

Students at Risk Policy and Procedure

1 Introduction

Students may be identified from time to time during their study program at Australian Lutheran College as being at risk. By this means that there are hindrances to the normal progress expected of students enrolled in a course of study and/or vocational program. These hindrances may relate to academic achievement, or they may relate to the area of vocation, or to both.

a) At risk academically

Hindrances to academic achievement may be evidenced by such indicators as:

- Unsatisfactory assignment grades
- Irregular class attendance
- Late submission of assignments
- Low level of participation in class discussion
- Disruptive behaviour in class

Hindrances to vocational formation may be related to the academic area, so the above indicators, while in the first place the responsibility of unit lecturers in conference with students in question, may also become the responsibility of heads of schools. For this reason close collaboration between unit lecturers and heads of schools is urged so that early identification, intervention, and remediation may be facilitated.

Note:

The Handbook lists conditions under which a student may be placed on academic probation. Student academic progress is monitored at the end of each trimester/semester by heads of schools and the dean of studies. Any student at risk of academic probation is advised of this situation so that appropriate remedial action can be taken. This academic probation may not necessarily lead to vocational probation.

b) At risk vocationally

Hindrances to vocational formation on the other hand may not be related to academic achievement but rather to matters of personal, spiritual, and psychological concern, such as:

- Strong sense of self-doubt and anxiety about the future
- Crisis of faith
- Loss of sense of call
- Relationship difficulties with peers, spouse, or family
- Stress and burn out
- Over-commitment
- Emergence of emotional trauma, past or present
- Perfectionism
- Unrealistic expectations of self or others
- Isolationism
- Financial stress
- Wrong motives [failure to understand nature of pastoral authority, servant nature of ministry, use of power and authority in ministry]

In addition to the above, members of teaching staff may have reasons for concern when a student demonstrates attitudes and actions which are vocationally inappropriate, such as:

- Low commitment, including regular worship
- Vengeful and/or judgmental spirit
- Unresolved anger
- Difficulties in conflict resolution
- Inflexibility and/or inability to hear others
- Weak personality—submissive/aggressive personality traits not conducive to vocational preparation
- Inappropriate sexual attitudes and/or behaviour
- Heterodox views which persist
- Substance addiction
- Other inappropriate dependency
- Gambling, financial mismanagement

When any of the above attitudes and behaviours is observed, members of teaching staff should keep anecdotal notes and follow up their concerns in accordance with the relevant guidelines. The teaching staff adviser of an at risk student's Care Group should be informed of the concern and, when it is deemed necessary by teaching staff in consultation, a conference between the student and the appropriate head of school should be arranged to discuss the matters in question.

2. Guidelines

Guidelines for proceeding with the support of students at risk are needed. The following approaches are suggested:

- The Principal, the Dean of Studies and head of school are to be notified as soon as a teaching staff member becomes aware that a student is at risk. The Care Group adviser should also be notified immediately.
- A conference with the student and the appropriate teaching staff representative [usually the Dean of Studies, Care Group adviser or particular head of school] is arranged by the Principal or head of school in order to raise matters of concern and discuss teaching staff decisions which relate to the student.
- The student, in consultation with the head of school and relevant member of teaching staff, prepares a proposal for remedial action. This proposal will include assessment indicators and nomination of support personnel. It should sit within a realistic time frame, and dates for further review of the situation will be included. Consulting teaching staff members will report to the principal and teaching staff regarding the student's remedial action proposal.
- From time to time, a student at risk may be placed on academic or vocational probation by the school for a trimester or semester while remediation is in place. A report with relevant documentation on the student [eg copies of recent assignments, reports from the field] shall be presented to teaching staff by the consulting member of teaching staff **prior** to the date when a teaching staff decision regarding the student is to be made.
- Students at risk, like all students at the college, need to be kept informed of teaching staff decisions which concern progress in their chosen program of study and vocational formation. For this reason, frequent meetings by the consulting teaching staff member with at risk students are necessary to ensure that a professional level of support and monitoring of progress is maintained. Students at risk need to feel and believe that the teaching staff is committed to a God-pleasing outcome.

