

RUSU Show Cause Information Pack for Students

This pack contains:

- A template of how to write a Show Cause letter.
- A list of examples of documentary evidence to support your letter.
- Two example Show Cause letters. ***These are examples only. Make sure you review the Template and use your OWN circumstances and personal experience to write your letter.***
- Information about a study plan and examples of what a study timetable might look like.

What should I do now?

Get in touch with the RUSU Student Rights Team (student.rights@rmit.edu.au) to see if you can attend one of the Show Cause group sessions (if available). 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 (subject to availability before your deadline). A draft of your show cause letter is required before setting up an appointment.

Need more information?

Call RUSU: 9925 1842 or email: student.rights@rmit.edu.au

RUSU Template for how to write a Show Cause letter

HINTS

The important thing to remember with a show cause letter is that you need to clearly state what were the **reasons (your personal circumstances)**, that prevented you from passing your courses in the semesters where you failed.

As with all RMIT applications, provide documentary evidence, dates and emails to support your statement, including a study plan for next semester.

Dear Program Assessment Board Chair,

I am writing to submit this Show Cause letter to explain why my academic performance has been affected in the semesters identified. I also want to explain what strategies I have and will put in place to successfully complete my studies in my program (**INSERT COURSE/PROGRAM**).

Your letter needs to be broken down into three main parts.

1. An outline of what were the difficult circumstances that you experienced over the semesters where you failed courses. Address all the semesters where you have failed courses including the first time you were placed At Risk.
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 or will be made that will make it better for you to study successfully.

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, and these 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 it take you time to transition to University life?
- 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, statements from friends or family?

Then, explain how did 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?

Here 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 or peer study groups?
- If you have suffered from depression or anxiety, what are some of the strategies that you have implemented to manage your condition more effectively? Are you getting adequate support now?
- 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 the Academic Performance Improvement Plan you were given 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?
- How did you go in your other courses? Have you improved since past semesters? Did you do well in some courses that you can highlight?
- Are you going to reduce your study load to part time?
- Are you taking a leave of absence to have a rest from study?
- 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 Program Assessment Board wants to feel confident that if you are allowed to continue in your program, that you will pass your courses.

Focus on why it is unreasonable and excessive to not allow you to continue in your program given the challenges you have faced. Connect the circumstances that were beyond your control to why you failed specific courses and how things that have changed or how you will do things differently.

REMEMBER YOU MUST PROVIDE EVIDENCE TO GO WITH YOUR LETTER. An important part of your Show Cause submission is to include a detailed study plan for next semester, which shows when you will attend class and also showing when you will fit in your hours of study. Read below, or follow the link listed to see further information about '**Examples of documentary evidence**' and see below for an example of what a study timetable looks like.

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

When referring to your evidence, you can write something like:

To support my letter of show cause, please find attached the following documentary evidence: (*list the documentary evidence you have attached with your letter*).

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. Thank you for considering my case and I hope you will 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.

For more student rights information visit our website: www.su.rmit.edu.au/student-rights or call us to speak with a Student Rights Officer.

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).

Hint

Make sure to keep copies of all the evidence you submit and get a receipt of your submission from The Hub, your school, post office (if sent in) or save emails

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 timetables – and how to write one!

An important part of your Show Cause submission is to 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	Lecture/tutorial name	Lunch	Lunch	Lecture/tutorial name	Home Study
	Break/library-study		Family time	Library-Study		-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	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							

HINTS

- The important thing to remember with show cause letters is that you need to clearly state what went wrong this semester, how this effected your study and what you will change (if relevant) to avoid this situation occurring again.
- As with all RMIT Applications, provide documentary evidence, dates and emails to demonstrate what you are saying.
- Is this the right program for you or will a leave of absence be a better option than continuing on to next semester? If not, let the Student Progress Committee know that you would prefer to take leave of absence or transfer to another program.

