Learning Advisory Committee

Guide to Medical Certificates under the Heriot-Watt University Assessment and Progression System

In response to a number of requests from academic and administrative staff, the following paper is intended to provide guidance on dealing with medical certificates under the Heriot-Watt University Assessment and Progression System (HAPS)\(^1\). A common approach across the University, which has also been requested by a number of departments, will ensure equality of treatment for all students who submit medical certificates.

Prior to the introduction of HAPS\(^1\), a student who was absent from an examination but produced a medical certificate would lose an assessment opportunity, although the result would be recorded as MC. The MC would, however, support the student’s case if he or she wished to apply for a further opportunity.

The following guidelines focus on medical certificates in the context of assessment opportunities and recording of grades and apply to all forms of assessment.

Medical Certificates and Assessment Opportunities

The following guidelines apply with regard to all assessment and re-assessment opportunities for students who have presented medical certificates:

1. No assessment has been undertaken

Students who have not been able to undertake any part of the assessment do not forfeit an assessment opportunity by presenting a medical certificate. Such students should be advised to undertake the assessment at the autumn diet, which would be regarded as the student’s first attempt.

Alternatively, the Progression Board may decide to award an appropriate grade (see below), even though no part of the assessment has been completed. In such cases, this will be recorded as the first assessment opportunity. Students will, however, be offered the opportunity to be re-assessed, if he or she wishes to try to obtain a higher grade. In this case, the attempt will be recorded as the second assessment opportunity.

Students who have not been able to complete any part of the assessment due to extenuating circumstances will be entitled to apply to the Student Progress Committee for further assessment opportunities.

2. Part or all of the assessment has been undertaken

In the case of students who have completed a part or all of the assessment and have presented a medical certificate, the Progression Board should take this into account in determining an appropriate grade (see below). This will be regarded as the student’s first opportunity. The student should, however, be offered the opportunity to take a re-assessment, if he or she wishes to try to obtain a higher grade. In this case, the attempt will be recorded as the second assessment opportunity.

Students whose performance in assessment has been affected by extenuating circumstances will be entitled to apply to the Student Progress Committee for further assessment opportunities.

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\(^1\) Previously named the Common Assessment and Progression System (CAPS)
Medical Certificates and Recording of Grades

There are two options available to the Progression Board with regard to the recording of grades for students who have presented medical certificates. The following guidelines will apply:

1. The Progression Board may decide that there is sufficient evidence, which could be based, for example, on coursework already completed or performance in other linked courses, to merit the award of a grade. In such cases, the Progression Board can award a grade in the range of A-D for continuing courses or a grade in the range of A-E for non-continuing courses, provided that the justification for so doing is recorded (Regulation 3 (New) 13.3.3). The Progression Board must also be satisfied that, if the course in question is a pre-requisite, the student has demonstrated the capacity to be successful in the next course in the sequence.

In this instance, the results letter will record the decision in the form of the grade awarded by the Progression Board, but the student will be offered the opportunity to take a re-assessment, if he or she wishes to try to obtain a higher grade.

2. If the Progression Board decides that a grade cannot be awarded, particularly in cases where the student has not completed any part of the assessment, a decision of MC should be recorded against the course(s) after the summer diet. The student should then be advised to take the assessment, either as a first or second opportunity, at the autumn diet and a grade will be awarded accordingly.

In this instance, the initial results letter issued in the summer will record MC against the course(s) and the letter issued after the autumn diet will record whatever grade is awarded by the Progression Board.

Medical Certificates and the Progression Board

The Progression Board in the student’s home department is responsible for making decisions based on the evidence of medical certificates and not the Course Board in service departments, although it is recommended that representatives from service departments attend Progression Boards. The Progression Board has the authority to judge the adequacy and accuracy of all medical certificates presented for consideration. Students should be notified that the signature of authentication on all certificates must be legible.

Summary

The two courses of action in relation to assessment opportunities and decisions (grades) may be illustrated as follows: