Thinking Of Dropping Out Of Uni?

There are many possible reasons for thinking about changing your plans. These may be study-related, personal or a combination of both. You may be encountering these sorts of things:

- Programs or courses that are not suited to your interests or career needs
- problems with studying, understanding what’s required
- personal problems, including family or relationship difficulties
- financial difficulties
- physical or mental health problems, either your own or those of other family members
- problems with living away from family and friends, particularly if you are an overseas or interstate student
- difficulties focussing on your work when your social life is too distracting or your study is not holding your interest

It's important to be aware of not only the impact these difficulties can have on your study, but also the options you may have to deal with them.

Steps in making a decision

Becoming informed

The best decisions are made when you have all the facts in front of you so that you can make an informed choice. Within the University, there are many people who are able to help you explore the issues associated with your decision to change courses or to leave. While it can sometimes be daunting to go and speak with someone about your concerns, it can often be extremely beneficial and save a great deal of worry.

For academic and administrative concerns:

Within your faculty/school/centre there are people able to help you directly with queries relating to your program, or specific courses. They can assist with questions relating to:

- assignments and examinations
- assessment dates
- special consideration
- withdrawal and leave of absence
- HECS-HELP and SLE and fees

The most appropriate people to start with are:

- your tutor or demonstrator,
the lecturer in charge of the subject, 
the sub-dean or secretary of your faculty (program convenor or administrator for graduate students).  
Student Administration and Student Fees staff

The Undergraduate Handbook or graduate Coursework Guide, are also valuable resources. The Student Enrolment and Administrative Procedures Guide can help you with the procedures that you need to follow and important dates.

For specific program and career concerns:

The Careers Centre provides careers counsellors who are available to talk through the issues with you and can provide information about the career implications of your decision. Before you see the career counsellor you might like to do the New Directions career guidance program, which can assist you to focus on your interests, values, skills and other elements of your life likely to impact on your program and career choices.

If you wish to change programs, obtaining accurate information about selection into other university and TAFE courses is vital for weighing up your options. Remember you may no longer be considered in the school leaver category by university and TAFE selection officers. The Careers Centre can also give you independent advice on the possible career directions of particular programs.

For other concerns:

The University is well aware that personal, relationship, health and a range of practical problems can arise in your life that can impact on your study. The University provides a range of services to assist you at such times. Check out these services to learn more about what is available.

Counselling Centre 6125 2442  
Health Service 6125 3598  
Academic Skills and Learning Centre 6125 2972  
Student Welfare Officer 6125 5849  
Disability Services Unit 6125 5036  
Jabal Centre (for indigenous students) 6125 2363  
International Education Office 6125 4643  
Students Association 6125 2444  
Chaplaincy 6125 4246  
Dean of Students 6125 4184

Explore All the Options Available

Continuing your current load of study

Having reviewed your difficulties, through using the student support services of the University and your own personal support networks, you may decide that you can continue your program without any changes.

Withdrawing from a course of study
Reducing your workload by withdrawing from one or a few courses of study may be possible within your faculty. This can then give you the time to deal with your current situation. Remember that there are time-limits for withdrawing without fail, so check the dates for the current year with Student Administration. Withdrawing after the Census dates (31 March and 31 August) means that you will still incur a HECS-HELP and SLE debt. Check also how a withdrawal affects Austudy, Abstudy, Youth Allowance arrangements, and your Student Learning Entitlement.

**Changing programs**

This is possible within the university but check procedures with Student Admin. Remember that your marks in your current program may significantly influence your chances of being accepted. It is helpful to get support from your current faculty for the move.

**Taking leave of absence from study**

This means you take time out from your program, but you keep your place with the option of returning at a later date. This period of leave is usually limited to one year. You need to apply for this at Student Admin or your Faculty/School/Centre office.

**Discontinuing your program**

If you withdraw from your study, you give up your place in that program altogether. So if you then wished to return to the same program after some time out, you would need to re-apply for admission.

This is a major step to take, and if you are considering this option you are strongly advised to talk with your faculty academic staff, advisors and the various student support services available to you.

Make sure you leave properly. Don’t just disappear – Fails instead of Withdrawals, outstanding fee or library debts, etc may make it more difficult to return to University, to enrol elsewhere, or to qualify for Austudy payments if you return to study in the future.

**International students**

If you are an international student you may not be able to study part-time or remain in Australia if you take a leave of absence. It is vital for you to check up on your options with the International Education Office or the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA).

If you are leaving study, and don’t have employment to go to, check out what assistance such as Job Search Allowance, or if applicable, Sickness Allowance, may be available to you at your local Centrelink.

**Follow Through Carefully on your Decision**

Whatever you decide, it is important to follow the appropriate procedures so that you are able to re-enrol at ANU or elsewhere at a later date.
If you have reached the point where you think you will leave your study, either temporarily or permanently, follow through the checklist below to make sure you have completed all the necessary stages. Forgetting to do any of these can cause a lot of hassles for you in the future!

**Checklist:**

Have you:

1) been to Student Administration and
   a. completed and submitted an *Application for Program Leave/Withdrawal form*?
   b. found out the closing dates for reapplying if you decide that this is what you wish to do?
   c. obtained a copy of all your results to date?
   d. asked about fee refunds?
   e. ensured they have your most recent address?

2) notified Austudy, Abstudy or Youth Allowance of your decision and filled out the relevant forms?

3) paid all outstanding debts and library fines and

4) kept all the appropriate records of your study?

**Emotional and psychological support**

It's sometimes difficult to imagine what the outcome of your decision will be. Students frequently experience a range of psychological reactions as a result. You may feel:

- relief that a decision has been made and you can move on to a different way of experiencing your study or working
- disappointment or a sense of failure at not achieving a goal you had set
- regret and wondering if you have been too impulsive in your decision making

These emotions are all normal reactions to what can be an extremely stressful period of decision making. It may be helpful to explore these concerns, and a possible referral for ongoing support with a counsellor to make the transition as smooth as possible. For an appointment, ring 6125 2442 or drop in at our office on the first floor, Building 18, near the Sports Centre.