

**Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination  
of Coursework**  
**Non-collated Faculty Responses**

- **Engineering and Information Technologies**
- **Law**
- **Pharmacy**
- **Science**
- **Veterinary Science**

## Engineering and Information Technologies

Dear Louise,

Below is the feedback from the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies

Regards,

Irena Koprinska  
Associate Dean L & T  
Faculty of Engineering and Information Technologies

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Feedback from School of IT, on draft Academic Board policy concerning special consideration

We have identified several aspects of the proposal that seem to us in need of refinement or reconsideration.

1. In a number of places, the document refers to decisions that can be made by the "lecturer" or "teacher" and which are then to be recorded by the "unit of study coordinator". Examples are in sect 5.5.1.2, 5.5.3.2, 5.5.4.1-3. A unit is often lectured or taught by a casual or adjunct employee, and we feel that it is unwise to expect such people to have close knowledge of university procedures, also, dealing with such issues would place an excessive administrative workload on them. We urge that all decisions on such matters be made by academic staff (either by the unit coordinator for these simple extensions etc, or by at least two staff members for the heavyweight formal process as mentioned in 5.3.2.4)
2. The change from the university-specific practitioner certificate to a standard medical certificate has considerable risks. We acknowledge that the description of sect 5.7.1.3 would "require" the medical certificate to provide enough information for a judgement on the case; however we wonder about the pragmatics. Our experiences, before the current policy was developed, showed many cases of un-informative medical certificates (such as the infamous "URTI"). For the proposal to work out, we need to see how doctors would be informed of the need to indicate such an assessment of impact, and how the university would deal with certificates that lacked this level of detail.
3. item 7.4.1.6, that permits special arrangements on the basis of pre-existing "essential employment", is too vague and is open to too much interpretation. We fear that many students will claim their employment is essential on financial grounds, and we think it is very important that the university does not weaken the focus on education, in face of growing numbers of students who are employed for many hours without correspondingly reducing their study load.

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Feedback from A/Prof Tim Wilkinson, School of Civil Engineering

1 - This policy seems very long and unnecessarily prescriptive in how academics should deal in certain situations such as extensions, reweighting etc. With such a long policy, it is difficult for academics to read, follow and understand, and they will almost certainly make a mistake, which leads us open to unnecessary appeals.

2 - Why do we need a separate section 7 on 'special arrangements' for jury duty, etc. This should be incorporated into Section 5 (in fact most of section 7 says "follow the principles of section 5")

3 - The minutes of the committee that formulated this policy seem to indicate a very long discussion on certain wordings and definitions. Why does each uni policy need to have a separate definitions section. Have a common glossary applicable to all uni policies.

4 - The policy should be commended for finally addressing "multiple of recurring claims for special consideration" (Clause 5.2.7) and noting that this is an indicator of at risk. Unfortunately there is a small but non trivial number of students who repeatedly apply for spec con for insurance or other reasons, and this takes up a huge amount of academic and admin time. However there is no indicator of how one is to deal with this? If someone puts in XXX special consideration applications in a given semester, or 1 every single exam period, does this mean we can put them on the at risk list? Given that all other parts of the policy seem extremely detailed in the instructions, it is surprising no details are given here.

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Feedback from A/P Alan Fekete, School of Information Technologies

I found the way the document framed sections 5.5 and 5.6 to be very confusing; it suggests that students make a claim for a particular treatment (eg reweighting, or extension or replacement assessment). However, even in the details here, we see cases where different treatment may be needed because of circumstances (eg material already returned as in 5.5.2.4 or the situations of 5.5.3.4 and 5.5.3.5). Thus I suggest reframing these sections with section headings and phrasing based not on the treatment, but on the type of task for which consideration is sought. For example one process is used for major assessments [substantial weight, one of only one or two assessments in the unit that provide evidence about a particular outcome of the unit]. Here a simple request might lead to extension of  $\leq 1$  week (as described in 5.5.1), and a formal request might lead to a longer extension, or other treatment (including alternate assessment) if the simple request is declined (as described in 5.5.2). Another category is requests about assessments that repeat; this is discussed in 5.5.3, and the typical treatment would be reweighting. Another category is groupwork, as discussed in 5.5.4. Finally there is special consideration for examinations which should lead to replacement assessment (as described in 5.6)

