STUDENT APPLICATION TO DEFER OR TEMPORARILY SUSPEND STUDIES

1 PURPOSE OF POLICY
Registered training providers must inform potential students prior to their enrolment of the grounds on which their enrolment may be deferred or suspended.

2 SCOPE
This policy and its procedure apply to all students including potential students enrolled or seeking to enrol in a course of study with Study Group Australia Pty Limited, and its trading divisions. It also applies to all students enrolled or seeking to enrol in SGA courses being delivered by SGA Licensed Partner Organisations. All of the above from here-on referred to as ‘the College’.

It does not address provider-instigated suspension or cancellation of a student due to misbehaviour; that is addressed under separate policies.

3 DEFINITIONS
Within this document, the following meanings apply:
Defer – postpone commencement of studies;
Suspend – to temporarily put commenced studies on hold;
Cancel – permanently cancel (terminate) an enrolment; and
Licensed Partner Organisations – any organisation that provides services to domestic students on behalf of Study Group Australia Pty Limited, including training, assessment, related educational and support services, and/or any activities related to recruitment. As the Registered Training Organisation, Study Group Australia Pty Limited (SGA) is responsible for ensuring all such services provided are in accordance with statutory obligations.
Training Team Leader – the staff member who is responsible for managing the provision of the training and assessment services throughout the student’s enrolment, and/or is the main contact for administrative and support purposes. Depending on the division of the College, this role may also be known as the Student Progress Advisor, National Discipline Leader, Program Manager, Academic Team Leader or National Academic Director.

4 DEFERMENT OF COMMENCEMENT - POLICY AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE

4.1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENT VISA HOLDERS
Before making an application to defer their commencement, international students should refer to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) website (http://www.immi.gov.au/), or telephone the Helpline 131 881, or visit the local DIBP office for advice on how the potential change to their enrolment may impact on their visa.

Students already granted a student visa may apply for a delay in the commencement of their studies on the grounds of compassionate or compelling circumstances (see Section 6 below). The application needs to be in writing, addressed to the International Admissions Centre, and include sufficient supporting evidence to enable assessment.
of whether the circumstance(s) justify a deferment, based on the potential impact that the delay may have on the applicant’s studies and visa. Applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of the assessment process.

Student visa holders who fail to arrive to commence their studies on the due date, and within 5 working days cannot be contacted or do not advise of an alternative start date acceptable to SGA, will be reported to the DIBP via PRISMS.

If the international student is under 18 years of age, and SGA has taken responsibility under the Migration Regulations for approving the accommodation, support and general welfare arrangements for that student, it must receive written approval from the parent or guardian of the deferred commencement date. This must include sufficient information of the welfare arrangements applicable between the original commencement date and the new commencement date to enable the making of an informed decision in relation to the suitability of those arrangements.

In all cases, documentary evidence relating to the application for deferral and the assessment process will be retained on the student’s file.

4.2 LOCAL (DOMESTIC) STUDENTS

Students may apply for a delay in the commencement of their studies. The application needs to be in writing, addressed to the Training Team Leader, and include sufficient supporting evidence to enable assessment of whether the circumstance(s) justify a deferment, based on the potential impact that the delay may have on the applicant’s studies. Applicants will be advised in writing of the outcome of this assessment process; documentary evidence will be retained on the student’s file.

If the student is under 18 years of age, the College must receive written approval from the parent or guardian of the deferred commencement date.

In all cases, documentary evidence relating to the application for deferral and the assessment process will be retained on the student’s file.

5 TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF STUDIES

5.1 POLICY

The College designates holiday periods for each year. Students do not need to apply for leave for these periods; their course will be automatically suspended for that time. These dates are shown within the On-campus and Online Academic Calendars published on the web sites.

Other than these designated holiday periods, the College may approve applications for temporary suspension of studies (i.e. special leave) on the grounds of compelling and compassionate circumstances (see Section 6 for examples).

If the international student is under 18 years of age, and SGA has taken responsibility under the Migration Regulations for approving the accommodation, support and general welfare arrangements for that student, it must receive written approval from the parent or guardian in advance of the proposed commencement date of the requested special leave period. This must include sufficient information of the arrangements during that special leave to enable SGA to make an informed decision in relation to the suitability of those arrangements.

If the local student is under 18 years of age, the College must receive written approval from the parent or guardian of the temporary suspension of studies.