- At all times during the implementation of the remedial action proposal, and for a reasonable period thereafter [see below], specific pastoral care support provisions need to be in place.
- Notes of procedures, reports, and support measures should be kept in a separate envelope within the student's personal file.
- Where vocational difficulties persist in spite of efforts at remediation, students at risk should be counselled to consider alternative areas of service.
- Should all efforts at restoring at risk students to an acceptable vocational equilibrium fail, they will be requested by the Principal [or Principal's representative], in accord with the recommendation of the teaching staff, to discontinue vocational studies at Australian Lutheran College.
- When a student is advised of a teaching staff decision to suspend or terminate his/her involvement in a vocational program, heads of schools in consultation with other related teaching staff shall meet with the student to explore alternative options and vocational paths as part of the college's pastoral care and vocational support program. This may require a series of meetings. Where possible and appropriate the spiritual, psychological, emotional and social welfare of the terminated or suspended student [and spouse if applicable] should continue to be a teaching staff concern for a reasonable period. Appropriate resources are to be applied so that any personal disruption or trauma experienced by the student due to the teaching staff's decision may be addressed.
- An appropriate balance between directing at risk students to undertake specific remedial steps and requiring them to prepare and follow a remedial program of their own devising needs to be maintained. The objective of the remedial process is that students at risk regain the ability to take responsibility for their academic and/or vocational progress.

Notes

1. **Role of Care Group teaching staff adviser**

It is important that during the period between the second and fourth year faith/life interviews Care Group advisers are made aware of any concerns regarding students in their Care Group. These concerns should be addressed through the Care Group in the first instance, hopefully before they become the cause of a major remediation program.

2. **Completion of vocational requirements**

All students in vocational programs need to be made aware that the vocational requirements for each particular vocational program are not optional extras. Once a student has been admitted to a vocational program, completion of the vocational requirements will be closely monitored. Where students are tardy in returning field education or other vocational reports as required by the curriculum, heads of schools will view this with concern.

The following procedures will be followed:

- a. In the first instance a note of reminder with reference to a due date will be sent to the student by the school administrator
- b. If this due date is missed the school administrator will inform the relevant head of school who will meet with the student to determine the cause of non-completion of the particular requirements. At this meeting a final deadline will be negotiated between the head of school and the student
- c. If this deadline is missed, the student will be considered to be vocationally at risk. In consultation with the other heads of schools the

relevant head will issue the student a note of vocational probation. This means that

- until the student regularises the situation by attending to the incomplete requirements, he/she will be considered to be on probation with regard to the vocational program
- should requirements not be completed within two clear weeks of the receipt of the note of probation the student will be suspended from the program without further consultation
- students suspended from a vocational program will be informed of this decision by the relevant head of school in writing. Suspended students may apply for readmission through the relevant head of school after a period of one semester/trimester
- re-admission will require an interview with the Head of School and other school teaching staff representatives. Re-admitted students will be on vocational probation for one full semester/trimester at the end of which their situation will be reviewed by heads of schools and, if appropriate, the probation period will be brought to a close
- in a case where a student is not deemed ready for re-admission, he/she will have the status of a private student and will be invited to come under vocational care.

3. Resources

Resources for teaching staff supporting students at risk are comprehensive. A register of qualified personnel can be found in the student handbooks. People on the register include those with pastoral, diagnostic and counselling skills. They may be pastors or medical practitioners, psychologists or psychiatrists, Christian counsellors, or representatives of other support ministries. All selected for inclusion have a proven record of their ability to serve others pastorally and in an authentic spirit of the gospel. They understand the nature and purpose of the ministry programs of the college. This register is updated annually as part of the iterative review of the handbooks.