Another point is that several places speak about simple requests going to the "teacher" or "lecturer". This is not well-defined, it is dangerous since "lecturers" are sometimes casual or external, and it is especially difficult in cases where there are multiple lectures with different staff. I think all decisions in simple requests should be made by the unit coordinator (a single, well-defined member of academic staff).

## Law

Dear Louise,

We have the following responses to the proposed revised Assessment and Examination resolutions:

1. In 2.3.4 it should be clear that it is based on experience over the course of the degree and not in each unit of study as otherwise the clause suggests that we could not set an exam unless previously the students have had a practice exam.
2. 2.2.8 requires that 'appropriate support' should be given to students undertaking remedial learning. Although this is a general statement of principle it is unclear what is meant by 'appropriate support'.
3. Under Part 3, Distribution of Grades, we still do not think the distinction between standards-referencing and norm-referencing is sufficiently clear and there is no acknowledgement of the widespread use (and legitimacy) of both forms in any one assessment task.
4. We would like some guidance on 3.2.7 and whether or not a reference to the academic board 'commending' a certain practice makes it mandatory or not.
5. 4 Students ought not be able to take a replacement assessment up to 6 weeks after the final exam. This could mean that the replacement assessment could be undertaken during the next semester. The replacement assessment should no longer be available 3- 4 weeks after the final exam.
6. 4.5.5 the Pro Dean will need to remind staff not to send draft exams to other staff members for comment by email.
7. Part 5 which deals with special consideration will have the most impact on our workload because it replaces the current system of mark variation with one of replacement exams. We can expect a lot more 'reassessments' in the future which will take up staff time in drafting and overseeing the running of those examinations. The regime also sets down a number of other remedies students may request such as 'simple extensions' and 'formal extensions'. We are not sure how these interact with replacement assessments, it may be possible for a student to request all three in respect of one piece of assessment.
8. 5.4.2.2. We do not have the resources to provide individually tailored academic plans for our students. This would only be possible in small faculties with small numbers.
9. 5.6.4. This clause is far too generous. If a student cannot complete a replacement assessment at the time set up by the faculty, then the student ought to be awarded a DNF. The clause also leaves it open for the student to make multiple application for replacement assessment.
10. 5.5.3. A faculty ought to be able to 'opt out' of the reweighting provisions. Certainly as it stands, a cautious approach will be that reading guides ought to make this stipulation. Also the Academic Policy ought to make it clear that optional assessment is not subject to this policy.
11. 5.6.5 appears to envisage that a student may apply for a replacement assessment, before, during or after the assessment as long as they do so before the release of marks. This seems to suggest that they can apply for a reassessment even though they sat the assessment. So if they feel they did not do well, they can run off to the doctor, get a certificate and get another assessment.
12. There is a further practical implication in that, because 5.6.7 requires replacement assessments to be completed within 6 weeks of a final

examination, the effect is that staff may be assessing all year during all term breaks.

Best wishes, Gillian

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Dear Louise,

These are some further comments from the chair of our Teaching and Learning Committee.

