

## **GUIDELINES FOR ACADEMIC STAFF**

### **STUDENTS UNABLE TO ATTEND COMPULSORY UNIT COMPONENT**

#### **Part A - Dealing with students unable to attend a compulsory unit component**

(1) These guidelines are for academic staff dealing with students who have been unable to attend a compulsory component of a unit.

##### **Compulsory attendance requirements**

(2) The learning guide for the unit must state the dates and times of activities/items/tasks that are compulsory for students to attend, if they are to pass the unit.

(3) These may include tasks that are formally assessed, like class room quizzes, or practicals, and constitute a percentage of the marks for the unit.

(4) Alternatively, they may be activities that, though not formally assessed, require student attendance in order for the student to demonstrate that the learning outcomes of the unit have been achieved. These may be activities requiring participation (and therefore attendance) at tutorials or attendance at mandatory briefing sessions (for example, a briefing session related to Work, Health and Safety for a laboratory-based unit). A unit may have attendance requirements that require the student to attend most of the tutorials, expressed as a percentage, in order to pass the unit.

(5) The University's courses contain online content and do not always require students to attend. It is not reasonable for students to be expected or forced to attend unit components unless they contribute to the learning outcomes of the unit.

##### **Requests from students unable to attend compulsory unit components**

(6) The normal expectation is that students attend compulsory components of units. Students are expected to manage the balance between their studies and other activities (such as employment, family life). Students may have compelling reasons for not being able to attend, but need to make the case to the Unit Coordinator.

(7) The assessment arrangements for units vary (for example, some have no compulsory attendance requirements, others may have academic reasons why attendance at tutorials is essential), so the Unit Coordinator must determine how to respond to a request from a student if they are unable to attend.

(8) Repeated requests from students unable to attend may be a sign that the student is not able to cope with their studies, and may need to be advised about the assistance available from Student Support Services.

(9) All requests from students unable to attend a compulsory unit component must be made in writing to the Unit Coordinator. Students may provide documentary evidence to explain their situation when explaining reasons for non-attendance.

(10) Unit Coordinators should not accommodate these requests if doing so would confer a potential advantage to a student over other students. This is an equity

issue, and academic staff must be able to defend the judgements they make when making concessions to students unable to attend a compulsory unit component.

(11) The following factors will NOT be regarded as suitable grounds for justifying making concessions to students unable to attend a compulsory unit component:

- a. routine demands of employment and employment-related travel;
- b. difficulties adjusting to university life, to the self-discipline needed to study effectively, and to the demands of academic work;
- c. stress or anxiety normally associated with examinations, required assessment tasks or any aspect of course work;
- d. routine financial support needs;
- e. lack of knowledge of the unit requirements of the Learning Guide;
- f. difficulties with the English language;
- g. difficulties with visa arrangements that could have been reasonably anticipated;
- h. ordinary incidences of life such as anticipated change of address, moving home, etc.

### **Determining student requests**

(12) In considering student requests that they are unable to attend a compulsory unit component, staff are expected to take into account the following:

- a. the nature, timing and duration of the student's illness, misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances and how this affected the student's capacity to attend;
- b. whether other students, faced with the same set of circumstances, would be compromised in their capacity to attend. Or whether better time management skills would have allowed the problems to be foreseen and accommodated.
- c. The evidence the student provides to substantiate their application.

(13) The Unit Coordinator must make a judgement as to whether or not the student's situation should be accommodated. See "Outcomes" below.

### **Outcomes**

(14) The Unit Coordinator will make a determination whether to:

- a. Decline the request; the student will be deemed absent from the component;
- b. Re-schedule or provide a replacement assessment task; or
- c. omit the assessment task from the final grade calculation, having determined that the student has otherwise demonstrated the required learning outcomes for the unit.

(15) The Unit Coordinator will inform the student of the outcome of their request via their Western Sydney student email address, as soon as is practicable. The Unit Coordinator may contact the student to discuss the matter further, if necessary.

(16) The outcome of the application will be noted on the student's record in TRIM in accordance with the School's procedures for recordkeeping.

Secretariat  
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