



## Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework

Approved by: Academic Board on 13 December 2000  
Last amended: [insert date] (Sections 5-7)  
Date of effect: [insert date]

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## Part 1 - Preliminary

### 1.1 Citation

This Resolution is made by the Academic Board of the University, pursuant to Clause 11(5) of the *University of Sydney (Academic Governance) Rule 2003* (as amended).

### 1.2 Commencement

This Resolution will commence on **[insert date]**.

### 1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this Resolution is:

1.3.1 to set out the principles underpinning the University's approach to assessment and examination of coursework award courses and units of study; and

1.3.2 to identify responsibilities for ensuring that the principles are implemented.

### 1.4 Authority

The University of Sydney (Coursework) Rule 2000 (Division 1, 5(4)) requires the Academic Board to establish policies for assessment and examination of coursework.

### 1.5 Revision

This document is maintained by the Academic Board. It is published by the Academic Board and also as part of the Manual for Examiners.

### 1.6 Associated Rules and Resolutions

This Academic Board Resolution refers to, or should be read in conjunction with, the following Senate and Academic Board Resolutions relating to student appeals against academic decisions.

1.6.1 Student Appeals against Academic Decisions: Senate Resolutions

1.6.2 Student Appeals against Academic Decisions: Academic Board Resolutions

1.6.3 Academic Board Resolutions: Academic Honesty in Coursework

1.6.4 University Privacy Policy

### 1.7 Definitions

In this document:

**Academic unit** means a Faculty, academic college, Board of Studies, school, department, centre or interdisciplinary committee of the University;

**Assessment** means examinations, assignments and other assessable work that contributes to a student's academic results in a unit of study;

**Award course** means a formally approved program of study which can lead to an academic award granted by the University;

**Coursework award course** means an award course not designated as a research award course. While the program of study in a coursework award course may include a component of original, supervised research, other forms of instruction and learning normally will be dominant. All undergraduate award courses are coursework award courses;

**Dean** means the dean of a Faculty or the director or principal of an academic college, or chairperson of a Board of Studies;

**Department** means a Faculty (if the Faculty does not have an internal departmental structure), Board of Studies, school, centre or interdisciplinary committee of the University. Departments are responsible for determining and implementing assessment, including examinations, in units of study, and in this document the term refers to the department responsible for assessing and examining the unit of study concerned;

**Disability** has the meaning prescribed in section 4 of the *Disability Discrimination Act* 1992 (Cth), and includes chronic medical conditions;

**Enrolled Student** means a student enrolled in an award course of the University;

**Faculty** means a Faculty or college board as established in each case by its constitution, or, where applicable, a Board of Studies. Faculties are responsible for award courses, and in this document the term refers to the Faculty responsible for the award course concerned;

**GDA (General Disposal Authority)** means a General Disposal Authority issued by the State Records Authority under the NSW State Records Act 1998. The University is required to comply with these GDAs in keeping its records; **Misadventure** means an unforeseen accident, mishap or personal misfortune;

**Norm-referencing** means the interpretation of scores on a measure that focuses on the rank ordering of students not their performance in relation to criteria;

**Scaling** means any system for the adjustment of scores or marks where such scores or marks are to be compared against a norm;

**Script Retention Period** means the period from the date of release of results to students during which departments are required to arrange for coursework students to request, peruse and if required copy their script. The Script Retention Period is four (4) months;

**Special Consideration** has the meaning prescribed in section 5.2;

**Standards-referencing** means a form of referencing against predetermined standards for grades. Predetermined standards are written in terms of grade descriptors, identifying key characteristics of performance for each grade and key differences in performance between the grades;

**Student** means a person admitted to candidature in an award course of the University, but does not include a person whose candidature has ceased; and

**Unit of study** or **unit** means a stand-alone component of an award course. Determining and implementing assessment, including examinations, in each unit of study is the responsibility of a department.

## Part 2 - Principles, Criteria and Responsibilities for Assessment

This Part of the document identifies the principles that should underpin student assessment, and, based on those principles, sets out the criteria which student assessments should satisfy. This leads on to the responsibilities of the University, departments and faculties, academic staff, and students, in ensuring that these criteria are met.

### 2.1 Statement of Principles

Any system for assessing the progress and achievement of students must be effective, efficient and acceptable. Furthermore, there is a tight link between what students believe are the aims of assessment, and how they learn.

#### 2.1.1 Effective Assessment

2.1.1.1 Effective assessment achieves the goals and purposes for which it is undertaken, and does not create perverse incentives. Assessment can have a number of goals and purposes, some of which may be mutually exclusive. These potential conflicts can be minimised by explicit statements about the goals and purposes of each assessment.

2.1.1.2 The goals and purposes of assessment must reflect and reinforce the goals and purposes of the curriculum. In doing so, the assessment must be a representative test of the knowledge, understanding and skills to be achieved by successful completion of the curriculum. This requirement for representativeness also applies to any further assessment or re-assessment which students may be required to undergo.

2.1.1.3 The University's academic honesty policy is implemented.

2.1.1.4 Assessment is often classified as formative or summative. Most assessments include both a formative and summative component.

2.1.1.4.1 That aspect of assessment which is **summative** is used to certify competence, or to arrange students in a rank order of merit. It certifies the attainment of a standard, and is used as the basis for progression to the next part of a course, or to graduation. Success at summative assessment is an important goal for students, and will have a powerful impact on the way they study and learn. While summative assessment may motivate students to learn, it should not be the means by which students are induced to study. "Knowledge acquired under compulsion has no hold on the mind" (A. N. Whitehead).

2.1.1.4.2 That aspect of assessment which is formative is used principally to provide students with feedback on their progress in learning. Not only does it reinforce successful learning, but it is an opportunity for students to expose the limitations in their knowledge and understanding, rather than to hide them. For this

reason, tasks which focus largely on the formative aspect of assessment should not be the sole contributor to decisions about progression or graduation.

Further, feedback from formative assessments should be presented within a timeframe that will enable students to undertake the additional learning they need in order to remedy their weaknesses. Feedback should also be provided in a form that students find useful in identifying their strengths, and in pinpointing areas for improvement. However, feedback should be presented in ways that will encourage self-reliance in learning and in assessment, rather than dependence on authority. Formative assessment also provides students with opportunities for practice on the types of assessment instrument that will be used in summative assessment. Summative assessments can provide useful learning experiences, but their formative value should not be over-estimated.

2.1.1.4.3 Both types of assessment can be used to provide feedback to teachers about the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and information that can be used in program evaluation.

2.1.1.5 Assessment may have unintended or negative consequences. For example, an assessment which ranks students in order of merit may encourage competitive attitudes and activities, which may not be appropriate in a world where co-operation, collaboration and teamwork are increasingly valued. Likewise, an assessment which is marked solely by academic staff may not be the best way of encouraging teamwork and peer-review, if these are valued activities. Again, an assessment which rewards the recall of isolated facts is unlikely to encourage students to explore the meaning of what they are learning, and to synthesise information from different sources. Thus the potential unintended and negative consequences of an assessment should be explored carefully before a particular type of assessment is implemented.

## 2.1.2 Efficient Assessment

2.1.2.1 An assessment that is efficient for **students** will maximise the benefit that they derive from the assessment for the effort that they expend on preparation for it. The benefit will depend on the type of assessment: for a final (summative) examination, the benefit will be the mark or merit grade obtained. For a primarily formative assessment, the benefit will be the quality, quantity and timeliness of feedback that students receive to assist their future learning.

2.1.2.2 An assessment that is efficient for **academic staff** will likewise maximise the benefit arising from the effort invested in developing, implementing and marking and providing feedback to students on

the assessment. Benefits will include the benefits to students described above, but also feedback to staff on the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and the intangible benefit of contributing to a quality learning environment. Against this must be set not only the effort invested, but also the opportunity costs of assessment – the benefits foregone through non-participation in other valued activities, e.g. research.

- 2.1.2.3 The minimum number of assessment tasks needed to make judgements about students' progression and learning should be used.

### 2.1.3 **Acceptable Assessment**

- 2.1.3.1 Any assessment system has to be acceptable to a number of stakeholders: the general community, the professions, Government, the University, academic staff, and students. While some of these stakeholders' requirements will be largely met by assessments that are effective and efficient, other factors contributing to acceptability should also be recognised:

- 2.1.3.1.1 For the **community**, there must be an assurance of the competence of graduates to carry out whatever roles and functions in society their degree has qualified them to undertake.

- 2.1.3.1.2 For the **professions**, there must be an assurance that the education and training components of the registration or licensing requirements for their industry will be met by a recognised course of study conducted by the University.