Best wishes, Gillian

**From:** Barbara McDonald

**Sent:** Thursday, 15 October 2009 9:45 AM

**To:** Gillian Triggs; Sandie Tolliday; Lee Burns; Fiona Burns; Roger Magnusson; Ross Anderson; David Rolph; Wayne Courtney; Gregory Tolhurst

**Subject:** RE: Assessment and Examination of Coursework (revised)

Dear Gillian,

I understand that Greg and David forwarded some comments yesterday and there are just a couple of points I would make on the proposed Resolutions that might raise concerns or problems for us in the future if they were taken too literally or if a student asked what we were doing about them:

1. 2.1.3.1.6 notes in relation to “stakeholder” interest in assessment that *“students have an increasing financial investment in their tertiary education and they too will require value for money.”* ( the ‘too’ seems to refer to the Government’s interest that public money is well spent.) I think we could have a real problem if we are required to evaluate assessment practices by reference to the money students have spent. This would be the case in any event but will be even more so where we have students who have contributed different levels of fees and particularly in the context of a fee paying JD program.
2. 2.2.4.1 requires us to timetable assessments taking into account other academic demands on students in other units. While we clearly can manage this for formal exams and for assessments where students do only law subjects, we cannot do this for interim assessment where students may be taken any of dozens or hundreds of units in other faculties in the first three years of Combined Law.
3. 2.3.3.5 There is a continuing concern about the implication that each unit of study must include formative as well as summative assessment. I think the best we can say is that we take a whole degree approach here and build formative assessment into the whole degree.
4. 2.3.3.11 implies that we keep a student file with records for each student of feedback, assessment, etc. As far as I know, individual feedback given to students is not added to a file- students often have communication with individual lecturers on a range of assessment issues which may not end up in a “file”. I have often thought that it would be good to know things such as how many extensions or reassessments an individual student has had or requested in the past and for what excuse, but we do not collate this information.

Regards  
Barbara

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Dear Matthew

Please find attached comments that have been received from members of our Teaching and Curriculum Committee.

Kind regards

Sandie Tolliday  
on behalf of Professor Gillian Triggs

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Dear Gillian,

I understand that you have requested comments on the Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework. There are several matters of concern regarding draft special consideration policy:

1 – Clause 5.4.2.2. We do not have the resources to provide individually tailored academic plans for our students. This would only be possible in small faculties with small numbers, [like Agriculture].

2 – Clause 5.6.4. The clause is far too generous. If a student cannot complete a replacement assessment at the time set up by the faculty, then the student ought to be awarded a DNF. The clause also leaves it open for the student to make multiple application for replacement assessment.

3 – Clause 5.5.3. A faculty ought to be able to 'opt out' of the reweighting provisions. Certainly as it stands, a cautious approach will be that reading guides ought to make this stipulation. Also the Academic Policy ought to make it clear that optional assessment is not subject to this policy.

4 – I think that students ought not be able to take a replacement assessment up to 6 weeks after the final exam. This could mean that the replacement assessment could be undertaken during the next semester. The replacement assessment should no longer be available 3- 4 weeks after the final exam.

**Yours sincerely,  
Dr Fiona Burns**

**Dr Fiona Burns | Associate Dean (UG) | Senior Lecturer | Faculty of Law |  
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Hi Greg,

My comments on the Assessment and Examination of Coursework policy – latest draft.

Ta,  
Pete

1.6: should read “relating to Assessment and Examination of Coursework” instead of “student appeals against academic decisions.” Should also refer to the policy on student plagiarism and students at risk.

Part 2: I note that the introduction and much of this section still says “should” rather than “must”. This is the section that many students use in Appeals to claim a breach of policy by the Faculty. **MUST the Faculty abide by all of these principles and criteria? Is a failure to abide reasonable grounds to grant a student appeal?**

2.1.1.4 This section defines two types of assessment, and then says that most assessments include elements of both. The rest of the sections then go on to talk about the two types separately:

2.1.1.4.2 Formative assessment provides opportunities for students to practice before summative assessment.

2.2.4.3 Formative assessments are timetabled to provide adequate time before summative assessment.

**2.1.3.1.6 “Secondly, students have an increasing financial investment in their tertiary education, and they too will require value for money.” What does this mean? I have had a student in an appeal try to claim that one of our assessments did not represent “value for money” (he failed) and wanted a re-assessment on these grounds.**

**2.2 To what extent are these criteria prescriptive? Does failing to meet one of these mean that a student appeal should be allowed?**

If they are prescriptive:

2.2.2.3 “Formative or summative nature of each assessment task is explicitly stated.”