Date
Your Name
Your Student Number
Your Contact Details

Dear Program Assessment Board Chair,

I am writing to you today with regards to receiving a letter indicating that further to being placed at risk, I have shown unacceptable academic progress this semester. I wish to submit this letter of Show Cause to explain the circumstances that led to this result and to illustrate what processes I wish to put in place to successfully complete my (INSERT COURSE/PROGRAM).

Over the past semester (USE THE QUESTIONS BELOW TO HELP WRITE THIS SECTION)

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

- What went wrong? What REALLY contributed to what went wrong?
- Did you do paid work for too many hours?
- Is this your first year at University, did you find the whole experience overwhelming? Did you feel isolated or depressed? Did you not know about services that could help you?
- Do you know of services that can support/help you now?
- Did an illness you have (or someone close to you) have a direct impact on your ability to study? Do you have any evidence about what went wrong? I.e. medical certificates, doctor's/ counselor's letters?
- Was there a stressful situation that you were dealing with? Breakup of a relationship?
- Were the circumstances academic or personal? (It is only worth mentioning things if you can also talk about how the problem has been/is being overcome or will no longer effect you in the future).
- If work was a problem, how many hours of study did you do compared to hours of paid work or other external commitments and what evidence (such as pay slips or a letter from your employer) can you provide to prove you have reduced your working hours?

WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF ANY OF THESE THINGS ON YOUR ABILITY TO STUDY SUCCESSFULLY?

Important: you want to demonstrate that you have the ability and capacity to complete your studies successfully, but things outside of your control (or things that you have now changed) had a direct impact on your ability to do so.

WHAT ACTIONS DID YOU TAKE TO IMPROVE YOUR GRADES?

- What did you do about trying to fix what went wrong? Did you seek help, assistance or counselling and/or did you talk to family and friends to seek help?
- What referrals and recommendations from your Academic Performance Improvement Plan have you utilised?

WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO CHANGE OR DO THIS SEMESTER?

- What are you continuing to do to improve your circumstances?
- Are the circumstances likely to continue? If so, how do you intend to reduce the impact they could have on your study?
- What are your short and long term plans for getting back on track?
- How will you approach your study differently if allowed to stay in your program?
- What is your plan for successful study?

The UAC will consider the likelihood of you succeeding in your next academic period of study should you be permitted to remain in the program. Are you nearly at the end of your program? Are you in the right program? Focus on why it is unreasonable and excessive to exclude you. Try to link the circumstances that were beyond your control to why you failed specific subjects and how things that have changed or that you will do differently will, or already are, seeing you succeed in those subjects on the next attempt.

To support my letter of show cause, please find attached the following documentary evidence; LIST EVIDENCE THAT YOU HAVE INCLUDED (This could be: a medical report, a police report, a counsellor's statement, a statutory declaration, a death certificate of a close relative, proof of attendance at support services from referrals/recommendations you agreed to attend as part of your Academic Improvement Plan, letters from landlords or employers. More examples of evidence can be found on the supplementary RUSU Handout; Examples of Documentary Evidence).

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 truly hope you will consider my case and allow me to (WHAT DO YOU WISH TO HAPPEN).

Regards,

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.

For more student rights information visit our website: www.rusu.rmit.edu.au/studentrights

For additional assistance drop into or call a Student Union Front Office to speak with a Student Liaison Officer;

Call RUSU: **9925 1842**

or

email: student.rights@rmit.edu.au

If required, an appointment will be made for you with a Student Rights Officer.

Show Cause & Exclusion

Show Cause

Have you been asked to 'Show Cause' to your School? Please read! This is important information.

What does this mean?

Students are asked to Show Cause after they have two unsatisfactory semesters in their program. A semester is usually considered unsatisfactory because half or more courses (subjects) were failed, or because a course was failed for a 2nd time (failing a placement course also makes a semester unsatisfactory).

What do you need to do now?