In all cases, documentary evidence relating to the application for temporary suspension of studies and the assessment process will be retained on the student’s file.
5.2 TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF STUDIES APPLICATION PROCEDURE

5.2.1 Non-VET FEE-HELP Courses

Students within courses that are not approved for VET FEE-HELP may apply for special leave if they have good reason for doing so (i.e. compassionate or compelling circumstances - see Section 6 for examples). To make an application, the student needs to complete an Application for Special Leave, which is available from Student Services. The completed form should be submitted to the College at least 10 working days in advance of the proposed commencement date of the requested leave period.

The College may grant or decline any student’s request for special leave, based on the potential impact that the temporary suspending of his/her studies may have on the applicant’s studies or visa (if applicable). Documentary evidence will be retained on the student’s file.

Before making an application for special leave, international students should refer to the DIBP website (http://www.immi.gov.au/), or telephone the Helpline 131 881, or visit the local DIBP office for advice on how the potential change to their enrolment status may impact on their visa.

5.2.2 VET FEE-HELP Courses

Should a student who is enrolled in a qualification approved for VET FEE-HELP choose to temporarily suspend his/her study or withdraw from a VET FEE-HELP Unit of Study, he/she must advise the College before the close of business of the next Census Date applicable. The Withdrawal should be in accordance with the ‘Withdrawing from Study (VET FEE-HELP) Policy and Procedure’, available on the web sites.

If the College does not receive the notification on or before the Census Date, the student will incur a debt with the Australian Government, and his/her FEE-HELP balance will be reduced unless special circumstances apply. (The Statement of VET Tuition Assurance and the Student Review Procedures for Re-crediting a FEE-HELP Balance can be found on the web sites.)

The College may grant or decline any student’s request for special leave, based on the potential impact that the temporary suspending of his/her studies may have on the applicant’s academic progress. Documentary evidence will be retained on the student’s file.

6 COMPASSIONATE AND COMPELLING CIRCUMSTANCES

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 well-being. These could include, but are not limited to:

a. serious illness or injury, where a medical certificate states that the student was unable to attend classes;

b. bereavement of a close family member such as a parent or grandparent (where possible a death certificate should be provided);

c. major political upheaval or natural disaster in the home country requiring emergency travel and this has impacted on the student’s studies; or

d. a traumatic experience which could include:

   - involvement in, or witnessing of a serious accident, or
   - witnessing or being the victim of a serious crime, and this has impacted on the student (these cases should be supported by police or psychologist’s reports);

e. where the College was unable to offer a prerequisite unit at that time; or

f. inability to begin studying on the course commencement date due to delay in receiving a student visa.
Please note that the above are only some examples of what may be considered compassionate or compelling circumstances. The Training Team Leader will use his/her professional judgement to assess each case on its individual merit. He/she will consider documentary evidence provided to support the claim, and will retain copies of these documents in the student’s file.

7 IMPACT OF SPECIAL LEAVE OR DEFERMENT—INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

An extended leave of absence or a deferral of more than 6 months, for any reason, will result in cancellation of the international student visa.

DIBP may cancel a visa where, for example, the student has obtained special leave with the understanding of returning to his/her homeland, and the student then does not leave Australia, or where the student leaves Australia, but does not return to his/her studies by the agreed date.

7.1 End date not affected

Where the application is approved and the period for which the student’s enrolment is being deferred or suspended will not affect the end date of his/her Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE):

- the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training (Commonwealth) will be advised via PRISMS of the Special Leave; and
- the student’s CoE status will remain as ‘studying’.

7.2 End date affected

Where the application is approved and the period for which the student’s enrolment is being deferred or suspended will affect the end date of his/her Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) and the return date is known:

- the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training (Commonwealth) will be advised via PRISMS of the Special Leave; and
- the original CoE will be cancelled and a CoE with a more appropriate end date will be created.

Where the application is approved and the period for which the student’s enrolment is being deferred or suspended will affect the end date of his/her Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) and the return date is not known:

- the Secretary of the Department of Education and Training (Commonwealth) will be advised via PRISMS of the Special Leave; and
- the original CoE will be cancelled and creation of a replacement CoE deferred until the intended return date is known.

Documentary evidence will be retained on the student’s file.

8 IMPACT OF SPECIAL LEAVE OR DEFERMENT—LOCAL STUDENT

In most qualifications, subjects need to be undertaken in a specific order. Students who take special leave may find that the sequencing of their schedule is negatively affected, resulting in an uneven study load or the need to extend their enrolment.