- 2.1.3.1.3 For **Government**, there must be confidence that the public funds invested in the University are being well spent. In addition, the assessment system should comply with any quality standards imposed by funding agencies.

- 2.1.3.1.4 The **University's** assessment system must match contemporary best practice. The assessment system must also be consistent with the image and ethos of the University. Assessments must be conducted in such a way that they do not attract negative publicity to the University, e.g. through the exposure of academic dishonesty, or impersonation, or unreliable marking. The system must also maximise opportunities for students in the University's equity target groups to realise their full potential, and should take account of the diverse cultural backgrounds of students enrolled at the University.

2.1.3.1.5 For **academic staff**, effectiveness and efficiency will contribute largely to the acceptability of the assessment system.

2.1.3.1.6 Likewise, for **students**, effectiveness and efficiency will contribute largely to acceptability. However, for students, there are three additional considerations. First, the assessment system should not generate levels of stress which are so high that they interfere with performance. Secondly, students have an increasing financial investment in their tertiary education, and they too will require value for money. Finally, the assessment system must be seen to be fair and transparent.

#### **2.1.4 Student-centred Assessment**

Assessment plays an important role in determining what students learn and understand. Indeed, a substantial amount of research in student learning in higher education has established a tight link between (1) students' perceptions and understanding of what the assessment aims to test, and (2) what and how much students learn. Consequently, the student-centred or student-focussed perspective of teaching and learning encouraged by the Academic Board requires not only that assessment systems be effective, efficient and acceptable but also that students be helped to understand the assessment system, what is to be assessed and why it is to be assessed and how it is to be assessed.

### **2.2 Criteria for Effective, Efficient and Acceptable Assessment**

The principles of efficiency, effectiveness, acceptability and student-centredness imply that the University's assessment system should satisfy the following criteria.

#### **2.2.1 Curriculum**

2.2.1.1 Each unit of study has an explicit statement of the generic and specific goals of the unit.

2.2.1.2 The curriculum for each unit of study is consistent with the University's Generic Attributes of Graduates.

#### **2.2.2 Scope of Assessment**

2.2.2.1 The assessment is generally representative of the generic and specific goals of the unit of study. While it will rarely be appropriate to test the achievement of all goals on every occasion, each assessment can be shown to address a balanced portfolio of goals.

2.2.2.2 The scope and nature of the assessment for each unit of study is explicitly stated at the beginning of delivery of the unit. This statement should include details of all aspects of the assessment system (but see 2.2.5.4 below). Reference should also be made to the Unit of Study outline requirements contained in the Academic Board Resolutions: *Management and Evaluation of Coursework Teaching*.

2.2.2.3 The formative or summative nature of each assessment task is explicitly stated.

### **2.2.3 Assessment Instruments**

2.2.3.1 The assessment instruments employed (written paper, practical task, etc.) are capable of validly testing the goals of the unit of study.

2.2.3.2 The assessment instruments possess reliability and reproducibility.

2.2.3.3 The length of each assessment balances the demands of validity and reliability on the one hand, and efficiency on the other.

2.2.3.4 Students have had the opportunity for formative practice or experience on each type of instrument that is used summatively.

### **2.2.4 Assessment Timetable**

2.2.4.1 Assessments are timetabled to take account of other academic demands on a student's time, e.g. other assessments, or the requirements of other units of study.

2.2.4.2 Adequate arrangements are made to cater for students with disability or other special needs to ensure transparency, fairness and equity.

2.2.4.3 Formative assessments are timetabled to provide adequate time for feedback and remediation before summative assessment.

2.2.4.4 In courses or units where failure at summative assessment requires remediation and re-assessment before progression in the course or unit, summative assessments are timed, if possible, to allow adequate opportunity for remediation and re-assessment.

2.2.4.5 Where an assessment requires the submission of an assignment, students are given reasonable opportunities to attempt and submit the assignment. Submission deadlines take reasonable account of practical difficulties that students might encounter, such as equipment failure and the temporary unavailability of materials, reference texts and so forth (technical and other difficulties should also be taken account where they affect other types of assessment, e.g. oral presentations, laboratory work, etc).

### **2.2.5 Assessment Tasks**

2.2.5.1 Each task is demonstrably valid (it tests achievement of one or more of the goals of the unit of study).

2.2.5.2 The set of tasks comprising the assessment of a unit of study can be shown collectively to test a balanced and sufficient proportion of the goals of the unit of study.

2.2.5.3 The scope and nature of each task is explicit. This includes such matters as the goals to be tested, the criteria against which

performance will be measured, the weighting of items and of tasks / papers, the due date for submission or testing, the conditions under which examinations will be sat, the conditions for extensions of time (if any), the penalties for lateness or for violation of assessment specifications (e.g. length).

2.2.5.4 Any necessary modifications to the scope or nature of any assessment task are communicated in writing to all students enrolled in the unit before the halfway point of the unit, and are applied so that no student is differentially disadvantaged by the modification.

## **2.2.6 Marking**

2.2.6.1 Tasks are marked according to the published criteria (such as marking schema and grade descriptors) which have been provided to students when they receive the unit of study outline (as required under the Unit of Study provisions in the Academic Board Resolutions: *Management and Evaluation of Coursework Teaching*).

2.2.6.2 Decisions which may impact on a student's progression or graduation do not depend on judgments made by a single marker without review by colleagues for calibration or moderation.

2.2.6.3 Decisions which may impact on a student's progression or graduation are based solely on the assessments specified for that purpose.

2.2.6.4 When marks from tasks are combined, the methods used are statistically and educationally defensible.

2.2.6.5 Any necessary retrospective modifications to the marking criteria are published at the same time as the results of the assessment.

2.2.6.6 Academic judgments, particularly adverse academic judgments, are supported by documented evidence of failure to satisfy academic standards. Frequently, such documentation will be entered directly onto an assignment or examination script. Where documentation exists beyond such markings on assignments and scripts, such documents will be placed on the relevant student file registered in the University's records management system, TRIM.

2.2.6.7 Due account is taken of the University's special consideration policy in relation to illness or misadventure.

## **2.2.7 Feedback**

2.2.7.1 Feedback to students is sufficiently timely to allow remediation where necessary.

2.2.7.2 Feedback to students, either individually or in a group, is sufficiently detailed to be a useful identification of strengths and

deficiencies, yet not so detailed as to discourage self-reliance in learning and assessment.

2.2.7.3 Feedback to students includes access to their own scripts, and to other relevant assessment material provided that students may not access test materials which are secured for re-use in subsequent assessments.

2.2.7.4 Evaluative feedback from students to academic staff is incorporated into teaching and learning strategies, and into future assessments.

## **2.2.8 Remediation**

2.2.8.1 Adequate academic support is given to students to clarify errors, misunderstandings and so forth requiring remediation.

2.2.8.2 Appropriate support is given to students undertaking remedial learning.

## **2.2.9 Re-assessment**

2.2.9.1 Where allowed, re-assessment of students refers to situations where failure at the first attempt requires remediation and subsequent re-assessment. Such re-assessment needs to be delayed long enough for useful remedial learning to have been possible.

2.2.9.2 The criteria for successful re-assessment are published, and consistent with the criteria applied to the first assessment.

## **2.2.10 Appeals**

The grounds for, and mechanism for, appeals against academic judgments which will impede progression or graduation are explicit.

## **2.3 Rights and Responsibilities**

The responsibilities of the University, departments and faculties, academic staff, and students in meeting these criteria for effective, efficient and acceptable assessment are detailed in this section.

### **2.3.1 Responsibilities of the University**

The University, through the Vice-Chancellor and the Academic Board, has a responsibility to ensure that:

2.3.1.1 assessment practices are explicit, fair, transparent and consistent across the institution;

2.3.1.2 assessment practices and procedures are monitored at the level of departments and faculties to ensure that they meet the criteria set out in this document;

2.3.1.3 resources are available to provide staff with access to information and expertise on the theory and practice of assessment;

2.3.1.4 facilities to sustain good assessment practice are available to staff and students;

2.3.1.5 policies regarding special consideration pursuant to illness or other misadventure, and for students with special needs, are explicit and consistently applied;

2.3.1.6 policies on academic honesty, legitimate cooperation, plagiarism and cheating, including sanctions and penalties for breaches, are explicit and consistently applied; and

2.3.1.7 appropriate mechanisms of appeal are available and publicised.