**Is it sufficient to have a % overall value of the mark?**

2.2.6.2 “Decisions which may impact on a student’s progression or graduation” – I assume this doesn’t include graduating with 1<sup>st</sup> class honours vs 2<sup>nd</sup> class honours, for example.

2.2.8.2 says that appropriate support is given to students undertaking remedial learning (no definition), but this puts some onus on academic staff.

2.2.9 No definition of re-assessment. 2.2.9.1 is slightly ambiguous – “Where allowed... refers to situations where failure at the first attempt requires remediation and subsequent re-assessment.” **Should specify “where explicitly required by the assessment regime chosen by the UoS Coordinator” or something.**

2.2.10 Appeals – refers to “academic judgements” but the appeals policy refers to “academic decisions”. Would be preferable to have consistent terminology.

2.3.3 Responsibilities of academic staff

2.3.3.4 “review and give timely and detailed feedback on work submitted” – need a definition of timely and detailed feedback. Who will determine whether the feedback was timely and detailed enough, if a student appeals against a final exam mark claiming they did not receive timely and detailed feedback? Does an assessment

mark equal adequate “detailed” feedback? Is there any onus on students to seek more detail/feedback if they require it?

Student responsibilities

2.3.4.14 “be aware of the means for seeking assistance” – **can we perhaps add “and actively seeking assistance where they feel it is necessary.”**

**3.2 Distribution of grades – is this section prescriptive or just descriptive?** Are the “two main approaches” the only acceptable approaches?

Part 5 – Special Con

5.2.6: “All claims for Special Consideration should be considered in the same manner across the University” – unclear as to what “in the same manner” means.

5.4.2: Special consideration will not be given in the following instances...  
“employment” has been removed from this section.

**Note that 5.4.2.1 has changed from “trivial illness of one or two weeks” to “one or two days”**

5.5 Extensions, reweighting, groupwork. **The policy does not specify any timelines for applications – does this mean that faculties can set their own time limits etc?**

5.5.3 Reweighting. It might be worth including in this section something about “students should note that missing assessments may necessarily prevent them undertaking formative opportunities.”

5.5.3.6 allows students to submit a request for a replacement assessment, but that section relates to examinations, not in-class/interim assessments.

**5.5.3.4 “...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.” Again, this policy puts the onus on academic staff to specify things in advance.** What is the purpose of doing this – except that it will inform students which bits of assessment they could decide to skip and request re-weighting for? This would really only serve students who choose to act dishonestly, as students who actually cannot make the assessments will not be helped by knowledge of what is excluded from this section.

5.6.2.2 “a Statutory Declaration, where the Medical Certificate is not appropriate” – should be reworded to “where **a** medical certificate is not appropriate”?

The policy seems to have revoked the existing requirement of the medical practitioner filling in the medical practitioner form. Instead of a common template we will now have medical certificates which take a variety of forms and may not consistently provide the information required. Can students be denied Special Con on the grounds that the Medical Certificate does not provide sufficient detail/information?

**5.6.4 “If a student is unable to attend the replacement assessment for good reason” Can they apply on the same grounds as the original special con application? I assume the definition of “good reason” is determined by the faculties.**

**5.6.5 A student may withdraw a claim for Replacement Assessment at any time prior to the release of results. What is the purpose of this section?** It seems like a) a backup plan for students – if they think they did well in the exam they can withdraw their application, and b) extra work for academic staff – what if a student submits an application, the replacement exam is developed, and then the student withdraws the application? Unnecessary extra work. If this **MUST** go ahead, students should only be able to withdraw their application up until the time limit closes for new applications. For example, we might say that students must apply for special con within 5 days of the exam. A student would therefore have to withdraw the application within 5 days of the exam. Personally I think it should be shorter than that...

