Assessment Working Party
Ethical Principles regarding Special Consideration

Revised 20 October 2008

**Principle 1:** Assessment is solely of student achievement of designated learning outcomes.

**Principle 2:** The purpose of Special Consideration is to provide a process to students who have experienced a limitation on their ability due to illness or misadventure, that allows them, when they are fully capable, to demonstrate achievement of designated learning outcomes.

**Principle 3:** We assume that students making claims for Special Consideration are of good intent and the process is to support them. We assume that any students seeking to gain an unfair advantage at any assessment will not succeed.

**Principle 4:** We identify the existence of both major and minor claims for Special Consideration. We define minor claims as being related to assessment worth 10% or less of the total value of the unit and it not being the final assessment.

**Principle 5:** Minor claims requiring Special Consideration:

The claim is established by agreement with the lecturer associated with the assessment. The basis of the request needs to be presented responsibly and with as much independent evidence as possible provided. The claim may be initially negotiated verbally but, to be valid, the agreement of both parties must be recorded, for example, by exchange of emails. The correspondence requesting the consideration must contain the case for consideration.
An important element is that other students are not to be disadvantaged by the approval of this request.

In general the consideration given will be an extension of up to one week. If longer extensions are necessary, the request will be treated as a major claim. If a minor claim is not accepted by the lecturer, the student can submit a major claim.

Principle 6: Major claims requiring Special Consideration:

6.1 Adequate supporting written evidence is required.

6.1.1 Not all applications for Special Consideration require a medical certificate. These should be sought only when a definitive identification of a health issue and its impact on the student can be provided by the health professional.¹

6.1.2 Medical Certificates will be issued in accordance with the guidelines of the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and the NSW Medical Practitioners Board.²

¹ Medical certificates are legal documents. Medical Practitioners who deliberately issue a false, misleading or inaccurate certificate could face disciplinary action under the relevant Medical Practitioners’ Act (or its equivalent). Medical practitioners may also expose themselves to civil or criminal legal action. Medical practitioners can assist their patients by displaying a notice to this effect in their waiting rooms. [No 5: The Responsibilities of Medical Practitioners, AMA Position Statement: Certificates Certifying Illness – 1998]

² Certificates must be dated on the day on which they were written. Under no circumstances can this be breached. There may be medical conditions which enable the medical practitioner to certify that a period of illness occurred prior to the date of examination. Medical practitioners need to give careful consideration to the circumstances before issuing a certificate certifying a period of illness prior to the date of examination, particularly in relation to patients with a minor short illness which is not demonstrable on the day of examination and add supplementary remarks, where appropriate, to explain any discrepancy. [No 9.1 Date of Certificate, AMA Position Statement: Certificates Certifying Illness – 1998]

If a medical practitioner cannot demonstrate any clinical evidence of the condition with which the patient claims to have suffered, the practitioner should consider completing a letter of support. [No 9.1 Date of Certificate, AMA Position Statement: Certificates Certifying Illness – 1998]
6.1.3 In the case of an illness or other misadventure which cannot be attested to by a health professional, a Statutory Declaration should be provided by the student.

6.1.4 In other cases, appropriate documentation may suggest itself.

6.1.5 An academic in the Faculty will make a judgement as to whether the evidence provided by the student indicates that the student’s ability to complete that assessment was impaired.

The term assessment includes not only the submission of a completed work or the completion of an exam, but the ability to prepare for it immediately beforehand.

6.2 There should be a period in which the completed Special Consideration claim should be submitted. The student may seek to have that period extended and the Faculty will not unreasonably deny that claim for extension so that both parties have a responsibility for managing that extension.

6.3 When Special Consideration is granted, in most cases the appropriate action is to allow another attempt at the assessment. The Faculty shall be responsible for setting the date of any subsequent attempt of the assessment. The student may seek to have that date amended and the Faculty will not unreasonably deny that claim for amendment so that both parties have a responsibility for managing that amendment.

6.4 For successful claims during semester, there may be circumstances where an extension of time to submit work is appropriate but this extension must not provide an unfair advantage over other students.

Principle 7: For successful claims made prior to, during or immediately after an end-of-semester assessment, typically an examination, a further assessment counts as though it were the first attempt and the original attempt is discarded.

A student may withdraw such a claim up until the release of the results for that assessment. The student may seek academic advice regarding this but not from any academic associated with the assessment.
Recognising that a claim for Special Consideration does not guarantee that the claim will be accepted, general advice to students able to attempt the assessment is to do so, irrespective of whether a claim is lodged.

**Principle 8:** Replacement exams should assess the same skills and knowledge, with appropriate preparation, irrespective of the form of assessment.

**Principle 9:** If a student, with good reason, is unable to complete a second assessment, there must be some further assessment process, with the limit that the taking of further assessment does not negatively impact on the subsequent semester’s instruction and study.

With respect to Principles 8 and 9, we recognise that there may be circumstances where third or subsequent attempts at assessment will not be viable, due to, for example, barrier considerations or the inability of the Faculty to construct a valid form of assessment.

**Principle 10:** All claims for Special Consideration should be managed in the same manner, so that students are assured of a consistent response to claims across the university.

**Principle 11:** Students with persistent illness or other problems should be managed through Disability Services, whose judgement will form the basis of an assessment process that provides an assessment effectively on the same basis as for unaffected students. There is no prohibition on a student registered with Disability Services from making a claim for Special Consideration appropriate to the circumstances.

**Principle 12:** A consistent pattern of claims for special consideration, both minor and major, may be an indicator of a student at academic risk.