

RUSU Exclusion Information Pack for Students

This pack contains:

- A template of how to structure an Exclusion letter.
- Some sample Exclusion letters. ***These are examples only. Make sure you review the Template and use your OWN circumstances and personal experiences to write your letter.***
- Information about documentary evidence, including what it is, why it is important and some examples.
- Information about a study plan and examples of what a study timetable might look like
- A copy of the form required by RMIT to lodge an Appeal Against Exclusion (which **must** be completed and submitted with your appeal).
- A leaflet explaining the Exclusion process and the impact of Exclusion/what happens from here.

What should I do now?

Make sure you contact RUSU Student Rights to join one of our Exclusion Group Information Sessions. Once you have attended a Group Information Session, you can use this pack to help you to write your letter. Then, you can make an appointment with a Student Rights Officer who will help to read over your letter, help you to improve or finalise your letter, and answer any further questions you may have. You should bring a draft Exclusion letter to this appointment, or email it to your designated Student Rights Officer beforehand.

Need more information?

Call RUSU:

City/Carlton campus on 9925-5004 or 9925-1842

Bundoora campus on 9925-7226

Brunswick campus on 9925-9478

Or

Email RUSU Student Rights: student.rights@rmit.edu.au

RUSU Template for How to Write an Exclusion Letter

HINTS

- **Have you attended an Exclusion Group Session?** If not, make sure you book in for one by contacting RUSU.
- **After you've been to a group session** and ideally prepared a draft letter, contact RUSU to make an appointment with a Student Rights Officer who can help you to fine tune your appeal.
- **Download a copy of the Appeal Against Exclusion form** from https://www.rmit.edu.au/content/dam/rmit/documents/Students/StudentEssentials/FeesandPayments/Appeal%20against%20exclusion_UAC_2018.pdf You must complete this form to lodge an appeal.
- **You are not automatically granted a hearing at the University Appeals Committee (UAC).** You must meet at least one of the four **grounds of appeal** listed on the form. If you aren't sure whether you meet the grounds of appeal, or which one is right, discuss this with a Student Rights Officer.
- **Documentary evidence** is vital to support your statement – read below.
- **Consider your program** – are you near the end of your program? Are you in the right program? Would you benefit from a leave of absence?
- **Clearly explain the reasons** why you were unable to pass your courses in the semesters where you failed – and what things are now in place to ensure you succeed in the future.

Include an introduction, where you state the grounds that you are appealing on.

Dear University Appeals Committee Secretariat,

I am writing to appeal against exclusion from my program (**NAME and PROGRAM CODE**) on the following grounds of appeal (***pick one or more that apply***):

- There is evidence that the penalty of exclusion is unreasonable, excessive or inappropriate (this includes evidence of compassionate or compelling circumstances (***this is generally the most relevant grounds of appeal that students select***));
- There is evidence of a breach of the Assessment: academic progress (coursework programs) procedure or another relevant University statute or regulation, policy or procedure in the handing of the exclusion process;
- There is evidence that the decision was made on the basis of personal bias or ill will (***this can be very difficult to prove and is an uncommon ground***); and/or
- There is significant new, relevant evidence that was not available at the time the student was required to 'show cause' why they should not be excluded (***if you are thinking of appealing on this ground – talk to a Student Rights Officer! The evidence must be new and not have been possible to collect until AFTER you submitted your Show Cause letter***).

Your letter then needs to be broken down into four parts.

1. An outline of the difficult circumstances that you experienced over the semesters where you failed courses.
2. How those circumstances ***directly impacted/got in the way of***, you being able to study successfully.
3. What has improved/how are things different now/what changes have been made that will make it better for you to study successfully.
4. Why your appeal meets the grounds of appeal.

The following is an example of what the introduction can sound like. Address specifically the semesters where you failed courses:

Over the past two semesters/**OR** since the beginning of my program/ **OR** last semester I experienced a number of difficult circumstances, many of them which were unexpected, that directly affected my ability to be able to study and achieve my full potential.

Provide information about:

- What went wrong in that given semester/s where you failed your courses/subjects?
- What happened?
- Were you or somebody close to you sick?
- Did you do paid work for too many hours?
- Did you experience financial difficulties?
- Was there a stressful situation that you were dealing with? Breakup of a relationship?
- Did somebody you love pass away?
- Did you feel isolated or depressed? Did you not know about services that could help you?
- Is this your first year at Uni, did you find the whole experience overwhelming/isolating?
- Did an illness you have (or someone close to you) have a direct impact on your ability to study?
- Were you caring for someone in your family?
- Do you have any evidence about what went wrong? Medical certificates, doctor's/counsellor's letters?

Then, explain how the above directly affect your ability to study

You want to be able to show that normally you do have the ability to pass your courses but because of those things that happened, your studies suffered.

