### POLICY

**Disruption to Studies Policy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>This policy governs the processes that enable students to notify the University of a disruption to studies and the basis and mechanisms through which the University will provide support in such situations.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Overview | The University is committed to equity and fairness in all aspects of its learning and teaching. It recognises that students may experience disruptions that adversely affect their academic performance in assessment activities. To assist students through their studies, the University provides support services. Whilst advice and recommendations may be made to a student, it is ultimately the student’s responsibility to access these services as appropriate.  
  
This Policy applies only to *serious and unavoidable* disruptions that arise after a study period has commenced. Such disruptions commonly result from personal, social or domestic nature and may include illness (either physical or psychological), accident, injury, societal demands (such as jury service), bereavement, family breakdown or unexpected changes in employment situations.  
  
Students with a pre-existing disability/health condition or prolonged adverse circumstances may be eligible for ongoing assistance and support. Such support is governed by other policies and may be sought and coordinated through Campus Wellbeing and Support Services. |

### DEFINITIONS

**Event critical study period**: intense academic phase during the study session characterised by the lead-up to or culmination of key academic work.  
  
**Evidence**: documentation outlined in the *Disruption to Studies Supporting Evidence Schedule* that demonstrates the severity and impact of a disruption to study.  
  
**Professional Authority Form (PAF)**: a form to document evidence of medical related disruptions (physical or psychological).  
  
**Special consideration**: the provision of an additional opportunity for a student to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes of a unit or units.  
  
**Serious and Unavoidable Disruption**: 
The University classifies a disruption as **serious and unavoidable** if it:
- could not have reasonably been anticipated, avoided or guarded against by the student; and
- was beyond the student's control; and
- caused substantial disruption to the student's capacity for effective study and/or completion of required work; and
- occurred during an event critical study period and was at least three (3) consecutive days duration, and / or
- prevented completion of a final examination.

### Scope
This Policy will be relevant to:
- undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students;
- staff involved in teaching, assessing or managing units of study at the University; and
- Student Administration and Campus Wellbeing and Support Services staff.

### Policy
In order to support students who have experienced serious and unavoidable disruption, the University will provide affected students with an additional opportunity to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes of a unit.

An additional opportunity provided under such circumstances is referred to as **Special Consideration**. Special Consideration will be granted after careful evaluation of evidence supporting a notification for disruption to studies.

**DISRUPTION TO STUDIES NOTIFICATION**
It is a student's responsibility to notify the University of their circumstances. All students of the University have the right to provide notification of a disruption to studies.

A student may notify the University of a disruption to their studies regardless of whether the disruption meets the **serious and unavoidable** criteria.

To be eligible for Special Consideration, a student must notify the University of a **serious and unavoidable** disruption within five (5) working days of the commencement of the disruption (Disruption to Studies notification). All Disruption to Studies notifications are to be made online via the University's **Ask MQ** system.

**DECISION PROCESS**
The determination of whether a disruption is regarded by the University as being **serious and unavoidable** is a decision made at the Administrative level according to a pre-approved set of criteria described in the **Disruption to Studies Supporting Evidence Schedule** of this Policy.
The evaluation of how a serious and unavoidable disruption relates to an assessment task, which is or was to be undertaken during the period of that disruption, and the determination of appropriate Special Consideration are Academic decisions.

A disruption arising from requirements placed upon a student by a PACE unit is governed by the Participation Activity (Disruption) Procedure.

**EVIDENCE**
A Disruption to Studies notification must be supported by documentary evidence.

The evidence must:
- identify the disruption;
- explain the severity and impact of the disruption; and
- clearly describe how the disruption has adversely affected the student’s capacity for effective study to which an assessment relates.

The University’s Professional Authority Form (PAF) is the only form of documentary evidence for notifications pertaining to a medical disruption (physical or psychological). The PAF must be completed by an appropriate professional authority as specified in the Disruption to Studies Supporting Evidence Schedule.

Notifications pertaining to non-medical disruptions must be supported by appropriate documentary evidence as specified in the Disruption to Studies Supporting Evidence Schedule.

All documentary evidence must be submitted electronically within five (5) working days of submitting the Disruption to Studies notification. The University reserves the right to request and retain the originals of supporting documentation and will conduct regular audits of supporting documentation submitted electronically.

Requests for original documentation will be sent to the applicant’s University email address within six (6) months of notification by the student.

Students must retain all original documentation for the duration of this six (6) month period and must supply original documents to the University within ten (10) working days of such a request being made.

All documentation (in hardcopy or electronic form) relating to a Disruption to Studies notification will be treated in accordance with the University’s Privacy Framework.

The student has the right to withdraw their Disruption to Studies notification at any time.

**SPECIAL CONSIDERATION**
Unit Convenors must grant appropriate Special Consideration in all
cases where the University has found that a disruption is *serious and unavoidable*. 

In cases where a disruption is found not to be *serious and unavoidable*, a Unit Convenor may still exercise discretion in granting Special Consideration. The conditions and processes that apply to the granting of this discretionary Special Consideration must be specified in the Unit Guide for the unit of study in question.

The nature of the Special Consideration granted will be determined by each Unit Convenor on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the *Disruption to Studies Outcomes Schedule* to this Policy.

Where Special Consideration is granted in the form of a supplementary examination, the initial examination affected by the disruption will not be marked. The grade of the supplementary examination will be upheld.

**APPEALS**
A student may appeal an adverse outcome to a Disruption to Studies notification in accordance with the *Academic Appeals Policy* and *Grade Appeal Policy*.

**COMPLIANCE AND BREACHES**
The University may commence applicable disciplinary procedures if a person to whom this Policy applies breaches this Policy (or any of its related Procedures).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact Officer</th>
<th>Chair, Senate Learning and Teaching Committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date Approved</td>
<td>Academic Senate 12 November 2013 and University Council 5 December 2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approval Authority</td>
<td>Academic Senate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Commencement</td>
<td>3 March 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amendment Dates</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date for Next Review</td>
<td>December 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Documents</td>
<td>Academic Appeals Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disruption to Studies Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disruption to Studies Supporting Evidence Schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disruption to Studies Outcomes Schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Final Examination Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade Appeal Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participation Activity (Disruption) Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Privacy Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Professional Authority Form (PAF)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Policies Superseded by this Policy**
The Special Consideration processes outlined in the University Handbooks (both published and online), the Academic Manual and any local policies (Faculty or Department) are replaced by this policy.

Special Consideration Policy approved 7 October 2008.
| **Keywords** | Disruption, special consideration, illness, serious and unavoidable and Professional Authority Form, PAF, withdrawal, supplementary examination. |