6. Reasonable adjustments

**6.7 Should begin “Except in the case of formal examinations which are administered by the Examinations Office (see 6.5)...”**

**6.8 Student with disability may apply for Special Con. Recommend to “An application for special consideration cannot be made for the same, or substantially the same, illness as that taken into consideration by the Disability Services Office in making a special arrangement for an assessment.”**



**Iqbal Ramzan** *PhD*  
Dean  
Professor of Pharmacy

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**MEMORANDUM TO:** Professor Tony Aspromourgos

**FROM:** Professor Iqbal Ramzan

**DATE:** 16<sup>th</sup> October 2009

**SUBJECT:** Assessment Examinations & Coursework Policy Revision

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Below are comments and concerns raised by the Associate Dean (Learning & Teaching) in consultation with members of staff in the Faculty of Pharmacy regarding the Assessment Examinations and Coursework Policy revision.

*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.*

It needs to be clearly stated that the case for the delay in applying for special consideration must be included in the application.

It should also be clearly stated that in the case of special consideration for exams, the application must be lodged before the exam results are released, or the faculty must at least be notified that the student is considering applying for special consideration so that the result can be withheld.

### **5.3.3 Responsibility of Students**

*Students have a responsibility and an obligation to:*

Somewhere in this section there needs to be a clause along the line of

ensure that all documentation is complete and includes all information required by the faculty to make a fair decision and that information not supplied with the original application will not be taken into consideration, unless the additional information is noted in the original application but not available at the time the application was submitted.

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

This section has been of concern to many staff, who feel that it would be much more appropriate for a student to submit a special consideration application and for the staff member to decide the outcome. While I appreciate that the intent was to simplify the special consideration process for these "minor claims" there is a risk that students who are struggling for whatever reason may slip under the radar because the applications are not being collected in any central place. Others have expressed the opinion that the simplified procedure sends the message that it is OK to miss these assessments if a student could technically miss up to 33 % of these assessments across all UoS in one semester.

In addition, the option to attend another lab class/tutorial group has not even been mentioned as a possible outcome.

The use of a form lays out the information that a student must provide, one member of staff recently received an email from a student that said

"Hello, would it be possible for me to join one of the XXXXXX labs? I had missed labs week 2 and 3 or my previous labs and couldn't do my XXXX that was due for that session. I regret missing those and do not want to fail the subject. Please allow me to attend one of wednesdays labs so that in addition to my monday labs so i can complete the coursework."

The student did not even give a name, let alone a reason for missing the classes. Even when the coordinator requested a name, it was not provided in a second email.

Maybe a university wide on-line form that is emailed to the UoS co-ordinator(s) would be a possibility.

#### **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 of the affected members is not 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 groupwork and will be made as described in section 5.6.2.*

5.5.4.2a states that the students WILL be given an additional assessment, in many cases offering an extension to the whole group is far simpler and the most likely outcome of a special consideration application outcome in a group work situation. The policy appears to be dictating the outcome of an application, while an alternative assessment may be required if a student is unable to contribute at all to the assessment, many group work assessments run over a period of weeks and the most common applications for special consideration only apply to a few days.

#### **5.6 Replacement Assessment**

There is great concern about no longer using the professional practitioner certificate. Even with the PPC, it is still common for insufficient information to be available, without the structure of the PPC the situation will be even worse. I have seen countless medical certificates that simply state "X is unable to study due to illness" with no dates or other information given.

Apart from specifying the information that is required, it also provides the opportunities for counsellors etc to provide an assessment if required.

There is a strong feeling that special consideration for examinations or other major assessments should not be done by an exchange of emails, and that there needs to be a central tracking mechanism to ensure that all applications are processed in a transparent manner by at least 2 members of staff as required by 5.3.2.4

It was also suggested that faculties publish the approximate times of special consideration e.g. Replacement Assessments will be held 2-3 weeks after the end of the formal exam period. So that students are aware of this time and can schedule holidays etc accordingly.