For example:

- You experienced sadness, depression, anxiety. This made you lose your motivation and you found it difficult to go to classes or to concentrate. You found it difficult to sleep, you always felt tired, alone. Your family did not know that you were struggling.
- You had financial problems and had to work many hours taking your time away from School. Perhaps you needed to give your family money in your home country or to help your family pay for expenses here in Australia. You were often working late shifts which paid

more money but it meant you were constantly tired and found it difficult to get out of bed ready for University in the mornings. You were so tired it was difficult to focus in lectures.

- Your mum has been unwell for a number of months. Your father works full time and is very rarely at home. You have a number of younger brother and sisters. As the oldest child you have had to take on most of the work at home. You do the food shopping, clean the house, prepare food, do the laundry and look after your brothers and sisters. Your mother needs help being driven to all of her appointments. If your mum has a medical appointment you have to miss class to take her as no one else can do it. If your younger brother or sister are sick you have to stay home to look after them. It makes it hard to plan your studies and your assignments when you don't know when you will be needed at home. Sometimes you have to miss class to be at home and it is difficult to catch up when you have so much to do.

What has improved/how are things different now/what changes have been made that will make it better for you to study successfully?

In this part of the letter you should write about what you have already done, and what will you continue to do, to ensure that you are able to undertake your studies more successfully in the future.

Things to consider when writing this section of the letter are:

- What have you done to address what happened in the past?
- Have your circumstances changed?
- What assistance have you sought? Counsellor, doctor, Study & Learning Centre, SLAMS, PASS sessions, peer study groups?
- Do you know of services that can support/help you now? What are they, have you used any?
- Have you cut back on your paid work? Are you not required to work any more?
- Dig out your old Academic Performance Improvement plan from when you were first placed At Risk. Did you go to your meeting with an academic advisor? If not, how come?
- What were the recommendations of the advisor? Were there any? Did you follow them? If so, write about how that may have helped, and if not, why?
- How can you demonstrate that you are not at risk of failing again?
- Are you going to reduce your study load to part time?
- Are you taking a leave of absence to have a rest from study?
- Create a study plan/study timetable for this or the next semester
- If some of the issues that impacted on your studies still exist, ***how will you manage these things so that they don't interfere with your studies to the same extent?***

The University Appeals Committee wants to feel confident that if you are allowed to continue in your program, that you will pass your courses.

Lastly, you need to explain how your appeal meets the grounds of appeal you have selected.

For example, if you are appealing on the grounds that to exclude you would be 'excessive, unreasonable or inappropriate', focus on why it is unreasonable and excessive to exclude you.

Connect the circumstances that were beyond your control to why you failed specific subjects and how things that have changed or how you will do things differently. Make an argument for why is an unreasonable punishment to exclude you, when you have taken steps to turn things around.

Remember you must provide evidence to go with your letter to support what you are saying. Go the link below to access ‘**Examples of documentary evidence**’ information or read on in this pack for some examples:

<https://rusu.rmit.edu.au/files/Resources/studentrights/exclusion/Examples-Of-Documentary-Evidence-2020.pdf>

You can write: To support my letter of exclusion, please find attached the following documentary evidence:

- *List the evidence you have included, eg. Doctor’s letter, bank statement, work roster, etc.*

You can conclude your letter with a statement like the following:

I believe that the above letter indicates the exceptional/unexpected/severe circumstances that have occurred and strongly affected my ability to perform academically to my full potential. I believe that I meet the grounds of appeal and would be willing to attend a hearing to discuss my case. I hope you will consider my case and allow me to continue in my program.

Yours sincerely,,

Your Name

Disclaimer:

The information in this leaflet is a general guide only. RMIT is a very complex environment, and there are often a number of different rules which apply. Always ask a Student Rights Officer if you’re not sure!

For more student rights information visit our website: www.su.rmit.edu.au/student-rights

Examples of Documentary Evidence

Where possible, it is important to support your Show Cause letter with documentary evidence, to support what you are saying in your letter. Your case will be **much stronger** with evidence. Evidence can be used to support the reasons why your academic performance was affected (eg a notice from your landlord giving you thirty days to leave), as well as the things that are supporting your studies to get back on track (eg a lease agreement for your new home).

Remember, never provide **original documents** to RMIT, **make copies and keep the originals for yourself**, as you will not get them back.

Examples – remember this list is not exhaustive! Other evidence or documents you have may be relevant to your case.

Medical Evidence

- Medical reports and/or doctors certificates
- RMIT Medical or Health Grounds Impact Statement (these are required when applying for special consideration at RMIT)
- A counsellor's statement (as additional support for cases of depression, etc.).