### **2.3.2 Responsibilities of Departments and Faculties**

Faculties and departments have responsibilities to ensure that:

2.3.2.1 the principles and criteria for assessment are adopted;

2.3.2.2 policies, consistent with the principles and criteria, are clear and available to all staff;

- 2.3.2.3 wherever required, individuals are identified and given appropriate authorities to act as the Principal Examiner of each unit of study;
- 2.3.2.4 information on all aspects of assessments, including criteria for satisfactory and meritorious performance, penalties for plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty, attendance and class requirements and the weighting of those assessments, are explicit to students within one week of commencing a unit of study;
- 2.3.2.5 assessment tasks reflect the relevant objectives of the unit of study, the goals for the degree and the generic attributes of graduates, as appropriate to the academic level of the students;
- 2.3.2.6 formative assessment is incorporated so that feedback is provided in a timely fashion during each unit of study;
- 2.3.2.7 appropriate amounts and a range of valid assessment instruments are applied, monitored by Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees;
- 2.3.2.8 students have an opportunity to become familiar with all assessment instruments that will be used summatively;
- 2.3.2.9 assessments are coordinated as far as possible to provide appropriate workloads for students across their units of study;
- 2.3.2.10 when marks are combined, statistically defensible methods are applied;
- 2.3.2.11 sanctions and penalties are made clear in the unit of study outline and are applied fairly;
- 2.3.2.12 examination scripts and other forms of summative assessment (other than secure databanks) are held for the mandated script retention period and appeal period for review by students;
- 2.3.2.13 publicly posted results are identified only by student number (students' names may only be used with the permission of the student, in accordance with the University Privacy Policy);
- 2.3.2.14 mechanisms of appeal against decisions on assessments, consistent with University policy, are in place;
- 2.3.2.15 accurate records of assessments and supporting academic judgements, and how they were formed, are made and kept for the mandated retention periods (see General Disposal Authority 9 governing University records); and
- 2.3.2.16 that all documentation arising from assessment action of a non-routine nature are placed on the relevant student's file (reference should be made to the University of Sydney By-law 1999, the

Academic Board Resolutions: *Student Appeals Against Academic Decisions* and the University Recordkeeping Policy for the procedures for dealing with documentation relating to misconduct and appeals).

### **2.3.3 Responsibilities of Academic Staff**

Individual members of staff have responsibilities to:

- 2.3.3.1 familiarise themselves with the University and Faculty requirements for best practice in assessment;
- 2.3.3.2 ensure that each assessment is congruent with the objectives of the unit of study;
- 2.3.3.3 adhere consistently to the policies of the Faculty and department on submission of assignments and other assessment items;
- 2.3.3.4 review and give timely and adequately detailed feedback on work submitted;
- 2.3.3.5 communicate clearly the requirements for assessment (including the balance of formative and summative assessment, procedures, weighting of marks and methods to be used, as well as penalties for plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty) at the commencement of each unit of study and, if changes are needed, discuss them with the students; such changes should not occur later than halfway through the relevant teaching period and should be applied so that no student is significantly disadvantaged;
- 2.3.3.6 ensure that reports of students' progress and achievement are based only on relevant evidence;
- 2.3.3.7 contribute to the setting and review of assessment tasks within their discipline to ensure fairness and the application of agreed standards;
- 2.3.3.8 ensure that students are assessed in a variety of ways and have opportunities to develop their own skills in self-evaluation;
- 2.3.3.9 evaluate their own performance as assessors and examiners against the principles and criteria. Such evaluations will assist in the continued enhancement of the learning environment and provide evidence to support applications for promotion;
- 2.3.3.10 not to discuss or disclose personal information, such as results, about students to anyone who does not have a legitimate right and need to have access to the information in order to carry out their duties (refer to the University's Privacy Policy); and
- 2.3.3.11 ensure adequate records relating to feedback, assessment, re-assessment and appeals are made and attached to the appropriate student file.

## **2.3.4 Rights and Responsibilities of Students**

Students have a right to:

- 2.3.4.1 be informed of all aspects of assessment policies and practices in each unit of study, including the criteria to be met and sanctions or penalties for breaches;
- 2.3.4.2 consistent application of policies and practices;
- 2.3.4.3 the timely return of the results of assessments with appropriate feedback;
- 2.3.4.4 information which allows them to calibrate their own performance against the criteria for each unit of study;
- 2.3.4.5 review their examination scripts and other forms of summative assessment (except those saved for reuse in subsequent testing) for the duration of the script retention period;
- 2.3.4.6 have access to their student file and any other documents relating to the assessment;
- 2.3.4.7 appeal against academic decisions made on the basis of flawed processes, during the appeal period; and
- 2.3.4.8 be informed of mechanisms for appeal.

Students have a responsibility to:

- 2.3.4.9 behave ethically and appropriately, avoiding any action or behaviour which would unfairly disadvantage or advantage another student;
- 2.3.4.10 be aware that a major objective of assessment is the facilitation of learning rather than the achievement of grades;
- 2.3.4.11 use assessments to help them develop strategies for self-assessment;
- 2.3.4.12 be aware of the rules of progression for each unit of study and the requirements for the award of the degree, diploma or certificate;
- 2.3.4.13 be aware of, and abide by, assessment policies and practices, including the University policies about academic honesty, legitimate cooperation, plagiarism and cheating;
- 2.3.4.14 be aware of the means for seeking assistance and advice on assessment within departments and the University;
- 2.3.4.15 ensure that they understand the requirements, including timetables, for examinations and other assessment tasks;

- 2.3.4.16 submit work on time, ensuring that is it their own except when they share ownership of a group project;
- 2.3.4.17 notify staff as early as possible if difficulties arise with the timing or other requirements of assessment tasks;
- 2.3.4.18 advise departments or faculties as appropriate of any substantial absence and be aware of the appropriate use of medical and other certificates in applications for special consideration;
- 2.3.4.19 ensure that they understand the advantages and possible adverse implications of discontinuation or withdrawal; and
- 2.3.4.20 be aware of appropriate mechanisms for appeal.

### Part 3 - Grades

This Part summarises the merit grades awarded in the University's assessment system, and the University's approach to the determination of grades, Honours and Medals.

#### 3.1 Common Result Grades

The Academic Board has adopted a set of grades that will be common to all undergraduate and postgraduate courses which award merit grades for coursework, effective from Semester 1, 1999, as set out in the following Table.

Permanent results			
Grade	Description	Mark Range, if applicable	Comments
HD	High Distinction	85-100	-
D	Distinction	75-84	-
CR	Credit	65-74	-
P	Pass	50-64	-
R	Satisfied requirements	-	This is used in Pass/Fail only outcomes.
UCN	Unit of Study continuing	-	Used at the end of a semester for units of study which have been approved to extend into a following semester. This will automatically flag that no final result is required until the end of the last semester of the unit of study.
PCON	Pass (Concessional)	46-49	Use of this grade is restricted to those courses which allow for a Concessional Pass of some kind to be awarded. A student may re-enrol in a unit of study for which the result was PCON. Each Faculty will determine and state in its course regulations what proportion, if any, may count – e.g. “no more than one sixth of the total credit points for a course can be made up from PCON results”.
F	Fail	0-49	This grade may be used for students with marks from 46-49 in those faculties which do not use PCON
AF	Absent Fail	-	Includes non-submission of compulsory work (or non-attendance at compulsory labs, etc) as well as failure to attend an examination
W	Withdrawn	-	Not recorded on external transcript. This is the result that obtains where a student applies to discontinue a unit of study by the HECS Census Date (i.e., within the first four weeks of enrolment).
DNF	Discontinued - Not to count as failure	-	Recorded on external transcript. This result applies automatically where a student discontinues after the HECS Census Date but before the end of the seventh week of the Semester (or before half of the unit of study has run in the case of units of study which are

			not semester-length). A Faculty may determine that the result of DNF is warranted after this date if the student has made out a special case based on illness or misadventure (see also Section 5.6.7).
DF	Discontinued - Fail	-	Recorded on external transcript. This applies from the time DNF ceases to be automatically available up to the cessation of classes for the unit of study.
<b>Temporary results</b>			
MINC	Incomplete with a mark of at least 50	50-100	<p>This result may be used when examiners have grounds (such as illness or misadventure) for seeking further information or for considering additional work from the student before confirming the final mark and passing grade.</p> <p>Except in special cases approved by the Academic Board [1], this result will be converted to a normal passing mark and grade either:</p> <p>(a) by the dean following a review of examination results pursuant to Part 4 (3)(5) of these Resolutions; or (b) automatically to the indicated mark and grade by the third week of the immediately subsequent academic session.</p>
INC	Incomplete	-	<p>This result is used when examiners have grounds (such as illness or misadventure) for seeking further information or for considering additional work from the student before confirming the final result.</p> <p>Except in special cases approved by the Academic Board[1], this result will be converted to a normal permanent passing or failing grade either:</p> <p>(a) by the dean at the review of examination results pursuant to Part 4 (3)(5) of these Resolutions; or (b) automatically to an AF grade by the third week of the immediately subsequent academic session.</p>

### 3.1.1 Special Cases

At its meeting of 13 October 1999, the Academic Board approved the following policies for dealing with special cases:

#### 3.1.1.1 Incomplete Units of Study

Where a MINC or INC grade arises because all or many students in a Unit of Study have not completed the requirements of the Unit,

the grade will be converted to UCN on the advice of the relevant dean. The students may be engaged in practicum or clinical placements, or in courses extending beyond the end of the semester (e.g. Honours). Heads of departments are encouraged to return UCN and not INC for students in such extended Units of Study. Deans are asked to avoid approving the use of UCN to deal with late results from a completed Unit of Study.

