glossary of terms
for local and overseas students

**Academic Year** - The standard academic year in Australia begins in late February or early March and ends in mid November. There is a winter break of about four weeks in June/July. Summer break is from mid November through February. The academic year consists of two 12-week semesters. There are also two Summer School sessions between November and February. During the academic year there are also student study breaks, holidays and examination periods. Check the RMIT web site www.rmit.edu.au for precise dates.

**Advanced Standing** - For applicants who have substantial previous study or professional experience (see Recognition of Prior Learning) some courses making up the degree may be exempted. Also, entry into second and/or third year of a program may be possible.

**Articulation** - For students with a TAFE (Tertiary And Further Education) or VET (Vocational Education and Training) certificate or diploma, recognition of that study may be the basis for entry to and exemptions within programs. For example, a student may be eligible to enter directly into the second or third year of the course.

This may also apply to overseas students with the equivalent of an Associate degree from a Community College. Details must be negotiated with the Program Leader prior to starting the program.

**Award** – In some countries this means ‘degree’ such as a Bachelor of Science, B.Sc. It is given (awarded) when a student has completed all the requirements set out by the program to acknowledge completion of the program.

**Class** – A series of classes make up a course. Classes usually meet once or twice per week. Classes may include lectures, laboratories, seminars, tutorials, etc. Some classes may be held in the field or at locations off campus. A weekly schedule of classes is usually confirmed before the first meeting of the class in the form of a student timetable.
College - At RMIT University, a college is a grouping of related academic centres for administrative purposes. For example, The College of Science, Engineering and Health comprise academic and research areas in science (biology, chemistry, physics, health science, etc.), engineering (mechanical, chemical, electrical, etc.) and health (biotechnology, food science, etc.).

Core courses - Core courses are what define the nature of a program. Successful completion of these courses is mandatory. Each year of a program has its core courses.

Course - A course is a set of classes delivered over the semester that cover a selected topic area. In some universities it is referred to as a ‘subject’. In New Zealand it is called a ‘paper’.

Course coordinator – An academic staff member responsible for the delivery of a specific course. They may also be referred to as a lecturer or professor.

Credit Points - RMIT University has adopted the terminology of credit points to recognise the time and effort a course takes to complete. It further defines the total points that a student must complete to fulfill the requirements for an award (degree).

The credit point weighting of a course is the combination of contact hours (time with a lecturer) plus expected non-contact hours (time spent in a self directed or self motivated activity).

Most undergraduate programs at RMIT University have a target of 96 credit points per year. Most courses are 12 credit points. Most degree programs require you to complete 288 credit points to be eligible for the award. In practical terms, that means you are engaged in studies for about 40 hours per week for the duration of the academic year, i.e., 2 semesters. This would continue over three years or when you achieve a total of 288 credit points for graduation.

Degree – See Award.

Discipline – In academic administration, it is an overall area of major study area such as chemistry, physics, biology, etc.

Electives (Student electives) - Each program at RMIT University includes time for students to take courses from other academic areas in the university. Depending on the specific program, you may take 2 or 3
student electives. These elective courses can come from any course offered at RMIT. If approved, you may also take courses from other universities.

**Exemptions** - Students who have completed some tertiary (university) level courses at any university may be offered credit towards a degree. They may be exempted from core or elective courses depending on the type of course previously completed and the grade achieved. Proof of successful completion must be shown. Exemptions are at the discretion of the Program Leader. Exemptions may also be granted for extensive work experience (see Recognition of Prior Learning).

**Faculty** – RMIT has phased out administrative units previously called a ‘Faculty’. See ‘School’. Some other universities use the term, i.e., Faculty of Science, Faculty of Engineering.

**Faculty member** – See staff.

**Honours degree** - In the Australian education system, a student may elect to do a further year of study after their undergraduate degree. The Honours degree is based on a project undertaken by the student with guidance of a staff member. Honours also includes some courses that support the project. The project may be defined by the student or in conjunction with research being done by a staff member. It may also be industry based. To be eligible, a student must have completed a university degree. Some projects may go on to become the basis of a Masters or Ph.D. program.

Honours students are chosen for their demonstrated academic performance and the merit of their project.

At the successful completion of the Honours project, the student is awarded a Bachelor of Science (Honours) degree, B.Sc.(HONS).

**Open Day** - Usually held on the second Sunday in August. The entire university has displays and information sessions highlighting its academic offerings. This is an opportunity for prospective students to gather information and speak directly to academic staff members about the various programs offered. Attendance is encouraged.

**Portfolio** – This term was recently dropped in favor of ‘College’. See ‘College’.

**Program** – A program is a collection of courses generally delivered over
two semesters for three years. There are four-year and double degree programs as well. Successful completion of a program results in an award (degree) conferred to the graduate.

**Program Leader (Coordinator)** – A senior staff member in charge of an academic program such as programs in Applied Science, Biotechnology, Food Science and Technology, etc.

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** - For those who have been working in the industry and are recognized practitioners in their field, a scheme is available to upgrade qualifications and complete a Bachelor of Science degree. Each situation is considered individually. The applicant must discuss the details with the Program Leader.

**School** – RMIT University has structured its academic units (previously faculties and departments) into Colleges, Schools and Disciplines. For example, programs in applied science, biotechnology, food science, etc. are in one school (School of Applied Sciences) in the College of Science, Engineering and Health.

**Staff (member)** – They can be individual administrative, teachers, lecturers and professors. The term can be broken down further to academic staff (teaching), technical staff (lab/studio managers) and administrative staff (secretarial and support staff). In some countries they are referred to ‘faculty’ members.

**Subject** – See Course

**Timetable** – The timetable is the schedule of the day, time and location of each course. Timetables are published and distributed for each year level of the program. These timetables list all core courses and some electives that do not clash with core courses.

**VTAC** – The Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre is the administrative body for the state of Victoria that handles all applications to all programs offered by Victorian universities and other tertiary institutions. The web address is: www.vtac.edu.au

The mailing address is:
The Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre
40 Park Street
South Melbourne, Victoria 3205
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