

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 4 October 2013

Development of Good Cause Claims in MyCampus

Helen Butcher, Senate Office

Currently students notify absence by completing an absence report in MyCampus and submitting any supporting documentation, while Good Cause claims are required to be submitted directly to Heads of School or nominee. In some cases there may need to be an absence report and a claim of Good Cause (e.g. where absence from exams is due to illness). This can cause confusion. Students may believe that having submitted to MyCampus full information about the illness that caused absence from an exam, the Exam Board will automatically consider this as a Good Cause claim.

In February 2012 ASC agreed that students should be required to submit all Good Cause claims to MyCampus and that Senate Office should work with SLSD to implement this.

Work so far has identified the need for a landing page in MyCampus from which students are clearly directed to either the Absence and/or Good Cause reporting processes. The Good Cause claim forms will be structured in a way which ensures that students must indicate which course(s) and assessments are affected by their adverse circumstances. In developing the Good Cause reporting on MyCampus the following issues have been raised.

1. Staff notification of Good Cause claims

A decision is needed on who should be notified, and when, of new claims submitted to MyCampus.

This issue has caused much debate in relation to notification of absence reports. The current position for absence is that notifications are sent to the course coordinator and course administrator. If no-one is named as course coordinator or course administrator on the course specification then the notifications go nowhere. The default is that Advisors of Study also receive notifications.

Whether or not staff will respond to absence notification will vary, depending on the circumstances of the absence and on the requirements of the programme. With Good Cause, however, it is essential that all claims are considered and also forwarded to the Exam Board. It is therefore proposed that notification of new Good Cause claims be sent to the Assessment Officer and course administrator for all courses affected. The Assessment Officer would then take responsibility for ensuring that all Good Cause claims are considered in accordance with our regulations. Including the course administrator in notifications will provide a safety net in the case of unforeseen absence of the Assessment Officer, and in many areas much of the initial work on Good Cause claims is undertaken by administrative staff.

While it is a requirement for all courses to have an Assessment Officer, there is currently no formal list of Assessment Officers. This would be required for the above process. It is therefore proposed that in order to identify the relevant Assessment Officer, a new field will need to be introduced on the course specification (involving development work for SLSD). Locally, staff would be required to input names and subsequently maintain that record.

An alternative process where no notifications would be made on Good Cause claims has been put forward which would require staff to run Good Cause claim reports from MyCampus at

appropriate points in the session (around submission dates and exam diets). Such reports would provide limited information, but specified members of staff would be authorised to draw the more detailed information and copies of supporting documentation from MyCampus. However, disadvantages to this approach would include potentially more work in running reports where no claims had been submitted; and the need for Assessment Officers to keep track of all assessment submission dates manually, which could be challenging in cases where Assessment Officers cover a large number of courses.

2. Security

Students who submit sensitive personal information to MyCampus are understandably often anxious about the number of staff who may have access to the information. Currently there is wide staff access to absence information on MyCampus. For Good Cause claims it will be appropriate to have different levels of access, as is currently the situation with information concerning disability. (Many staff can see that a student has a disability, while Disability Coordinators have access to more detailed information.) For Good Cause claims, limiting access to Assessment Officer and course administrator may again be most appropriate. As students will be required to specify the course or courses to which the claim relates, Assessment Officers and course administrators for the student's other courses will not be able to access the claims. Implementing the different levels of staff access to Good Cause claims will involve developmental work for SLSD.

In cases where the information is highly sensitive, students will have the option to log a Good Cause claim on MyCampus but provide detail and supporting documentation to Assessment Officers direct.

3. Deletion of Good Cause claims from MyCampus

Currently it is possible for staff to delete a student absence record from MyCampus (e.g. where the student notifies the member of staff that a record was made in error). Within the current development it will not be possible for Good Cause claims to be deleted by staff, although the facility to delete could be provided with further development.

Summary of Proposal and Benefits

ASC is invited to consider for approval the following for students to submit Good Cause claims via MyCampus:

1. Development of a landing page from which students select to input Absence or Good Cause claims – with an explanation of the two processes.
2. All Good Cause claims to be notified in My Campus (even if in particularly sensitive cases, the details of the adverse circumstances are not loaded onto the system).
3. Assessment Officers and course administrators to be notified of all Good Cause claims for their courses in order for claims to be considered through due process and submitted to Examination Boards.
4. Details of Good Cause claims to be restricted to Assessment Officers and course administrators.
5. All Good Cause claims to remain on the system as a permanent record.
6. A pilot of the new system in selected Schools or subject areas.

While the above would require development work for SLSD and significant work by Schools in the initial input of Assessment Officer names into each course record, the following benefits have been identified.

- Increased understanding by students of how and why Good Cause claims need to be submitted, the timescales for this, and a reduction in confusion between Absence reports and Good cause claims;
- Streamlining of procedures ensuring information on Good Cause claims is directed to the correct staff and opportunities to remind students of procedure e.g. automatic reminders of outstanding documents which they are required to submit.
- The move away from paper processing would reduce the risk of lost claims or wider circulation of claims than is necessary;
- There would be a permanent record of Good Cause claims accessible by appropriate staff.