**Informational – NGO Social Work Study Awards Academic Review Process**

**Policy Framework**

This process is a mechanism by which students who have already applied for, and who have been successful in gaining an NGO Social Work Study Award do not have to re-apply for their award every year. MSD has determined that an annual Academic Review process is realistic approach.

To be considered for an extension of their NGO Social Work Study Awards from one year to the next students need to provide their academic results to MSD, to pass the Academic Review Process, and to provide an updated Study Plan to MSD for the forthcoming academic year, and beyond.

**Application**

Students are required to provide their academic results to MSD as soon as possible after study has been completed each academic year - students **MUST** supply results for each year of support.

Based on consultation with a range of education providers around part-time study MSD has determined that the expected study load per student within the NGO Social Work Study Awards is a study load of 60 credits to be studied each year (Please see the Study-load guidelines).

Once students provide their academic results to MSD these will be reviewed and considered against the academic review criteria.

Students who pass a minimum of 30 credits each year, providing this is at least 50 % of the study undertaken during the academic year under review, will have their NGO Social Work Study Award extended for a further academic year.

Where the study-load exceeds 60 credits it is not sufficient to simply achieve the minimum 30 credits – in these instances students are expected to achieve no less than 50 % of the study-load undertaken. For example – a study-load of 120 credits per year will require the student to pass no less than 60 credits to pass the academic review process. This is broadly in-line with the StudyLink policy for further funding for Student Loans.

In addition to be eligible for further funding students must also continue to meet the core requirements of the NGO Social Work Study Award Programme. Students:

* remain employed by an employer meeting the requirements of the NGO Social Work Study Award programme; and
* remain enrolled in a course of social work which leads to a qualification that meets the requirements of the NGO Social Work Study Award programme;
* undertakea study-load that is acceptable to MSD;

Passing the Academic Review Process

Students who study at least 60 credits per year **and** who pass a minimum of 30 credits (providing this is at least 50 % of the study undertaken during the academic year under review) will pass the academic review process. If they continue to meet the core requirements of the NGO Social Work Study Award Programme they will have their NGO Social Work Study Award extended for a further academic year.

Both the student and their employer will receive letters from MSD advising that the student “passed the academic review process”. At the same time updated information will be taken from the updated Study Plan to advise StudyLink to pay the fees for that student for the forthcoming year, up to the funding levels permitted.

However, if these results are not provided then all future funding for both the student and the Agency will be stopped - continued non-provision will require MSD to consider the recovery of funding expended to date.

Students cannot be further supported once they meet the educational requirements for Social Worker Registration, or once they become fully registered (i.e. Students obtaining S13 registration cannot be supported once their registration is confirmed).

Some examples of other possible outcomes through the academic review process are set out in Appendix I.

Withdrawals / Did Not Complete (DNC)

Where a student withdraws early in the academic year, and is able to get a fee refund, then the academic results will not show the paper as a part of the annual study-load. The academic review process will proceed on the basis of the information provided by the education provider that takes into account the lower study-load.

However, if the withdrawal is too late in the academic year to qualify for a fee refund then the education provider will continue to record this paper as a part of the annual study-load. The academic results provided by the education provider will record this as a “Did not complete (DNC)” or similar on the academic results.

In these instances the credit value of the DNC paper is counted as a part of both the study load for the year for the student, and will be counted as a “fail” for the purposes of the academic review process.

For example, a student who has attempted 60 credits and passes 15 credits and “Did Not Complete” 15 credits, and fails 30 credits, will effectively fail 45 credits. The student will fail the academic review process because they only passed 15 of the 60 credits attempted and so they do not meet either the 30 credit minimum or the 50 % minimum pass rate.

