

Defence Reservists & emergency volunteers

Title	Defence Reservists & emergency volunteers
Overview	The policy enables special arrangements to be made for students who, by virtue of their service, have irregular, often with limited notice, outside commitments that may interfere with their study.
Key Words	Reserve, Army, Navy, SES, CFA, Special
Scope	All coursework degrees
Related documents	
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Contact Name/extension/email	<hr/>

The University of Melbourne

POLICY February 2008

Definitions: (NB. These are working definitions that may be changed to ensure consistency with terminology employed in the Student System).

Defence Reserves: students who are members of the Australian Defence Reserve Service, or Reservists or Defence Reservists. Such students may be required to attend one or more compulsory camps of continuous training in a year and occasionally a service role, a non-compulsory camp or course.

Emergency Service Volunteers: students who are members of VIC SES (State Emergency Service) or CFA (Country Fire Authority) and similar organisations - volunteer based emergency services, servicing the State of Victoria and occasionally other states or international service. Participants may be required to attend an emergency at very short notice, and have irregular training commitments.

Policy applies to: All coursework degrees in the Melbourne Model

Policy Objective: The University is committed to working with students who are members of the Defence Reserves and other emergency service volunteer organisations, to ensure that they are not disadvantaged academically or financially¹ as a consequence of their participation in service activities.

Policy:

The University encourages a flexible approach to the provision of assistance for Defence Reservists and emergency service volunteers, subject to preservation of the integrity of academic programs, the maintenance of appropriate academic standards and equity between students. Provision may include alternative examination arrangements, renegotiation of assessment deadlines, alternative format learning materials, cross-institutional study, timetable planning and flexibility about class attendance requirements, deferment, leave of absence, withdrawal and refunds. Discretion available within these policy areas may apply to Defence Reservists and emergency service volunteers.

Students who wish to receive assistance on the grounds that they are a Reservist or emergency service volunteer must submit appropriate documentation verifying that they are identified and recognised as a Reservist or volunteer.

It is the students responsibility to notify the University of any change in status and the University has the discretion to ask for an update status annually, or as required.

Procedure and Practice: All coursework degrees in the Melbourne Model

1. Application for assistance

¹ i.e. by allowing, where appropriate, refund of tuition fee, see below.

The University of Melbourne

POLICY

February 2008

1.1 The first request - Identification

- Students seeking assistance for the first time on the grounds that they are a Reservist or emergency service volunteer should speak with a Student Adviser in their Student Centre or Graduate School and provide appropriate supporting documentation.
- If the grounds on which a student is claiming status as a volunteer falls outside this policy, or established precedent, the Student Adviser should refer the matter to the Vice-Principal and Academic Registrar for determination.
- Once a student's status has been established this can be noted on the Student System so that future requests do not have to be verified to the same extent, although verification of continuing status may be sought in the next semester or the next year.

1.2 All requests

- Once a student's status as a Reservist or emergency service volunteer has been established, special arrangements are generally considered on the basis of particular documented commitments to the required activity, such as compulsory training or camps, or attendance at an emergency event.
- Requests should always be negotiated through a Student Adviser in the relevant Student Centre or Graduate School.
- Should changes to assessment be requested, the student adviser will consult with subject coordinators, who may discuss matters with the chair of board of examiners.

1.3 Timing of requests

- The nature and extent of commitments can be unpredictable and outside of a student's control, for example, during an emergency.
- A student will be expected to plan for known commitments, for example regular training commitments or service, well in advance.
- Students are advised to seek assistance at the earliest possible time to ensure the best outcome.
- Subject to other policies relating to enrolment and assessment, there are no formal deadlines by which students must request assistance on the basis of their required activity, however the timing of requests will have an impact on the University's capacity to provide assistance.

2. Assistance Provided

- The precise nature of the assistance provided to each student will vary depending on the nature and extent of their commitment to their voluntary service activity.

Examples of assistance that may be provided include:

- Extended deferment or Leave of Absence: Subject to the relevant policies, recognised and commitments may constitute compelling grounds for additional periods of leave or deferment.
- Timetable planning: Subject to the availability of classes that facilitate involvement in required activities, such activity may constitute grounds for registration in a particular class.

The University of Melbourne

POLICY

February 2008

- Attendance Requirements: commitments may be considered grounds for discretion around the application of a policy on minimum class attendance requirements.
- Alternative exam arrangements: Usually permission to sit exam on the same day as the official exam in an appropriately supervised alternate location. Student to organise and incur any costs involved. The student is to organise and incur any costs involved.
In exceptional circumstances, an alternative examination may be provided at a different time, subject to the agreement with the subject coordinator(s) of the relevant subject.
(see Examinations policy for more details).
- Renegotiation of assessment deadlines: Usually permission for short-term extensions (e.g. of up to two weeks for a larger assignment. See Extensions Policy for more details).
- Cross-institutional enrolment: Participation in commitments may be considered compelling grounds for discretion around the application of the policy on cross-institutional enrolment.
- Alternative formats of learning materials: only where possible, the subject coordinator may arrange to provide learning materials in alternative formats, if the student is unable to attend face-to-face activities during their Reserve or emergency service volunteer activity, but is otherwise able to study. The student should provide advice as soon as possible in order for alternative format materials to be provided.
- Withdrawal: A student whose Defence Reserves or emergency volunteer service commitments impact negatively upon their attendance and assessment performance may apply in writing for special consideration to withdraw from the course without academic penalty (that is without a grade of fail on their academic record for units being undertaken in the current semester). Such written requests must be submitted before the end of the semester.
- Refund of fees: in the event that a student Reservist or emergency service volunteer is forced to defer or withdraw from study in order to undertake full-time service, the University will consider remitting the student's HECS for the relevant units (subject to Federal Government guidelines), if the withdrawal occurs after the census date. If the student is enrolled on a full-fee place and is forced to withdraw in order to undertake full-time service, the University will consider refunding the student's fees for the relevant units, if the withdrawal occurs after the census date.

3. Discretion

- Student Advisers consider all requests for assistance in the first instance.
- Where this policy is unclear or silent on the subject of eligibility for assistance, and there is no established precedent, questions are referred to the Vice-Principal and Academic Registrar for determination by the Academic Board. Once determined, the established precedents will be updated.

The University of Melbourne

POLICY

February 2008

- Where this policy is unclear or silent regarding the appropriateness of assistance sought, and there is no established precedent, questions are referred to the Manager of the relevant Student Centre or Graduate School, or the Academic Head of the relevant degree (the dean or custodial dean) for final determination.
- In the case of alternative assessment arrangements, the head of the relevant teaching department may also be consulted prior to a recommendation being made, if the request involves a proposed arrangement for which there is no established precedent.

4. Appeals

Students concerned about decisions made in respect to this policy should consult the Student Grievance Policy for information about how to conduct an appeal.