous studies at TOP. Students are not eligible to overload in a Summer School.

Further to these eligibility criteria, students must show that the course structure does not impact the possibility of completing the course in an appropriate time period. That is, pre-requisite units can still be completed and students will have the recommended assumed knowledge for all units in the course as a result of the overload.

Students who appear to meet eligibility criteria are not automatically granted approval to overload. They must still submit an application for consideration and decisions will be made based upon eligibility as well as other relevant circumstances.

#### **4.5 Conditions for Reducing or Increasing Study Loads**

Prior to applying for a variation to normal study loads, students are responsible for checking:

- Relevant professional accreditation requirements;
- Terms of any scholarship awards;
- Fee implications;
- Census dates and other progression implications for research students; and

Compliance with requirements of relevant government agencies. This is particularly applicable to students on an international student visa, as a variation to study load will affect the duration of studies. Refer to TOP's *International Student Enrolment Amendments and Variations Guidelines* for further information.

Students applying to overload must demonstrate that units can be completed without timetable clashes. Further, it must be possible to meet assessment deadlines for all units.

Issues arising because of overloading are not grounds for appeals and/or applications for extensions or special circumstances. Students who are granted permission to vary study loads are not provided with any support or provisions over and above that usually available to students at TOP.

#### **4.6 Applying for Variation to Study Load**

Students wishing to apply for study load variations must submit the *Non-standard Enrolment Form* to the Academic office. Applications cannot be lodged before results are available for the previous semester of study but should allow time for approval before deadlines for adding units of study. Refer to the *Non-standard Enrolment Form* for other specific details on timing of applications, required information and relevant documentation to support the application.

Students must seek academic advice from the Academic Support Team prior to submitting an application to vary a study load. The Academic Support Team is available for general advice on study loads, but they do not make the final determination on an application. In addition, Course and Unit coordinators are able to provide specific information relevant to their discipline area. Applications

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must be supported in writing by the Senior Student Services Manager before a formal application can be submitted to the relevant Dean.

#### 4.7 Responsibilities

Applications are considered by the relevant Dean in consultation with the Senior Academic Manager. The Dean will make the final determination as to whether a variation to study load is approved.

The decision will be communicated in writing to the student within 10 working days of lodging an application. The Academic office is responsible for communication to the student and staff as well as updating relevant records.

## 5 RELATED DOCUMENTS

- i. Student Progression, Exclusion and Graduation Policy and Procedures
- ii. Student Handbook
- iii. International Student Enrolment Amendments and Variations Guidelines
- iv. Non-standard Enrolment Form

## 6 Version Control

| Historical Version | Approved by    | Approval Date   |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 2018.10            | Academic Board | 23 October 2018 |