### 3.1.1.2 Students with incomplete results

Deans are authorised to approve the extension of a MINC/INC grade for individual students having a valid reason for their incomplete status.

## 3.2 Distribution of Grades

**3.2.1** There are two main approaches to the award of grades. The **standards-referencing** approach assesses the achievements of students against a pre-determined standard. The **norm-referencing** (with associated scaling of marks) approach, on the other hand, grades students by comparing their achievements with that of other students undergoing the same assessment. (Here standards referencing is not to be confused with criterion referencing. Criterion referencing refers to the criteria to be used to make judgements – it does not usually refer to standards to be used in making the judgements. Standards based assessment usually refers to the general standards to be used in allocating grades.)

**3.2.2** Traditionally, merit grades have been awarded largely on a norm-referenced (with scaling) basis, based on the expectation that, within a certain range, from year to year a relatively constant proportion of the class will achieve a High Distinction, a Distinction, etc. These proportions have been refined over a number of years to provide a basis for equity of examination results particularly in cases where students are shared between faculties. The proportions are cumulative and are based on the number of students who gain a Pass or better in the particular unit of study.

	%HD	%D+	%CR+
First Year	3	14	42
Senior/Upper	4	18	50

It is important to note that the proportions of merit grades may vary from unit of study to unit of study, and from year to year, reflecting differences in the capabilities of different groups of students. Proportions should not be interpreted too literally, particularly with small numbers of students or in units that traditionally set exceptionally high academic standards. The proportions should apply at highly aggregated levels .

**3.2.3** Norm-referencing (with scaling) has several advantages over standards-referencing. It requires no additional information or specification of standards, no estimates of how students will perform in a given assessment, no pre-specification of expected levels of achievement, and it compensates for a range of parameters that are hard to standardize, such as the quality of curriculum and instruction, adequacy of assessment practice, and variation in

student cohorts. It also assists the control of grade inflation and the intercomparison of achievements between different disciplines.

- 3.2.4** Norm-referencing (with scaling), however, has several disadvantages when compared with standards-referencing. It will fail to take account of changes in the quality of students enrolled in the program. It does not require specification of the academic standards reached in the course or unit, making it difficult to benchmark those standards. It is difficult to provide a clear statement of expected levels of achievement using the norm-referencing (with scaling) approach, and it is known that undergraduate students complain frequently about the absence of such information.
- 3.2.5** Recognizing the deficiencies of norm-based assessment, some faculties and departments already engage in standards-based assessment. Each Faculty will have a policy statement on standards applying in that Faculty and how those standards are being assured. Two major approaches to this are (a) a standards-referenced approach, with explicit statement of standards and (b) a norm-referenced (with scaling) approach, incorporating some form of external check on standards. The Academic Board recommends greater use of standards-based assessment, while acknowledging that many faculties and departments *will wish* to retain norm-based approaches to review the distribution of merit grades.
- 3.2.6** Faculties are required to submit an annual report to the Academic Board outlining the approach to be used for awarding grades (i.e. standards-referenced or norm-reference with scaling) in the following academic year. This report will be collated by the Dean of each Faculty from reports submitted by Heads of Schools.
- 3.2.7** The Academic Board commends the following approach for faculties and departments in the implementation of standards-based assessment:
- 3.2.7.1 at unit of study level, identify examples of students' work that are characteristic of achievement at different merit grades (benchmarks);
  - 3.2.7.2 describe the differences between work at different achievement levels in information given to students. Descriptions are likely to be statements such as the following:  
  
"At HD level a student demonstrates a comprehensive understanding of the unit material, and exhibits initiative and self-reliance in critically evaluating and synthesizing ideas related to the unit.";
  - 3.2.7.3 provide students with samples of work at different achievement levels (Note: If samples mean examples of real students' work, then a copy of the signed permission of the student author must be kept for as long as the example is used for this purpose);
  - 3.2.7.4 grade assessments and examinations against the benchmarks, discussing the outcomes with colleagues teaching within the unit and in similar units to refine the standards;

- 3.2.7.5 use norm-referenced statistics to review the distribution of merit grades of standards-based assessment, seeking further justification from Unit of Study Co-ordinators if the distribution appears too aberrant. Such a review must adhere to the policy and any guidelines established by the Faculty or department or provided in unit of study descriptions;
- 3.2.7.6 if some form of scaling of marks is considered necessary by the Unit of Study Co-ordinator because the distribution of grades is not considered appropriate, a statement justifying the scaling with reference to appropriate standards will be included with the submission of final grades and marks. Evidence of a discussion of the justification with a colleague in a similar unit will also be submitted and the final report will be submitted by the Head of School to the Dean of the relevant Faculty. Scale marks are to represent a relation to the standard/s but not a position in a cohort; and
- 3.2.7.7 as part of the information provided to students regarding assessment procedures (see Part 2, section 2 (6) (a)), it must be clearly stated whether or not scaling may be used and the implications of the use of scaling on students' final marks.

## **Part 4 - The Conduct of Examinations**

### **4.1 Principles**

The University's commitment to fairness has a number of implications for the conduct of the University's assessment system, including the conduct of examinations.

**4.1.1** Implementation of the University's Equal Opportunity in Education Policy includes the provision of special examination conditions for students with disabilities or other needs, as published in Part 6 of this document.

**4.1.2** The University's assessment system aims to be fair to all students. Students who experience illness, misadventure or other circumstances beyond their control may therefore receive special consideration as described in Part 5 of this document.

**4.1.3** Students may appeal against the procedures used to arrive at an academic decision. The policies and procedures in respect of student appeals are found in the documents:

4.1.3.1 Principles and Procedures for Student Appeals Against Academic Decisions for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Awards: Academic Board Resolutions.

4.1.3.2 Principles and Procedures for Student Appeals Against Academic Decisions for Postgraduate Research Awards: Academic Board Resolutions.

4.1.3.3 Appeals Against Academic Decisions: Senate Resolutions.

4.1.3.4 Academic Board Resolutions: Academic Honesty in Coursework.

### **4.2 Examination Procedures**

The following procedures are to be followed, except with the permission of the Dean:

**4.2.1** Examiners are strongly encouraged to require no more than 30 minutes of examination per credit point; a shorter time is quite acceptable, especially when students are also assessed progressively. Examinations during the formal examination period will normally be no longer than two hours. The responsible dean may make provision for three-hour examinations in special cases, provided that no unit of study has examinations which are in total longer than the equivalent of 30 minutes per credit point.