Your School will send you an email asking you to explain why they should not exclude* you from your program. It is in your best interest to respond to this invitation and explain your circumstances. These emails are sent to students at the end of Semesters, when classes have stopped. Even between semester, KEEP CHECKING YOUR STUDENT EMAIL ACCOUNT, you don't want to miss this opportunity to explain your circumstances.

If you do not respond to this email request from your School, in the time-frame given to you, your School will recommend your exclusion from your program.

What does 'exclusion' mean?

Exclusion means that your enrolment in your program is cancelled, you cannot study in your program for 12 months and you must reapply the following year to get back in- there is no guarantee that your school will accept you back into your program.

What is a 'Show Cause' letter and why do you need to write one?

You need to write a letter to your school which explains why you failed courses. There could be many reasons why you did not do well, or one particular reason. It is really important that you provide evidence with your story.

What happens if you don't respond to your School's email inviting you to make a timely 'Show Cause' submission?

As mentioned above, your school will refer the matter to another area of RMIT (the Academic Registrar's Group), recommending your exclusion.

You will now be expected to write a more thorough and stronger case, outlining specific appeal grounds, for why you should not be excluded from your program and, if RMIT is willing to consider your new application, you will need to sit in a University hearing and present your case to a panel.

You don't need to go through this alone

Exclusion

You will have received notification from RMIT's Academic Registrar's Office that you are being recommended for exclusion. You have TWENTY (20) WORKING DAYS to lodge appeal applications to the University Appeals Committee (UAC) after receiving the Exclusion letter. You are advised to contact a Student Rights Officer at the Student Union to assist you with this process.

1. Writing the appeal letter

Your letter should explain how your situation fits within one of the following grounds of appeal:

- a) There is evidence that the decision was made on the basis of personal bias or ill will; and/or
- b) There is evidence of a breach of this procedure or another relevant university statute, regulation, policy or procedure in the handling of the exclusion process (this includes evidence of procedural error in the handling of an appeal against assessment or evidence that the school failed to implement the academic progress intervention strategy); and/or
- c) There is evidence that the penalty of exclusion is unreasonable, excessive or inappropriate (this includes evidence of compassionate or compelling circumstances);
- d) 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.

You may appeal under more than one of the grounds.

2. Attach supporting documents

Lodge your appeal application, appeal letter and all supporting documentation with the Secretary of the University Appeals Committee. It is advisable to meet with a Student Rights Officer at the Student Union before handing in your appeal submission. They will be able to look it over and give you some advice.

Further advice on writing your application can be found at www.rmit.edu.au/help

Then what?

Initial review

The Academic Registrar will review the appeal submission to see if it addresses one or more of the grounds of appeal mentioned above. If your submission is found not to have addressed the grounds, you will be notified and the Academic Registrar (or nominee) will arrange the cancellation of your enrolment.

Where your submission is found to have addressed the grounds, you will be invited to a University Appeals Committee hearing.

Remember to check your student email regularly as RMIT will use your student email to notify you. **CONTINUES PAGE 2 ►**

► Preparing for your university appeal hearing

The Committee must give you at least five (5) working days notice of the venue, date and time of your hearing. Tell a Student Rights Officer as soon as you have these details.

Prepare a statement of how you will present your case. When preparing, keep in mind that the University Appeals Committee need to be convinced by you that you will be able to succeed in your studies if they uphold your appeal. Be prepared for questions about your study habits, workload outside of university, and number of hours you spend studying. It is highly advisable that you go to your own hearing and are not on holidays on the date of your appeal.

You have the right to be represented by another person such as a Student Rights Officer. You can also take witnesses or an interpreter if necessary. It is highly advisable that you seek the Student Union's support.

The role of the Student Rights Officer is to support you and empower you to win your own case. They can assist you to present your case if you do not feel confident or if there are breaches of policy that require complex interpretation.

Discussion about your case and decision making will happen 'in camera' meaning that you and the School representative won't be in the room when the Committee makes its decision about your appeal. If your appeal is unsuccessful, you can appeal to the Victorian Ombudsman.