It was also suggested that in the event of exams where it is not possible to give extension or reweighting, that it be specified that a replacement assessment will occur, there are still some faculties that adjust marks of exams for students who are granted special consideration. Since it is not possible, even with detailed information regarding the nature of the illness/misadventure, to

predict how a student would perform in an exam had they not been affected by illness/misadventure, a replacement assessment is really the only mechanism to assess the student which is fair to both that student and all other students.

*5.6.4 The faculty is responsible for setting the date of replacement assessment. If a student is unable to attend the replacement assessment for good reason, they may lodge a further application for replacement assessment.*

It has been suggested that this is limited to ONE further application, to make it clear that students can not continue to submit repeat special considerations.

*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.*

As raised at the Academic Board meeting, that this is too prescriptive in terms that the Faculty WILL award a grade of DNF after the 6 week period as there may be circumstances which warrant an extension longer than 6 weeks. There was also concern that some students may exploit this to receive a grade of DNF rather than F.

*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.*

How is a Doctor going to know what the designated learning outcome is let alone whether a student can meet it or not?

Page 35, Part 6 needs a heading (possibly) Students with Disabilities

*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.*

Again this is very prescriptive, that faculty staff are REQUIRED to implement the adjustments, there have been several occasions in my own faculty where the changes suggested by disability services have been impractical and faculty staff have provided alternatives which not only were more practical but in fact were of greater assistance to the student.

Regards,  
Iqbal Ramzan

## **Faculty of Science response to the draft policy *Assessment and Examination of Coursework*.**

The Faculty of Science acknowledges the need for policy to be regularly reviewed and amended, to address anomalies, and to take into account perceived increases in administrative workloads for both students and staff. While the revisions suggested in the draft policy address some of these issues, the Faculty feels that some areas of the policy revert to previous poor practice and does not constitute an improvement. Additionally some new areas have formalised matters in such a way that workload and bureaucracy will increase for both staff and students.

The Faculty of Science has always maintained an approach to implementing policies such as the Assessment and Examination of Coursework, which is based on the need to have

- clear evidence from both applicants and assessors to inform decisions and to ensure fairness and appropriate support of students, and
- a rigour in processing of applications and decisions which is transparent and relevant to each policy.

The Faculty of Science has always been involved in initiatives which better support students in satisfying the requirements of their degree program, and which lead to implementation of policy in the most efficient manner, particularly where these involve large administrative loads for both students and staff.

In relation to the amendments of the Assessment and Examination of Coursework Policy we have undertaken extensive consultation with approx 30 members of both academic staff coordinating units of study and administrative staff processing applications, including members of all 8 schools/units, ProDeans, Associate Deans, Faculty Managers, Directors of First Year Units, and members of the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee. Following two meetings to discuss and collate all these comments we have prepared a Faculty response to the draft policy highlighting the key areas which we feel need particular attention before the policy is returned to the Academic Board.

We have been diligent in implementing policies in the past and have extensive experience in processing large numbers of applications associated with assessment (approx 2500 special considerations per year). However, unless there are documented problems with our approach in terms of lack of accountability, lack of appropriate support for students, or inconsistency in applying the policy, we feel that the existing policy adequately addresses the assessment of coursework. We do however agree that some areas could benefit from more carefully phrased statements and we welcome these changes.

