COURSE DURATION, STUDY LOAD AND TRANSFER POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1. INTRODUCTION

Sydney Metropolitan Institute of Technology (Sydney Met) is responsible for ensuring that all students enrolled in award courses complete their course in the allotted course duration or earlier. For international students there are further obligations that relate to course duration, study load and transfer between providers. Specifically, international students are required to complete their course by the end date of their Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE) and to maintain a full-time study load, and the *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018* ('the National Code') places restrictions on higher education providers in relation to enrolling international students who wish to transfer between education providers prior to the overseas student completing the first six (6) months of study in their principal course, except in limited circumstances. These factors are impacted by any credit or recognition of prior learning (RPL) granted to the student. This policy should be read in conjunction with the *Admissions Policy and Procedure*, the *Credit and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy and Procedure*, and the *Course Progress and Intervention Policy and Procedure*.

2. PURPOSE

This document describes the study load and course duration requirements for students enrolled in award courses at Sydney Met. It also describes the approach that Sydney Met takes to transferring students to ensure that Sydney Met does not enrol any transferring international student prior to 6 months of their principal course being completed, unless that student has a valid letter of release agreeing to such a transfer, or if other specific conditions are met.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all students.

4. COURSE DURATION

4.1 The following staff members are responsible for ensuring students are informed of their course duration and study load responsibilities:

    a. Admissions Officer/Manager
    b. General Manager
    c. Executive Dean

4.2 Students shall be informed of the following program details pertaining to course duration through written means and verbally in cases where the student presents themselves to the college for matters that may affect the criteria of course duration and full study load (for international students). This information shall also be relayed to students via:

    a. Student Handbooks
    b. Information for Intending Students
    c. College Website
    d. Marketing materials
    e. Student Orientation when joining the College
    f. Seminars/webinars scheduled from time to time

4.3 The Bachelor of Business (Entrepreneurship) and the Bachelor of Information Technology comprise twenty-four (24) units of study with each unit valued at six (6) credit points, a total of 144 credit points, and are usually completed in three (3) years of study. A standard load each year is eight (8) units, a total of 48 credit points.

The Bachelor of Social Work comprises thirty-two (32) units of study with each unit valued at six (6) credit points, a total of 192 credit points, and is usually completed in four (4) years of study. A standard load each year is eight (8) units, a total of 48 credit points.

4.4 The college runs three (3) trimesters.

4.5 A standard full-time load is eight (8) units per year. It is compulsory for all students to undertake two trimesters a year, so that the standard, compulsory full-time load is four (4) units per trimester.

Students wishing to complete their course more quickly may choose to study in an accelerated mode of up to twelve (12) units a year, four (4) units in each of Trimesters 1, 2, and 3.

Students identified as at risk of unsatisfactory progression or who are identified as making unsatisfactory progress with their courses under the *Course Progress and Intervention Policy and Procedure* may be required to enrol in fewer units.

4.6 Students who have successfully completed 48 credit points (8 units) in two consecutive trimesters will not be enrolled in units in the following trimester and will receive a letter from the College confirming they have completed their annual full-time load unless they request to accelerate their progression. For example, if a student commences study in Trimester 2 of a specific year and successfully completes four (4) units in Trimester 2 and Trimester 3 of that year (8 units, 48CP), then that student would not be enrolled in Trimester 1 of the following year and would receive a letter confirming this.

Any student who completes fewer than eight (8) units successfully will normally be required to enrol in units in the following Trimester to maintain their progress through the course.

Students who have successfully completed 48 credit points (8 units) in two consecutive trimesters will not be enrolled in units in the following trimester unless they request to accelerate their progression. For instance, if a student commences study in Trimester 2 of a particular year and successfully completes four (4) units in Trimester 2 and four (4) units in Trimester 3 of that year (8 units, 48CP), then that student would not be enrolled in Trimester 1 of the following year and would receive a letter confirming this. Any student who completes fewer than eight (8) units successfully will be required to enrol in units in the following Trimester to maintain their progress through the course.

5.   FULL STUDY LOAD FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

5.1 International students must undertake a full-time study load each year. A full-time study load is usually eight (8) units or 48 credit points each year.