If the University Appeals Committee dismisses your appeal against exclusion, the Secretary of the University Appeals Committee will inform you that you have 10 working days in which to seek a review of its decision externally by the Ombudsman of Victoria, (where Ombuds of Victoria jurisdiction applies).

If you do seek a review by the Ombuds, you must provide evidence to the Academic Registrar of your lodgement of the application within 10 working days if you wish to continue to be enrolled whilst that review is being conducted.

If no valid notice of application for review by the Ombuds of Victoria is lodged with the Academic Registrar at the expiry of 10 working days after the date the University Appeals Committee decision has been sent, the Academic Registrar will cancel your enrolment (and if you are an international student, will advise the Director, International Services to report you to the Department of immigration and citizenship as required by the ESOS Act and National Code).

Other relevant information

Re-enrolment

You must enrol for the next year if you intend to appeal against the exclusion recommendation. You have a right to re-enrol whilst waiting for your appeal outcome. If you do have problems on re-enrolment day, contact a Student Rights Officer, your Program Coordinator or Head of School immediately. If you do not re-enrol you may lose your place regardless of the outcome of your appeal.

Appealing your results

Did you fail any subject you believe you should have passed? You may be recommended for exclusion because you failed half or more of your course load, or you failed a subject for the second time. As well as appealing against a recommendation to exclude you, it might be possible to appeal against assessment results. If this is the case, you should first appeal to the College Appeal Committee. You have 20 working days after the official release of results in order to do this. For more information, see www.rusu.rmit.edu.au/appealsagainstassessment

What happens if I am excluded?

If you are excluded from a particular Program, you can apply for admission to other Programs at RMIT or the same program elsewhere.

You are only excluded from your Program for 12 months.

After 12 months you are not automatically readmitted. During your 'excluded' year you should make an appointment with your Head of Department (around August) to discuss readmission. They normally have the final say, but a Student Rights Officer may be able to assist you in this process.

International students

As we said above it is a condition of student visas that you maintain satisfactory progress so if you are excluded, the Department of Immigration will take this as proof that you have not met a visa condition. This can lead to the cancellation of your visa. We strongly recommend that if exclusion gets to the stage of being reported to the Department of Immigration, you seek expert advice from a migration agent and contact RMIT International. In many cases things do not have to get to this stage, and there are many excellent strategies available for resolving your problems within RMIT.

If you are an international student:

- Lodge an appeal so that you have a chance to resolve your problems within RMIT and
- Make sure that you see a Student Rights Officer for expert help and advice about your case and for appropriate referral where necessary

Vocational Education (TAFE) students

Due to changes in RMIT policy in 2007, there are now certain criteria that relate specifically to the exclusion of Vocational Education (TAFE) students. Vocational Education (TAFE) students are required to 'show cause', it is not mandatory that they be excluded; special circumstances may be taken into account. It is expected that the Program Assessment Board will exercise academic judgment, taking account of the student's overall performance in the program and any other relevant issues or special circumstances.

Students enrolled in Australian apprenticeships and traineeships The final stage does not apply to apprentices and trainees, who cannot be excluded for unsatisfactory progress during the period of their training contract. These students must be managed in accordance with the Skills Victoria Vocational Education (TAFE) Program Delivery Guidelines.

Useful notes

Before you see a Student Union Student Rights Officer, please do as much work on your appeal as possible as they have limited time available.

- If you have an ongoing or long-term illness, you may wish to apply for an Equitable Assessment Arrangement. You can get an application form from www.rmit.edu.au/students/forms. The form should be submitted at least 4 weeks prior to your assessment.
- RMIT Counselling Service is free for RMIT students. You may contact them on 9925 4365 between 9 and 5pm Mon to Fri. Their website is: www.rmit.edu.au/counselling

Relevant policies and procedures

Assessment: Academic progress

Coursework programs procedure