## Key issues

### PART 5 – Special Consideration

#### Section 5.5.3. Reweighting or average across other assessments and SECTION 5.6 Replacement Assessment

- A number of staff independently raised the point that the wording of the document in section 5.5.3 gives the impression that students may indicate in their special consideration application what type of replacement assessment they want. While we do not think this is the intention of the committee or the policy, we would like clarification and possible re-wording to avoid confusion.
- There is no clear time limit for making applications for replacement assessments (Sections 5.6.7 and 5.5.3).
- We would like it clearly understood, for Sections 5.5.3 and 5.6, that students make an application for consideration and that staff make the decision as to the form of the action and subsequent replacement assessment.
- We would like to clarify the meaning of the term examination-based assessment (Section 5.6.1). We would include all weekly quizzes as well as final examinations – is this the definition assumed by the committee?
- We would like to see a copy of the new application form listed in Section 5.6.2.1, and would like the requirements in Section 5.6.2.3 clarified.
- We would seek clarification of the type of documentation required to make an application with regard to Groupwork (Section 5.5.4), and the difference between a teacher and coordinator for this section?
- We see the potential for scenarios where students will apply for many iterations of replacement assessment eg supplementary examinations, over a period of six weeks (Section 5.6.7). If students subsequently recover they may be precluded from completing assessment and awarded a DNF automatically. This will cause problems if they are completing the last unit for graduation, and we would prefer to leave open the possibility of further assessment after the 6 week period, in genuine cases. In addition DNF is currently granted only in extreme circumstances at present, not as a default.
- We seek clarification on the intention of the statement in the last sentence in Section 5.6.5.

## **PART 5.7 Medical Certificates**

### **Changes to the documentation required when making an application for special consideration.**

- The removal of the PPC, and move back to use of medical certificates, is seen as problematic since less information may be provided to those making decisions about the application. We have found that the PPC provides detailed information about the extent to which students may be disadvantaged, and provides the opportunity for further discussion with medical practitioners. We do not want to lose such information with a move to medical certificates which, in the past, have provided very general statements about illnesses.
  - We would like clarification on the requirement in Section 5.7.1.3 with regard to documenting the impact of the illness on complete assessments, since medical practitioners do not always/routinely provide this information. The PPC effectively solved this problem.
  - We note that there is now only one reference to sighting 'original documentation' in point 7.4.1.2, and are concerned that we will not be able to verify documents presented with applications. The use of statutory declarations may also lead to students providing information which is unnecessary and raises issues of privacy.
  - We are very concerned that the statement which appeared in the previous policy, about family members not signing medical certificates, has been removed in the new policy, and would ask that it continue to appear in the new policy document.
  - We seek clarification s to why the approval to contact the medical practitioner to verify the validity of the medical certificate ahs been removed
- Different types of documentation are now deemed acceptable depending on the type of consideration requested eg formal and simple extensions. We see the potential for loopholes in these sections to be exploited and predict that there will be an increase in the volume of applications. (See also comment on simple and formal extensions below)

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

The new policy in this area makes a distinction between those applications that require documentation (formal extensions, some groupwork, replacement assessment – Section 5.5.2) and those that simply require negotiation with a lecturer, without validated documentation (simple extensions, some groupwork, reweighting/averaging – Section 5.5.1).

- We feel that the practice of asking academics to make appropriate decisions without adequate documentation (Section 5.5.1) will lead to increased workloads, for unit coordinators in particular, and provides opportunities for some students to exploit the process. We question whether a decision not to grant a simple extension is ever going to be followed by a successful application for a formal extension? We are also concerned that scenarios will arise where one request for a simple extension may be awarded and will be followed by another request. When this is rejected students will apply for formal special consideration which will be rejected because it is outside the formal time limit and the student may then resort to lodging an appeal.
- There is complete agreement within the faculty that we want appropriate documentation for awarding any change to assessments; most coordinators agreed that they would give 'simple' extensions very rarely, and require a more formal approach to all their assessments.
- While the intent in awarding simple extensions is acknowledged, we feel that there will be an increase in problems of accountability and equity. In addition, creating a culture of applying for simple extensions may cause serious problems in our faculty, particularly for units with large cohorts( ie 1500 – 2300 students), where we do not have the resources, in terms of space, equipment or staff to replace lab classes or create replacement assessments. Similar issues arise in terms of providing replacement assessments (Section 5.6).