**4.2.2** Assessment strategies must be appropriate for the learning objectives of a unit of study, so that there is no requirement that units of study must be examined in the formal examination period. Where a formal examination is conducted during the formal examination period for a unit of study:

4.2.2.1 any unit of study with a value of 6 or fewer credit points will be examined in no more than one examination in the formal examination period;

- 4.2.2.2 any unit of study with a value of more than 6 credit points will be examined in no more than two examinations in the formal examination period;
  - 4.2.2.3 two two-hour and one three-hour examination session(s) may be scheduled each day during the examination period. The three-hour session will be the last one of each day in order to allow students to complete by 6.00 p.m., and
  - 4.2.2.4 no student will be required to sit for more than two examinations on the same day. In cases where a student has three examinations scheduled for the same day, provision must be available for one of those examinations to be taken at an alternative time.
- 4.2.3 There is no formal provision for supplementary examinations, but departments may arrange for further testing in cases of special consideration, in accordance with Academic Board policy and any relevant Faculty policies.
  - 4.2.4 Examinations may be held during classes provided that faculties ensure that the assessment practices for all units of study are reasonable and not structured in a way that may disrupt attendance at other classes. Examiners should consider which forms of assessment may be appropriate to use during classes.
  - 4.2.5 The week after the end of teaching, e.g. lectures, in each semester will be a study break (Stu-vac) with examinations to commence the following week.
  - 4.2.6 Faculties whose examination processes are fully quarantined or contained may conduct examinations outside these guidelines, within the spirit of the agreed procedures. This dispensation cannot apply when it leads to timetable clashes, for example for students taking combined degrees.
- 4.3 Conduct of Examinations and Determination of Results**
- 4.3.1 The head of the relevant department shall be responsible for all academic aspects of the conduct of examinations in the undergraduate and postgraduate coursework units of study taught in that department and shall ensure that they are conducted in accordance with the policies and directions of the Academic Board and the relevant Faculty.
  - 4.3.2 In cases where the teaching of a unit of study is shared by more than one department, **the relevant dean(s) will appoint a head to undertake the responsibilities of a head as set out in section 1 above**, following consultation between the departments concerned.
  - 4.3.3 The head shall appoint a Principal Examiner for each unit of study. Principal Examiner(s) are responsible for:
    - 4.3.3.1 providing a copy of examination paper(s) to the Examinations Section by the specified deadline or, failing this, to print the examination paper(s) locally; copies of all examination papers must be forwarded to the Examinations Section for retention by the University Archives (GDA 9, 19.4.2);

- 4.3.3.2 ensuring security of working papers developed in preparation for the examination, and ensuring that all secure papers are accounted for;
- 4.3.3.3 justifying the returned result from evidence such as mark sheets, annotated examination scripts, minutes of departmental meetings, in case an appeal process requires such evidence. If an appeal is made, all documentation relevant to that student's assessment must be placed on the student's appeal file (such files to be created and maintained on TRIM in accordance with Records Management Systems procedures). All other annotated scripts are to be retained together for each examination for the appeal period (GDA 9, 10.4.1), mark sheets for 12 months (GDA 10.5.1) and minutes of departmental meetings are to be centrally filed where they will be retained for 5 years (GDA 2, 2.4.1)
- 4.3.3.4 for all students in the unit of study concerned, ensuring the security of marks, arranging the collation of marks, and transmitting final results to the head by a date specified by the head.
- 4.3.4 The relevant Faculty will determine the award of honours degrees and the levels at which they are awarded.
- 4.3.5 The relevant Faculty will establish mechanisms for review of results, including those for students affected by illness or misadventure, in accordance with any policies of the Academic Board.

#### **4.4 Processing and Releasing Results**

- 4.4.1 The head will forward the results to the Student Records Office on a date to be determined by the Registrar (where spreadsheets are used for recording final results there needs to be an authorised read-only copy - electronic or paper - which is maintained in the department). In order to minimise delays in the transmission of results to students, the Registrar will normally set this date no later than five working days after the last scheduled examination. This tight timetable requires that special attention be given to scheduling large enrolment examinations as close as possible to the commencement of the examination period.
- 4.4.2 Results not forwarded to the Student Records Office by the due date must be approved by the relevant dean. Heads seeking late approval should forward the unapproved results to the Student Records Office who will contact the appropriate dean.
- 4.4.3 Departments are normally expected to make results available to students directly after they have been confirmed by the head.
- 4.4.4 The Registrar shall ensure that results are released to students as soon as possible after receiving them from the head. The final numerical marks obtained by undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students in completed units of study will be made available to them by printing such marks on the Examination Result Notices forwarded to them.

- 4.4.5 Departments are required to make arrangements for providing undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students, on request, with the numerical marks for each assessment task (where there is more than one), which comprise the final numerical mark reported on Examination Result Notices. Records of such marks should be retained for 12 months (GDA 9, 10.5.1).
- 4.4.6 Departments are asked to make arrangements for undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students, on request, to peruse and, where they so desire, to obtain (a copy of) their examination scripts or any other written answers to examination questions, provided that:
  - 4.4.6.1 the request is made within the script retention period, and
  - 4.4.6.2 in the case of examinations involving confidential examination papers, where examination questions are used on more than one occasion, students may peruse under supervision, but not obtain a copy of, the examination paper and their answers to the questions.
- 4.4.7 The destruction of examination scripts and marking sheets after the respective retention periods should be documented and authorised by the head of the unit on a form available from Records Management Services.

#### **4.5 Security of Examination Papers and Results**

- 4.5.1 In the preparation of examinations, it is essential to ensure the security of questions and papers so that examinations are fair to all students and preclude (as far as possible) opportunity for unfair advantage for any individual or group. There is also a need to keep results secure while they are being entered and summed so that they cannot be changed.
- 4.5.2 Computer systems used to prepare examinations and to record results are potential sources of security breaches. Information transmitted over networks (including networked printers and email), and information saved on shared devices is potentially insecure. The most secure computer system may be a non-networked computer with data stored on removable media (e.g. floppy discs) that are normally locked away, and with a non-networked printer. Care should be taken to avoid casual observation of computer screens by unauthorised persons.
- 4.5.3 Working papers should be kept secure at all times, without clearly indicative labelling. After use, all working papers should be shredded or discarded via the University's Confidential Bag Waste service.
- 4.5.4 To prevent any breakdown in security when questions are re-used in subsequent examination papers, variation is encouraged as much as is practicable, within the constraint that questions requiring selected responses (including multiple choice variants) need to be trialled adequately to ensure their validity and reliability.
- 4.5.5 The Principal Examiner of a unit of study is responsible for security of working copies of examination papers during the examination preparation process for that unit. Complete copies of the examination paper should not be circulated

by mail, by fax or by any other electronic means, but should be delivered by hand or courier.

- 4.5.6** It is assumed that the University Printing Service and Central Duplicating are secure. All final examination papers should be delivered to Examinations by hand or courier. All reproduction of examination papers should be undertaken by University Printing Service through the Examinations Office.
  - 4.5.7** The Principal Examiner will ensure that all secure papers used in the examination are returned/accounted for by the Examinations Office or internally if the examination was a departmental one.
  - 4.5.8** Students' examination scripts should be retained by the department for the specified script retention period. During this time, students have a right to access their own written paper. Papers should be destroyed after the script retention period.
  - 4.5.9** All examination results recorded by individual staff members must be held securely, and handed on expeditiously to Principal Examiners.
  - 4.5.10** Final results, appropriately checked and validated, whether recorded in the form of hard copy or electronic media, should be sent by courier or by hand to the Student Records Office, or transmitted electronically with appropriate security protocols.
  - 4.5.11** Possible breaches of security or misconduct during an examination must be reported to the Principal Examiner and, if appropriate, to the Registrar. All unusual events, breaches of security or difficulties encountered in the setting, transport, marking or entering of marks should be reported to the head, if possible before the head determines the results of the examination.
  - 4.5.12** Any paper whose security may have been compromised should be re-set.
- 4.6 The Use of Computers and Calculators in Assessments**
- 4.6.1** It is generally expected that "written" student assignments will be presented as documents printed from a relevant computer program. The ability to prepare such documents is an expected generic skill of graduates, and the University provides access in a variety of ways to computers that may be used by students to prepare assessment items. Where the submission of word-processed work is required, students shall be given adequate advanced notice of the requirement.
  - 4.6.2** Departments should recognise that hand-held computing devices may allow students to take large amounts of information into examinations. Acknowledging the equity issues associated with the cost of powerful advanced hand-held computing technologies, and the difficulty faced by examination supervisors in assessing the power of particular devices, it is University policy that such hand-held devices normally are not permitted in formal examinations. Departments may however develop examinations and assessments in which such devices are permitted, and in doing so should consider the equity, supervisory and logistical implications.

**4.6.3** The University will provide suitable non-programmable calculators to be supplied to students during examinations. Each department will decide whether students are supplied with these calculators during all or some of its examinations. Departments or faculties may elect to provide students with an approved list of calculators for use in examinations (e.g. the approved calculator list for 2 Unit Mathematics issued by the NSW Board of Studies).

#### **4.7 Examinations – Emergency Evacuations**

When an examination room is evacuated, the relevant Dean shall determine whether the examination shall be resumed at the earliest opportunity, or whether the examination shall be re-sat by the affected students. Where the Dean is not available, the appropriate Associate or Sub-Dean shall be consulted. If this person also is not available then the examination is deemed to be abandoned. The following principles are also to be employed:

**4.7.1** Only the examination/s in the affected rooms is/are deemed to be abandoned. Students should be advised by the room Supervisor-in-Charge that the examination will not resume after the evacuation. Where the examination is also being held in other buildings (not affected by the emergency), those sessions will continue as normal. Where an examination room has been evacuated, students must remain in the immediate vicinity and examination supervisors must continue to ensure that no communication occurs between students.

