

QF013 Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances Guidelines

Guideline Category	Student Services		
Document Owner	Registrar		
Responsible Officer	Registrar		
Review Date	12 December 2027		
References and Legislation	National Code of Practice of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018; Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000; Higher Education Standards Framework		
Related Documents	Student Handbook; Student Code of Conduct; Admissions Policy; Assessment and Moderation Policy; Student Progression Policy; Enrolment Policy; Enrolment Rules; Overseas Student Transfer Between Registered Providers Policy; Refund Policy; Student Fees Policy;		
Version	Change Description	Approved	Effective Date
1.0	New Guidelines	CEO	25 March 2020
1.1	Minor changes to the job titles and extension of review date	CEO 11 July 2023	11 July 2023
1.2	Extension of review date	CEO 30 January 2025	30 January 2025
1.3	Strengthened clarity around acceptable circumstances, evidence requirements, process steps and decision-making responsibilities.	Board of Directors: 12 December 2025	12 December 2025

1. Purpose

The guideline defines the circumstances that APIC considers compassionate or compelling and outlines when and how such circumstances will be assessed. It provides clarity for students and staff on eligible scenarios and evidentiary requirements. The guideline serves as a tool for fair, consistent and transparent decision-making, while recognising that each case will be judged on its individual merits in line with APIC's discretion and duty of care.

2. Scope

This guideline applies to all current students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate courses at APIC. It covers all decisions regarding claims of compassionate or compelling circumstances including, but not limited to, requests for course deferral, leave of absence, reduced study load, late withdrawal, extensions, or other provisions permitted under related APIC policies. It should be read in conjunction with APIC's broader policies (see Related Documents).

3. Definitions

Term	Definition
AHPRA	Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.
International student	A student studying in Australia on a Student visa (subclass 500).
Registered Medical Practitioner	A person registered with AHPRA as a medical practitioner that is permitted to practice in Australia or overseas equivalent.
Registered Psychologist	A person registered with AHPRA as a psychologist that is permitted to practice in Australia or overseas equivalent.

4. Principles

All students have equal opportunity to make an application claiming compassionate and compelling circumstances should the circumstances outlined in this guideline apply to their situation. The guideline is to be implemented in a fair and equitable way for all students, ensuring that all decisions made regarding claims of compassionate and compelling circumstances are dealt in a professional, just and reasonable manner. The guideline seeks to balance institutional integrity and academic standards with empathy, flexibility and support for student wellbeing and success.

5. Compassionate or Compelling Circumstances

Compassionate and compelling circumstances are circumstances beyond the student's control that significantly impact their wellbeing or capacity to progress in their course. The circumstances must occur after a student has accepted an offer to study at APIC. Any compassionate or compelling circumstances that predate the acceptance of the offer must be declared by the student to relevant APIC staff during the application stage, and before any offer is accepted.

Compassionate and compelling circumstances are circumstances that include but are not limited to:

- Serious illness or injury or mental-health condition affecting the student's ability to study.
- Death or serious illness of a close family member such as a sibling, parent or grandparent.
- Major political upheaval, natural disaster or another event considered serious by APIC in student's home country which requires emergency travel and seriously affects the student's study.
- Traumatic events such as a serious accident, being a victim of or witness to a crime, or other crisis influencing physical or mental wellbeing.
- Documented family or domestic violence that impacts the student's safety, wellbeing or ability to engage in study
- An unexpected incident beyond the student's control that prevents participation in study or assessment such as a major traffic incident or public transport issue;
- Sudden major life disruptions, e.g. homelessness, unexpected caring responsibilities (for dependents), or sudden loss of living arrangement
- Pregnancy-related medical complications or sudden changes to caring responsibilities that significantly affect the student's capacity to study
- Delayed approval or refusal of a student visa. Cancellation of a student visa for reasons other than breaching the student visa conditions or fraud.
- Provider unable to offer a pre-requisite unit.

Other circumstances may still be considered by APIC as compassionate or compelling, depending on their nature and are at the discretion of the Registrar, Director Student Services or their delegate.

6. Circumstances Not Considered Compassionate or Compelling

Circumstances that are reasonably within the student's control or which are considered to have no significant impact upon the student's ability to successfully progress through their course will not be considered compassionate or compelling.

Circumstances not considered compassionate or compelling include, but are not limited to:

- Failure of a student to understand and/or seek clarification of APIC policy, rules, guidelines or requirements, for example, examination timetables, class timetables, assessment requirements.
- Financial difficulties arising from voluntary changes to employment or personal financial planning (international students are expected to maintain capacity to pay tuition and living costs as per visa conditions).
- Minor or non-serious illnesses or medical conditions, for example, stress related to normal study requirements.
- Ongoing medical conditions or other compassionate or compelling circumstances that were not declared during the student's application and before acceptance of the offer.
- Conflicts in scheduling which are not due to unexpected or serious events, and which the student can take reasonable actions to avoid, for example, work schedule clashing with examinations.
- Unexpected incidents that could have been avoided through reasonable actions of the student, for example, missed examination due to not checking the examination timetable.
- Student travel that does not allow reasonable additional time to account for possible incidents or delays.

7. Claiming Compassionate or Compelling Circumstances

Students may claim compassionate and compelling circumstances as part of an application under the relevant APIC Policy or regulations, such as an application for leave of absence, deferment, reduced load, late withdrawal, assessment extension. Claims must be submitted as soon as reasonably practicable after the event and no later than a timeframe specified in the relevant policy. Details regarding the requirements for specific application requirements can be found under the relevant APIC policy or regulation. APIC policies and regulations can be accessed on the APIC website under [Policies and Forms](#).

Appropriate evidence and supporting documentation are required when making a claim for compassionate and compelling circumstances. These documents will be kept by APIC as a record of the evidence provided. The evidence or documents can include, but is not limited to:

- Police or hospital report.
- Medical Certificates provided by a health professional as defined in Section 3.
- Mental health report by a registered psychologist or equivalent from the student's home country.
- Death certificate in English or translated by a NAATI accredited translator.
- Statutory declarations or official letters at the discretion of APIC.
- Media reports and government statements.
- Any other documentation as determined by APIC staff as reasonable evidence to support the claim.

Students may also be required to attend a formal interview. A student will be notified of any supporting documentation that may be required before the meeting. The meeting will be scheduled within ten working days of the application being received. If the student requires additional time to gather the requisite evidence and documentation, staff may extend the application at their discretion.

8. Assessment and Decision-Making

When assessing a claim, APIC (or its authorised delegate) will:

- Use professional judgment, assessing each case on its individual merits.

- Review documentary evidence and when relevant seek medical or specialist input regarding impacts on study capability or wellbeing.
- Ensure that any sensitive personal or health information is handled in line with privacy laws and institutional confidentiality standards.
- Provide a written outcome to the student, clearly detailing the decision and, where relevant, options for support or reasonable adjustments (e.g. extended deadlines, leave, reduced course load).

9. Appealing a Rejected Claim of Compassionate or Compelling Circumstances

If an application that a student has submitted, which claims compassionate and compelling circumstances, is rejected by APIC; the student may appeal this decision in accordance with APIC's Student Grievance and Appeals Policies as required. APIC policies can be accessed on the APIC website under [Policies and Forms](#). Appeals relating to decisions for international students will be managed in accordance with Standard 10 of the National Code 2018.