

SUMMARY INFORMATION ABOUT CHANGES TO SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

Overview

The University developed new policies on Special Consideration in 2008 for implementation in 2009.

The President of the Academic Board has approved a plan to delay full implementation of these policies, with the exception that, from semester 1, 2009, mark adjustment will no longer be allowed as an outcome of the special consideration process.

This means that the existing processes in place to manage special consideration applications and extensions in Faculties and Departments should remain for semester 1, 2009, however staff will no longer have discretion to award a mark adjustment on the basis of an application for special consideration.

Applicability

Changes to Special Consideration are now in effect and applicable to all Semester 1, 2009 subject enrolments onwards. The new policy will not apply to any subject enrolments prior to Semester 1, 2009, even where a subject result has not yet been returned or finalised.

Rationale for Change

Special consideration policies have been revised to increase the academic integrity of the process by eliminating the need for staff to speculate about what the impact of a student's circumstances may have been in order to calculate an 'appropriate' mark adjustment. The policy changes also require greater consistency of practice across the University with regard to outcomes of special consideration applications.

Consultation and Approval Timelines / Processes

The Special Consideration Policy was approved by Academic Board in 2008, following extensive consultation carried out over several months by the Academic Policy and Procedures Working Group in 2008, involving academics and professional staff in faculties.

In 2007, the then Policy and Procedures Working Group was charged with drafting a single Special Consideration Policy to cover all coursework degrees under the Melbourne Model. The policy was to provide clarity and consistency to staff and students across degrees, a need highlighted by the introduction of breadth within the new generation undergraduate degrees and the development of Student Centres. The resulting Special Consideration Policy was endorsed by Academic Board in 2008.

At the time of its approval, it was expected that features in the Learning Management System (LMS) designed to support the new policy would be in place by 2009. Delays in the development of changes to LMS and constraints in the existing student system (Merlin) mean that student systems do not have the capacity to facilitate parts of the proposed Special Consideration Policy. As a result, the policy was revisited, taking into account current business requirements and also existing system functionality. It was agreed to delay full implementation, with the exception of disallowing mark adjustment as an outcome of a special consideration application. This was endorsed by Academic Board in February 2009.

What Is Changing?

- Mark adjustment will no longer be allowed as an outcome of the special consideration process from Semester 1, 2009 onwards. .
- A revised HCAP form has been introduced. The revisions encourage Health (and other) professionals to provide information relevant to the student's capacity to complete the required assessment tasks in their subject(s).
- Students are now able to submit a Statutory Declaration in lieu of an HCAP form where there is no appropriate professional or other person who can verify their circumstances, and yet the circumstances are still serious enough to warrant special consideration.

Impacts for Staff

- Academic staff will no longer be able to adjust a mark for an item of assessment, exam or an overall subject result following an application for special consideration. Additional assessment or a special examination can be offered and a revised mark entered as a result of additional assessment or a special examination.
- Academic staff, student advisers and enquiry staff will need to advise students that mark adjustments will not be allowed as an outcome of an application for special consideration and that a Statutory Declaration can be submitted in lieu of an HCAP form under certain circumstances.

Impacts for Students

- Students can no longer have a mark adjusted as an outcome of an application for special consideration. Additional assessment or a special examination can be offered. If the student elects to complete additional assessment or sit a special examination and achieves a higher mark the subsequent mark will apply.
- Students can now submit a Statutory Declaration instead of the HCAP form where there is no appropriate professional or other person who can verify their circumstances, and yet the circumstances are still serious enough to warrant special consideration.