**4.7.2** The moment the Supervisor-in-Charge leaves the examination room, the examination question papers, whether confidential or not, are deemed to be compromised and must be declared invalid for future use.

**4.7.3** The moment the Supervisor-in-Charge leaves the examination room, students' work (i.e., answer booklets, computer answer sheets, etc) must be deemed null and void for the purposes of marking.

**4.7.4** At the time of evacuation, examination supervisors must inform the department concerned of the abandonment of the examination and advise the students to contact their department in person as soon as possible and no later than the following working day to obtain information about re-assessment.

**4.7.5** In the event of the abandonment of an examination, departments should ensure that the affected students re-sit the examination/s as soon as possible.

**4.7.6** Students are advised to remain in Sydney and not make any overseas or interstate travel plans until the official end of the examination period.

The University's policy on Illness and Misadventure applies in the circumstances of an abandoned examination.

## **Part 5 - Special Consideration Due to Illness and Misadventure**

### **5.1 Introduction**

**5.1.1** Assessments are designed to provide feedback on performance or to establish that students have achieved an adequate standard to proceed or to graduate. The University's assessment system is designed to ensure that conditions are fair to all students, as consistent as possible and that individual students are not disadvantaged by adverse personal circumstances beyond their control or by the activities of other students.

**5.1.2** Generally, serious illness or misadventure will be taken into account when considering a student's performance in a course or unit of study. There is, however, a clear distinction between longstanding illness or difficulties which prevent students from attending classes or completing required work or which seriously interfere with their capacity to study for long periods and short-term illness or misadventure that may prevent a well-prepared student from sitting for an examination or completing a particular assessment. In general, the provisions of Special Consideration are intended to apply to the latter situations.

**5.1.3** Students who bear a primary carer responsibility toward another person at the time of the assessment may apply for Special Consideration based upon illness or misadventure on the part of the person for whom they bear the responsibility, and which affects their ability to prepare for or perform the assessment in the same manner as if the illness or misadventure was their own.

### **5.2 Principles for Dealing with Cases of Special Consideration**

**5.2.1** Special Consideration is a process that affords equal opportunity to Enrolled Students who have experienced circumstances that adversely impact their ability to complete an assessment task.

**5.2.2** Enrolled Students who are granted Special Consideration will nonetheless be required to demonstrate achievement of designated learning outcomes.

**5.2.3** An Enrolled Student who is capable of attempting an examination should do so, notwithstanding any claim for Special Consideration.

**5.2.4** All claims for Special Consideration will be genuine and will be made with good intent. Students seeking to use Special Consideration as a means of gaining an unfair advantage in the assessment of designated learning outcomes will be unsuccessful, and may be subject to disciplinary action.

**5.2.5** Other Students will not be disadvantaged by the approval of a request for Special Consideration.

**5.2.6** All claims for Special Consideration should be considered in the same manner across the University, but the response may vary depending on the circumstances of the illness, misadventure and assessment.

For example, consider the instance of a student who provides a medical certificate as evidence of a sprained wrist, and applies for Special

Consideration in two assessments. In the first, which is a creative performance assessment, the academic judges that the sprained wrist would be a serious impairment to the assessment task and a replacement task is scheduled. In the second assessment, which is a traditional examination, the University accepts that the student's ability to write is impaired, and provides a writer to transcribe the student's answers.

**5.2.7** Multiple and recurring claims for Special Consideration may be an indicator of a student at academic risk, as defined by the Academic Board policy "Identifying and Supporting Students At Risk".

**5.2.8** Requests for Special Consideration should be lodged within five working days of the assessment. Where circumstances preclude this, a student may still apply, but must provide a reasonable case for the delay in application. The Faculty will not decline an application on the grounds of lateness where a reasonable case is provided.

### **5.3 Responsibilities**

#### **5.3.1 Responsibilities of the University**

The University has a responsibility and obligation to:

5.3.1.1 ensure that its policies on special consideration are publicised to all academic staff and students;

5.3.1.2 ensure that its policies on special consideration are implemented and applied consistently across all faculties;

5.3.1.3 promote best practice in considering applications for special consideration; and

5.3.1.4 ensure that fair and well-publicised procedures are applied for the consideration of any cases where students are applying for special consideration.

#### **5.3.2 Responsibility of faculties**

Faculties have a responsibility and obligation to:

5.3.2.1 develop procedures for considering applications of special consideration which ensure:

5.3.2.1.1 timeliness of consideration of applications of special consideration;

5.3.2.1.2 fair consideration of applications of special consideration;

5.3.2.1.3 accurate reporting of how an academic judgment was formed;

5.3.2.1.4 respect for privacy; and

5.3.2.1.5 that all parties are informed of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the application of special consideration.

5.3.2.2 ensure consistent application of University policies and faculty procedures both at a Faculty and department level.

5.3.2.3 ensure that there are clear and appropriate processes in place, consistent with the University's policies, so that students are treated fairly and equitably. These processes should be promoted widely and clearly in plain English.

5.3.2.4 ensure that two or more academic staff are involved in reaching an academic judgment regarding a student's formal special consideration application (see Sections 5.5.2 and 5.6) and that the process of determining that academic judgment is recorded in detail.

### **5.3.3 Responsibility of Students**

Students have a responsibility and an obligation to:

5.3.3.1 become familiar with University policy and Faculty procedures relating to special consideration;

5.3.3.2 act in accordance with the principles of special consideration as set out in this Resolution;

5.3.3.3 provide the relevant information to their Faculty offices as soon as practicable and certainly within five working days of the due date of the assessment for which special consideration is sought (see also 5.2.9);

5.3.3.4 act honestly when applying for special consideration; and

5.3.3.5 recognise that a claim for Special Consideration does not guarantee that the claim will be accepted and that general advice to students able to attempt the assessment is to do so, irrespective of whether a claim is lodged.

## **5.4 Serious Illness or Misadventure**

**5.4.1** Special Consideration is a process designed to effectively facilitate and provide students with appropriate means to demonstrate their academic achievements in assessment tasks in units of study, without an impairment on their ability.

It should be noted that only well-attested serious illness or misadventure during a semester or occurring at the time of an examination will warrant special consideration for academic performance. The academic judgement as to whether special consideration will be granted will depend upon both the nature of the illness or misadventure and its timing with respect to the assessment. For instance, a short acute illness supported by a medical certificate on the day of the examination would normally be accepted as causing an impairment to a student's ability to demonstrate academic achievement, but the same illness

occurring several weeks before an assessment would be unlikely to cause such an impairment. The exact nature of misadventure will vary. For instance, serious illness or death of a close family member close to the assessment would clearly warrant consideration.

Occasionally there will be circumstances of a longer term nature, the impact of which on a student's ability to study and undertake assessments without impairment may be protracted and widespread. Such circumstances could include for example extended periods of recuperation from illness, or bereavement.

Under these circumstances, students should feel free to approach their academic advisor/s or counsellor to discuss relevant options and to determine how best to proceed. The intent of these discussions is to provide both the opportunity and forum in which particular needs of the student, and the impact of the relevant life event, can be holistically assessed within a context of ensuring academic achievement. In particular, where circumstances have prevented study for a significant proportion of the semester, an academic judgement, to which the student is a party, must be made as to whether the requirements of the student's study can be met by continuing at that time.

It is possible that one or even a number of special consideration applications may not serve the student's interest in these circumstances, and other options for study management may need to be discussed. These options could include for example, discontinuing with permission, or temporary leave of absence (see the *University of Sydney (Coursework Rule) 2000 (as amended)*). International students may need to seek advice regarding visa requirements prior to making any changes to enrolments. Assistance can be sought from the International Office.

#### **5.4.2** Special consideration will not be given in the following instances:

- 5.4.2.1 occasional brief or trivial illness of a one or two week duration that occur one week or more before an assessment is due or an examination undertaken;
- 5.4.2.2 to balance workloads from other units of study, disciplines or faculties. It is expected that in semester assessment tasks in units of study, disciplines or faculties will normally be timetabled to enable orderly completion. However in cases where this is not possible, students are encouraged in the first three weeks of semester to develop an individual study timetable. Academic staff are expected, upon request, to give advice and to assist students to develop a viable work plan for the timely completion of all set assessment tasks;
- 5.4.2.3 I.T.-related problems, except where they could not have been prevented, avoided or the effects minimised by reasonable diligence on the part of the student, and

- 5.4.2.4 Jury Service, Military Service, National sporting, religious or cultural commitments and other unforeseen events are dealt with as Special Arrangements described later in this policy (see Part 7).