Non-Medical Evidence

- A police report.
- A statutory declaration - a written statement declared to be true in the presence of an authorised witness. Be aware that a person who willfully makes a false statement in a statutory declaration is guilty of an offence and may be fined or jailed, or both.
- A counsellor's statement/letter.
- A death certificate of a close relative – often this is quite hard to obtain as a family going through the trauma of a death may not have a death certificate on hand, or you may not feel comfortable asking for it off family members. Funeral notices, death notices and letter from funeral homes can also be submitted.
- Evidence that proves you have a familial relation to someone, for example a spouse, child, or sibling. Marriage certificates and birth certificates are the most common examples of these.
- Proof of attendance at support services from referrals and/ or recommendations you agreed to attend as part of your Academic Improvement Plan.
- Letters from landlords or employers - for cases such as pipes bursting, or other household emergencies and extra hours or reduction in work hours or a traumatic event that occurred at work.
- Eviction notice, or a lease showing date you moved house.
- Letters from family/friends/lecturers/community members/religious or spiritual leaders in your life verifying what happened to you or your ability to be successful in your studies.
- Email confirming enrolment in Study and Learning Centre Workshops.
- Good results for individual assessments (particularly for subjects you failed) - this shows that you generally have a good academic track record or that you have turned a corner and your academic performance is improving.
- Study timetable you have made to help you in future- see below for more info.
- Emails sent to or from lecturers or RMIT staff where you have asked for assistance, re-assessment of your grades, raised problems etc.
- Attendance records showing that you are or did attend all your classes.
- Emails from other students saying you are studying in a group with them and they are going to assist you in the future.
- Evidence you now have a tutor to help you.

Study Plans – and how to write one!

As part of your Appeal Against Exclusion submission you can include a detailed study plan. The University wants to know that you are able to complete your program of study and that you have a plan in place to help you succeed in the future. In your submission you might write about how you are planning on organising your work and staying on top of your studies at RMIT.

Below is an example of what a weekly study timetable might look like. **Importantly you need to include your courses and the hours per day that will go towards your study, which will be personal and depend on the degree you are studying, the number of courses you are enrolled in and the time it takes to review each week's material.** If you are between semesters and you don't yet know what classes you will be enrolled in just name them lecture 1, tutorial 1, lecture 2, tutorial 2, etc. Remember that RMIT expects that most bachelor students will be putting around 10-12 hours of study **per course** – your study timetable should reflect this. If you are part of a study group/you go to SLAMS/are doing a study workshop, you can include this. You can also include any sporting or other activities you do during the week. If you are responsible for caring for family, visiting family or performing a lot of household chores remember to leave time for those too.

Over the next two pages there are two examples of what your study timetable might look like. **Remember it is important not to copy and paste these timetables but to develop your own.**

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| | Train to university | Train to university | Gym | Train to university | Gym | |
| | Lecture/tutorial name | Lecture/tutorial name | Home Study | Lecture/tutorial name | Home Study | Gym |
| | Lecture/tutorial name | Break/Lunch | Home Study | Lecture/tutorial name | Home Study | Home Study |
| | Break/lunch | Break/Library-study | External Tutoring | Slams program | Train to University | Home Study |
| | Lecture/tutorial name | | Lunch | Lunch | | Home Study |
| | Break/library-study | Lecture/tutorial name | Family time | Library-Study | Lecture/tutorial name | -Lunch |
| | Tute | Library-study | Home Study | Library-Study | Break/Lunch | Leisure time |
| | Slams program | Library-study | Home Study | Train back home | Lecture/tutorial name | Leisure time |
| | Library-study | Train back home | Leisure time | Home Study | Library-Study | Home Study |
| | Train back home | Leisure Time | Leisure time | Home Study | Train back home | Home Study |
| | Dinner | Dinner | Dinner | Dinner | Dinner | Dinner |
| | Home Study | Home Study | Home Study | Leisure Time | Leisure Time | Leisure time |
| | | | | Home Study | | |
| | Sleep | Sleep | Sleep | Sleep | | |

| | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------|------------|--------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| 8am-9am | | | | | | | |
| 9am-10am | Work at Childcare | Lecture 1 | | Tutorial 3 | | Work at Childcare | Spend day at my Mum's |
| 10am-11am | | Reading in library | Lecture 2 | | S+L | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|---|---------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|-----------|---|
| 11am-12pm | | | Lunch | S+L | Reading in Library and lunch | | |
| 12pm-1pm | | Lunch | Lecture 3 | Lunch | | | |
| 1pm-2pm | | Tutorial 1 | Tutorial 2 | Reading in Library | S+L | | |
| 2pm-3pm | | | | | Tutorial 4 | | |
| 3pm-4pm | | Travel home | Lecture 4 | | | | |
| 4pm-5pm | | Food shopping and chores | S+L | | Travel home | | |
| 5pm-6pm | Travel home and prepare food | Prepare food | Spend evening at my Mum's | Night off | Spend Evening at my Mum's | Night off | Finalise assignments and readings for the week and prepare food |
| 6pm-7pm | Go over readings and lecture notes for the week | Go over lecture notes work on assignments | | Night off | | Night off | |
| 7pm-8pm | | | | Night off | | Night off | |
| 8pm-9pm | | | | Night off | | Night off | |
| 9pm-10pm | | | | | | | |