**Appendix I**

Some examples of possible outcomes under these academic review criteria are set out below:

1. The student has attempted 30 credits and passes 15 credits - under these criteria the student does **not** pass the academic as the student does not achieve the minimum of the 30 credits required.
2. The student has attempted 60 credits and passes 45 credits - under these criteria the student passes the academic as the student achieves both the minimum pass-rate of 50 % (i.e. 45/60 = 75 %), **and** the minimum of 30 credits.
3. The student has attempted 75 credits and passes 30 credits - under this criteria the student does **not** pass the academic as the student does not achieves the minimum 50 % pass-rate required (i.e. 37.5 credits)
4. The student has attempted 90 credits and the student passes 45 credits - under this policy the student passes the academic as the student achieved both the minimum of 50 % required, (i.e. 45/90 = 50 %), **and** the minimum of 30 credits.
5. The student has attempted 120 credits and the student passes 45 credits - under this policy the student does **not** pass the academic review as the student did not achieve the minimum of 50 % required (i.e. 60 credits), even though they did met the minimum requirement of 30 credits. (i.e. 45/120 = 37.5 %).

Passing the Academic Review Process

Students who study at least 60 credits per year **and** who pass a minimum of 30 credits, providing this is at least 50 % of the study undertaken, during the academic year under review will have their NGO Social Work Study Award extended for a further academic year.

Both the student and their employer will receive letters from MSD advising that the student “passed the academic review process” and will be supported for a further academic year. In addition the letters will contain up-dated financial information, such as the balance of the funding still available.

The first of these letters will be sent out in early January, and for students who are late in supplying their academic results, these letters will be sent approximately 2 weeks after the results have been sent into MSD. At the same time, MSD will advise StudyLink to pay the fees for that student, up to the funding levels permitted.

Updated information will be taken from the Study Plan - this will be the basis of the payments to be approved in the coming academic year, and will form a part of the academic review process at the end of that year.

Failing the Academic Review

Students who do **not** achieve the standard of passing 50 % of the credits attempted, with a minimum of 30 credits, during the academic year under review will “fail” the academic review process. These means that these students do not qualify for additional funding support in the coming academic year.

Where a student does **not** meet the academic review requirements then the student “fails the academic review” and the study award could be either suspended or terminated, at discretion of MSD (see below).

However, these students could still be considered for an extension on a case-by-case basis, taking into account any extenuating circumstances. As a general guideline students may be considered for further study support where they:

* Have “extenuating circumstances” that impacted on their study during the previous academic year; and
* Are able to describe why they believe that their level of academic success did not meet requirement, and can describe why they believe that their level of academic success is likely to improve; or
* Can demonstrate previous academic success that can provide some confidence for future academic success; and
* Are able to demonstrate their ability to complete their course of study within the course regulations (which often prescribes a maximum duration of study)

MSD will make decisions in each instance on a case-by-case basis, taking into account any representation from the student, from their employer, and from their Education provider.

Suspension

The most likely outcome of failing the academic review process is “suspension”. Usually this means suspending the student from the study award programme for a set period, say one or two semesters, during which period the student is expected to “make-up” the academic review process shortfall (i.e. 15 or 30 credits, etc.). If the study award is suspended the student will not be supported financially by MSD until they meet the minimum academic review requirements for the year under review.

At the end of this period the results would be again reviewed - if the student has passed sufficient papers to meet the minimum study required for the previous year then they could then be re-instated into the study award.

**Example**

The student has attempted 60 credits and passes 15 credits and fails 45 credits, and the student fails the academic review because they do not meet either the 30 credit minimum, nor the 50 % minimum pass rate.

The student is advised that they have not passed the academic review, that their study award is “suspended” – the student is advised that they must pass a minimum of a further **15 credits** (i.e. To make–up the current shortfall of both 30 credits and 50 % of the credits attempted) before they can re-join the programme.

They could undertake this study during ‘Summer School” if this option is available or otherwise would undertake this study in semester 1 of the next year - all “make-up” study is at the personal cost of the student.

Termination

In some instances, perhaps in response to particularly poor results, or a history of poor results, the study award may be terminated.

If the study award is terminated then both the Student and the employer will be advised of the outcome in writing, and given an opportunity to make representations before the final decision is made.