5.2 In exceptional circumstances international students may be enrolled in less than a full-time study load. Exceptional circumstances include:
- a student is in the final teaching period of a qualification and completing remaining units.
- a reduction in the number of units the student is taking is approved due to ill health as recommended by a professional health practitioner.
- situations where RPL or academic credit transfer prevent the student from enrolling in a fulltime study load.
- an intervention strategy has been implemented due to poor course progression .

Changes to the study load must be approved by the college in advance, and in all cases approval must be sought from the Executive Dean, or a nominated responsible officer.

6. TRANSFER BETWEEN PROVIDERS

6.1 Students can request transfer from another education provider to Sydney Met if they have completed at least six (6) months of study at the other institution. Sydney Met will not enrol a student wishing to transfer from another registered provider prior to the student completing six months of their principal course of study, except in the following circumstances:

- the student provides a written letter of release from the original registered provider; or
- the original registered provider has ceased to be registered, or the course in which the student is enrolled has ceased to be registered; or
- a government sponsor of the student has provided a written support for change to be in the student's best interest; and
- the student seeking to transfer to Sydney Met meets Sydney Met's course entry requirements.

6.2 In determining whether a student can transfer to Sydney Met the procedures below are followed:

- The student submits an application to transfer to Sydney Met.
- Sydney Met determines whether the student has completed six months of their principal course of study with the original registered provider.
- If the student has completed 6 months study in their principal course of study Sydney Met asks the student to provide either:
  - o a letter of release from the registered provider; or
  - o a letter of support for transfer if the student is sponsored by a government; or
  - o evidence that the original institution or course has ceased to be registered, in which case no release is required.
- If the student has not completed six months study in their principal course of study, or if no release is received, the application process is closed.

6.3 Students can request transfer from Sydney Met to another education provider if they have completed at least six (6) months of study at the college. To transfer after six months the student must complete a Transfer to Other Provider Request Form and provide evidence that justifies the request. The College will assess the request and will respond to the application within fourteen (14) working days from the date of receiving the request.

6.4 Sydney Met will not provide a release to international students wishing to transfer to another registered provider prior to the student completing six months of their principal course with Sydney Met except in the following circumstances:

- There is robust evidence of compassionate or compelling circumstances.
- There is clear evidence that the student has been misled by the College regarding the College or the Course, which constitutes a breach of the ESOS Act 2000.
- There is an appeal on a matter that may reasonably result in a decision or recommendation to release the student.

6.5 Sydney Met may refuse a request for release if:
- the student has not demonstrated reasonable grounds and/ or provided satisfactory evidence for release stated above. It is the responsibility of the student to provide evidence within the stated period and to cooperate fully with the college;
- the student is suspected to have requested the transfer to avoid being reported in PRISMS for failure to meet academic progress requirements;
- the student has not genuinely engaged with the College's intervention strategy and it is suspected that they have intentionally failed so as to be released;
- the student intends to study at a lower Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level and will need to apply for a new student visa; or
- the College considers that the student is engaged in activities or shows behaviours of a non-genuine student.

6.6 Decisions about applications for transfer between providers are made by the Executive Dean on advice from the General Manager.

6.7 If the release is granted, there will be no cost to the student.

6.8 If the College refuses the release Sydney Met will inform the student in writing of the reasons for the refusal and of the student's right to appeal the decision under College's *Complaints, Grievances and Appeals Policy and Procedure*.

6.9 The College will not finalise the student's refusal status in PRISMS until:
- the timeframe for the appeal has passed; or
- the appeal has been finalised in favour of Sydney Met; or
- the student has withdrawn from the process.

6.10 The College will maintain a record of all requests for a release, including details of the assessment of the request and the decision made regarding the request, for two years after the international student has left Sydney Met.

6.11 The Academic Board will audit student transfer requests and decisions.

7.   COMPLETION OF COURSE

7.1   When an international student has completed their course, and before the student visa expires, the student must:

- Enrol in another CRICOS registered course, or
- Enrol with another education provider, or
- Depart Australia immediately, unless they have been granted permission to stay by the Department of Home Affairs.

7.2   If the student completes the course earlier than the expected course completion date on their Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE), the College will report this early completion to the Department of Home Affairs, as required by law. Early completion is defined as one (1) or more trimester earlier than the expected completion (end) date on the CoE.

7.3   In the event that a student wishes to attend their Graduation Ceremony, they are required to request a Course Completion Letter from the college and to contact the Department of Home Affairs for further advice regarding their ability to attend the Graduation Ceremony.