## **5.5 Extensions, Reweighting and Groupwork**

### **5.5.1 Informal Extensions**

- 5.5.1.1 An informal claim for Special Consideration in the form of an extension is a claim relating to a non-examination based assessment task for which an extension of less than a week is sought.
- 5.5.1.2 A request for an informal extension may be granted following agreement with the Lecturer responsible for the Assessment. An application for an Extension must:
  - 5.5.1.2.1 clearly set out the basis for the claim; d
  - 5.5.1.2.2 be recorded in writing (including by the exchange of emails).
- 5.5.1.3 In assessing whether to grant an extension, the extent to which the student's ability to prepare was affected will be balanced with equity, fairness and consistency for all students.
- 5.5.1.4 An Enrolled Student whose request for an informal extension is not granted by the Lecturer may make a formal request for an extension.

### **5.5.2 Formal Extensions**

- 5.5.2.1 A formal claim for an extension is a Special Consideration claim relating to non-examination based assessment task.
- 5.5.2.2 An application for a Formal Extension must:
  - 5.5.2.2.1 use the specified form;
  - 5.5.2.2.2 be supported by: a Medical Certificate; a Statutory Declaration, where the Medical Certificate is not appropriate and where possible accompanied by other appropriate supporting documentation.
- 5.5.2.3 In assessing whether to grant an extension will take into account the extent to which the student's ability to prepare was affected. The Faculty will determine the duration of the extension.
- 5.5.2.4 Extensions up to 20 working days may be granted. Longer extensions will require the completion of an alternative assignment. Additionally, if an extension of up to 20 working days would extend past the release of other class results for the same assignment and this could be of advantage to the student applying, an alternative assignment will be given.

### **5.5.3 Reweighting or average across other assessments**

- 5.5.3.1 A claim for a reweighting or averaging is a claim relating to assessments that repeat on a regular basis. Repetitive assessments are typically assessments that occur throughout the semester, for instance, weekly class tests, tutorial participation marks, laboratory work in which each assessment alone is not worth a high percentage of the total unit mark.
- 5.5.3.2 A request for reweighting may be granted following agreement with the Lecturer responsible for the Assessment. An application for reweighting must:
- a) clearly set out the basis for the claim;
  - b) be recorded in writing (including by the exchange of emails).
- 5.5.3.3 In assessing whether to reweight, the extent to which the student's ability was affected will be balanced with equity, fairness and consistency for all students.
- 5.5.3.4 The non-completion of some minor component of assessment must not compromise the integrity of the assessment of the curriculum. Therefore, there may be situations where re-weighting is not permitted on academic grounds: this will be declared in the description of assessment for that unit of study or curriculum. In these cases, students will complete an alternative assessment.
- 5.5.3.5 Should a student miss more than one third of the regular assessment component, the student will be required to submit an alternative assessment. The mark for this alternative assessment will replace the missed component of the repetitive assessment.
- 5.5.3.6 An Enrolled Student whose request to reweight an assessment is not granted by the Lecturer may make a formal request for Replacement Assessment.

### **5.5.4 Groupwork**

Where one or more members of a group suffer an illness or misadventure,

- 5.5.4.1 if recovery from the illness or misadventure is such that, in the opinion of the teacher, continuation from the affected members is most impaired, no Special Consideration is necessary;
- 5.5.4.2 where the contribution is impaired in the opinion of the teacher;
- a) the member or members suffering illness or misadventure may apply for Special Consideration and if successful, will be given alternate assessments. The claim of Special Consideration should note that it is in respect of group work and will be made as described in section 5.6.2;

- b) the members of the group who are not suffering the illness or misadventure may apply for Special Consideration. The assessment task will be redefined for these members of the group by the teacher, based on the contributions they were to make and assessment will be based on this redefined task. The teacher, on the merits of the situation, may allow an extension of time. The claim of Special Consideration should note that it is in respect of group work and will be made as described in section 5.6.2.

## **5.6 Replacement Assessment**

- 5.6.1** A claim for a replacement assessment is a claim relating to an examination-based assessment.
- 5.6.2** An application for a replacement assessment must:
  - 5.6.2.1 clearly set out the basis for the claim on the specified form;
  - 5.6.2.2 be supported by:
    - a) a Medical Certificate or other authorised certificate provided by a registered health practitioner;
    - b) a Statutory Declaration, where the Medical Certificate is not appropriate and where possible accompanied by other appropriate supporting documentation; and
  - 5.6.2.3 be recorded in writing (including by the exchange of emails or completion of web forms or similar process).
- 5.6.3** Replacement assessment should assess the same skills and knowledge, with appropriate preparation, as the original assessment, irrespective of the form of the replacement assessment.
- 5.6.4** The Faculty is responsible for setting the date of replacement assessment. If a student is unable to attend the replacement assessment, they may lodge a further application for replacement assessment.
- 5.6.5** An Enrolled Student may withdraw a claim for Replacement Assessment made prior to, during or immediately after an Assessment (typically an examination) at any time prior to the release of the results for that Assessment. An Enrolled Student may seek academic advice regarding the withdrawal of a claim for special consideration, except from an academic who is associated with the assessment.
- 5.6.6** Where a successful claim for special consideration is made prior to, during or immediately after an assessment (typically an examination), any replacement assessment will be treated by the Faculty as a first attempt and the results of any original attempt at the assessment will be deemed not to have occurred.
- 5.6.7** Where an Enrolled Student, for demonstrated good reason, is unable to attempt a replacement assessment, or the Faculty is unable to construct a valid form of assessment, the Faculty will, where reasonable, determine alternative means of assessment. Both the faculty and the student will use their best endeavours to

complete the replacement assessment within six weeks of the date of the final examination in that unit of study. When the assessment is unable to be completed in that period for the reasons described earlier in this paragraph, the Faculty will award a DNF grade to the student.

## **5.7 Medical Certificates**

- 5.7.1** Medical Certificates submitted to the University in support of a special consideration claim must:
- 5.7.1.1 be issued in accordance with the guidelines of the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and the NSW Medical Practitioners' Board;
  - 5.7.1.2
    - a) indicate the date on which the medical examination took place
    - b) indicate the date the Certificate was written ; and
  - 5.7.1.3 provide an assessment of the impact of the illness on the ability of the enrolled student to achieve designated learning outcomes.
- 5.7.2** Where circumstances exist that enable a medical practitioner to certify that a period of illness existed prior to the date of medical examination, the Medical Certificate must clearly detail those circumstances.

## **5.8 Procedures**

- 5.8.1** Applications for extensions up to seven days, and reweighting or averaging marks will be decided by the Lecturer responsible for the assessment.
- 5.8.2** Applications for all other forms of Special Consideration will be decided by a faculty Special Consideration panel.
- 5.8.3** The Panel will be composed of a senior academic responsible for coursework (e.g., Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies, Coursework degree coordinator or the like) and two academic staff. Academic staff serve on the Panel on a rotating basis.
- 5.8.4** The Panel will meet with sufficient regularity to ensure that students receive a decision on an application within one week of submission of a completed application.
- 5.8.5** The responsibilities of the Special Consideration Panel are to:
- 5.8.5.1 assess all applications and approve or decline them in accordance with this policy;
  - 5.8.5.2 ensure students and unit of study Coordinators are notified of the outcome of all applications by email within 24 hours of the Panel meeting, and
  - 5.8.5.3 keep detailed minutes and records of all meetings and decisions, and report as required.

- 5.8.6** The responsibilities of Unit of Study Coordinators/Heads of Disciplines/Schools\* are to:
- 5.8.6.1 Ensure students are notified of this policy and the procedures to be followed when applying for Special Consideration;
  - 5.8.6.2 Require that any student requesting a variation to assessment dates follows this policy. No other adjustments can be granted, and
  - 5.8.6.3 Apply the form of consideration decided by the Panel.
- 5.8.7** Replacement assessment for final exams may be administered centrally by the Examinations Office / Faculty (?). An exam schedule for replacement assessment will be published by the faculty upon release of the standard exam timetable.
- 5.8.8** Replacement assessments for mid-semester and other in-semester tests, and other exams will be administered by Faculties.

## **5.9 Students with a Disability**

- 5.9.1** Students with a disability<sup>1</sup> who wish to obtain reasonable adjustments for their disability must register with and seek the support of the Disability Services Office (see also Part 6).
- 5.9.2** A student with a disability may, notwithstanding his or her registration with the Disability Services Office, and prior provision of reasonable adjustments for the disability, make a claim for special consideration due to illness or misadventure, in accordance with this Resolution.