## **PART 7 - Special Arrangements for Examination and Assessment**

### **Sections 7.1.1.6. and 7.3.1.1**

#### **Definitions of Essential Employment**

*Essential* employment needs clear definition, otherwise there will be an increase in applications, issues with equity, and problems with getting appropriate documentation eg family businesses. We have already an increase in requests from students needing to work during timetabled classes. We feel that we will disadvantage students in our degrees if we allow flexible interpretations of 'employment'. Our on-campus degree programs require students to be on campus. We have very limited resources both in terms of providing alternative spaces, and in terms of staff time to rearrange timetables. This issue is becoming especially difficult for laboratory programs.

#### **The proposed process for working with claims on religious grounds**

Claims for consideration on religious grounds (Section 7.3.1) are already dealt with when appropriate, and we feel that the changes suggested in this section will be impossible to implement. We have no resources to collect information about religion at the time of enrolment, but perhaps this is being integrated into the university-wide online enrolment system? Certainly first year students will not be in a position to have read the policy nor to have consulted their timetable for the semester before enrolling. We also feel there are issues of privacy inherent in collecting information at this point.

## **PART 6 – Reasonable Adjustments for Examinations and Assessment**

We understand that an Academic Plan, formulated in conjunction with the Disabilities Services, (Section 6.1, 6.2 6.3) has been trialled in the Faculty of Economics and Business. Will this system be implemented as part of the changes to the policy?

- If this is not the case then it may be necessary to make changes to Section 6.5 to indicate that Disabilities Services will notify Examinations Office of agreed adjustments.
- We would like clarification on how Disability Students fit into the 6 weeks replacement assessment time frame followed by submission of DNF grade (Section 5.6.7), if their disability requires that they need more time?

## **Veterinary Science**

The Faculty of Veterinary Science has concerns about several of the proposed changes to the “Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework” which are detailed below.

The Faculty would see the introduction of simple extensions as outlined in 5.5.1 as introducing inconsistency in judgements and provide a greater workload for staff. The process to be followed by a student applying for a simple extension is clearly outlined but no guidelines as to what might constitute a legitimate basis for such an application is given. This will introduce inconsistency across units of study that are administered by the same Faculty, and indeed across Faculties, since the decision is taken by a single lecturer who is responsible for the assessment. The Faculty feels there will be an increase in the number of students being granted extensions for reasons that would not necessarily meet the strict criteria required for a Formal extension and students being afforded an advantage not granted to their cohort. Those students with a legitimate basis for an extension would have no problem in supporting an application for a formal extension whereas there is no oversight of the granting of these simple extension.

The Faculty would oppose the use of Medical Certificates to support a student application for formal extensions and replacement examinations. Whilst the Academic Board may have expectations as to how a Medical certificate should be completed it is not clear that medical practitioners will be able to, as requested in 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”. Are students to provide these learning outcomes to the medical practitioner and would the medical practitioner be able to make a valid assessment? The currently used practitioners certificate has the advantage of not only asking the medical practitioner for an assessment of the level of impact but also for the duration of such an impact on “the student’s ability to attend classes learn, retain and/or complete assessment requirements”. This wording is clearer to someone who may have limited understanding of current pedagogy. The practitioners certificate also makes evaluation of the length of extensions and timing of replacement examinations by the academics assessing the application easier based on the medical practitioners assessment.

Under part 7 Special arrangements for examination and assessment the Faculty has concerns at the lack of clarity as to what might constitute jeopardy to continuing essential employment (7.1.1.6) . Does this refer to the threat of termination of employment or the financial impact to the student of a missed employment opportunity? It is difficult to financially audit a student as to the impact of a missed employment opportunity with many students claiming to be living precariously in a financial sense. The verification of threats of termination of employment when submitted by students will require the time of an administrative assistant being utilised.

Whilst the expectation is that applications from students for special arrangements be made within published cut-off dates, Faculties are in 7.3.2 to allow late applications for special arrangements where a students attendance is affected by “ compulsory absence” but it is not clear what this constitutes. Students could apply within days of the examination citing changes to their working arrangements leaving a Faculty scrambling to verify the claim and opening the door to a student obtaining an advantage of extra preparation time.