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<sup>1</sup> The definition of disability is based on the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)* and includes; deafness/hearing impairment; blindness/vision impairment; physical disability; specific learning disability; psychiatric disability; acquired brain injury; chronic medical conditions and temporary disability.

Services are provided through Disability Services where:

- A student has a disability as defined in the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)*; AND that disability impacts on the student's University studies; AND the student has supporting documentation, i.e., medical documentation describing the disability and any corresponding need for services and/or adjustments.

When assessing whether an adjustment is 'reasonable', the Disability Services Officer will consider in consultation with academic or other staff if appropriate:

- The inherent requirements of the course that demonstrate core learning outcomes
- The extent to which a disability impacts upon study, and
- The effect, if any, of the adjustment on other students or the teaching and learning process.

Disability Services also assists students with temporary disabilities (e.g. broken limb) to access reasonable adjustments and services.

#### **5.10 Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards**

In exceptional circumstances involving serious illness or death, award of *aegrotat* and posthumous degrees and diplomas may be made. In this circumstance, the Dean, acting on behalf of the Faculty, would then authorise the Registrar to certify that the conditions for the award of the degree or diploma had been met.

## Part 6 – Reasonable Adjustments for Examinations and Assessment

Students who have registered with Disability Services and have satisfied the University's requirements for supporting documentation may be eligible for Accessible Examination and Assessment Arrangements. Students seeking registration with Disability Services must meet the definition of disability within the Disability Discrimination Act (1992).

- 6.1** Students with a permanent or temporary disability that will impact on their ability to demonstrate the extent of their knowledge and ability in an examination or assessment may apply for accessible examination and/or assessment arrangements. The provision of any accessible examination and/or assessment arrangement is in keeping with the University's Equal Opportunity in Education guidelines.

Students wishing to apply for accessible examination and/or assessment arrangements on the grounds of medical, physical, sensory, psychiatric condition or learning disability must register with the Disability Services.

- 6.2** To register with Disability Services, the student must supply current relevant specialist documentation in support of their application. Documentation will indicate the nature of the condition, whether temporary or permanent, current treatment and condition management, the likely impact on the student's ability to study, and recommendations for adjustments. The Disability Service determines eligibility for adjustments and informs the student and faculty of required reasonable adjustments available, thus helping to ensure consistency and equity in the application of these procedures, as well as facilitating the University compliance with the DDA legislation.

- 6.3** Once registration with the DS is complete, students are required to notify the DS if they wish to apply for adjustments or accessible examination and assessment arrangements. Disability Services sends students an email attaching an application form at the time the examination timetable is released. The completed form must be returned to Disability Services for accessible examination and assessment adjustments to be provided.

- 6.4** Accessible examination and assessment conditions include, but are not limited to: extra time for reading, writing, resting or toilet breaks, use of a scribe, examination papers in alternative formats, use of assistive technology, ergonomic furniture, modified lighting, using a designated room and experienced supervisors, a separate room with scribe or assistive technology, rescheduling, and spacing of examinations into the deferred exam period.

- 6.5** Examination conditions for Formal Examinations are organised and supervised by Examinations – Student Centre.

- 6.6** In-department examinations, within semester assessment, practical and oral assessments, are managed by the faculty. Responsibilities of the Faculty include:

6.6.1 notifying student in timely manner of the confirmed adjustments, and time and location of adjusted examination;

6.6.2 provision of notified adjustments and accommodations including supervision, scribes, and equipment. Disability Services provides assistance with specialist

equipment, ergonomic furniture and access to assistive technology. Disability Services also have a list of trained scribes and supervisors who can be employed by the Faculty, and

- 6.6.3 responsibility to ensure that adjustments approved for the original formal exam period apply to and are delivered for any replacement assessment.
- 6.7** Faculty staff are required to implement the examination and assessment adjustments as notified by Disability Services. Students are not required to undertake an examination when the notified adjustments are not provided accordingly, nor are they then required to lodge Special Consideration. A further test shall be provided by the Faculty with the required adjustments.
- 6.8** A student with a disability may, notwithstanding his or her registration with Disability Services and prior provision of reasonable accommodations or adjustments for the Disability, make a claim for Special Consideration due to Illness or Misadventure. The student will be required to note on the Special Consideration form whether they have applied for accessible examination and/or assessment arrangements for the assessment for which they are applying for Consideration.

## Part 7 - Special Arrangements for Examination and Assessment

### 7.1 Coverage

- 7.1.1** Special arrangements may be made available to any student enrolled at the University of Sydney who is unable to meet assessment requirements or attend examinations because of one or more of the following situations:
- 7.1.1.1 essential religious commitments or essential beliefs (including cultural and ceremonial commitments);
  - 7.1.1.2 compulsory legal absence (e.g. jury duty, court summons, etc);
  - 7.1.1.3 sporting or cultural commitments, including political/union commitments, where the student is representing the University, state or nation;
  - 7.1.1.4 birth or adoption of a child;
  - 7.1.1.5 Australian defence force or emergency service commitments (including Army Reserve); and
  - 7.1.1.6 when continuing employment is jeopardised.
- 7.1.2** Deans and/or faculties may consider special arrangements for situations other than those mentioned above at their own discretion and on a case-by-case basis.
- 7.1.3** Special arrangements are intended to support the University of Sydney's commitment to Flexible Learning. However it must be recognised that the University and its faculties, while making every reasonable attempt to accommodate student needs, may not be able to provide special arrangements for assessment and/or examination in all cases, e.g. it may not be possible to make flexible arrangements for clinical placements, practicums, etc.

### 7.2 Types of Special Arrangement

- 7.2.1** Special arrangements for assessment or examination may include but is not limited to the following:
- 7.2.1.1 alternative dates for submission of assessments;
  - 7.2.1.2 provision of alternative assessment tasks; and
  - 7.2.1.3 alternative examination times/arrangements.
- 7.2.2** Faculties or departments/schools are encouraged to deal with each application for special arrangements on a case-by-case basis and to provide a flexible response to applications. In cases of an extended absence, faculties should discuss the option of withdrawal without failure with students. Unit of study and course co-ordinators would be best placed to determine when a student's absence from the University would reach the point of making it improbable, if

not impossible, for the student to meet the requirements of the unit and/or course even with special arrangements for assessment and examination.

### **7.3 Timelines for Applications**

**7.3.1** Any student who wishes to seek special arrangements for assessment or examination is to advise the Faculty which administers the unit of study affected by the request:

7.3.1.1 at the time of enrolment with regard to religious beliefs or commitments relating to moveable feasts, prayer or worship times, or with regard to other requirements of their religion which may have an impact on the types of assessment and/or examination they can undertake; and

7.3.1.2 as soon as possible after being notified of a requirement to be absent from the University in the case of other types of commitment.

**7.3.2** Faculties will advise students of the cut-off dates for lodgement of requests for special arrangements with regard to assessment due-dates and examination times. It is expected that faculties will consider late requests for special arrangements where the student's attendance is affected by a compulsory absence or late notification of cultural or sporting representational commitments.

**7.3.3** With regard to examinations held during University-wide examination periods, the following may be used as guide by faculties for cut-off times:

7.3.3.1 Notice of intent to apply for special arrangements with regard to an examination to be received within 2 weeks of the publication of the examination timetable.

7.3.3.2 Full application and all supporting documentation to be lodged with 1 week of submitting notice of intent to apply for special arrangements.

### **7.4 Supporting Documentation**

**7.4.1** Faculties have the right to expect students to provide sufficient and relevant supporting documentation in English with any application for special arrangements. Such documentation may include, but is not restricted to:

7.4.1.1 in the case of religious beliefs or commitments, a supporting letter from the student's mullah, pastor, rabbi or equivalent religious or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians' leader;

7.4.1.2 in the case of a compulsory absence, a copy of the summons, subpoena, court order or notice of selection for jury duty (faculties may ask to sight the original document);

- 7.4.1.3 in the case of sporting, cultural or political/union commitments, supporting documentation from the organising sporting, cultural or political/union body;
- 7.4.1.4 in the case of parental or adoption commitments, a certificate from a medical practitioner or midwife stating the expected date of birth or documentation from the relevant adoption agency concerning the expected date of placement;
- 7.4.1.5 in the case of defence force or emergency services commitments, supporting documentation from the student's brigade or unit;
- 7.4.1.6 in the case where continuing employment would be jeopardised, supporting documentation from the student's employer; and
- 7.4.1.7 in the case of other situations being considered by the Dean and/or Faculty, such documentation as is considered necessary by the Dean and/or Faculty.

**7.5** Students must also provide contact details to enable the Faculty to seek further advice from the person or body which issued the supporting documentation used in the application.