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Management of Support to Ensure the Academic Success of Top Student- Athletes



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saam vorentoe

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Management of Support to Ensure the Academic Success of Top Student-Athletes

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¹ Rules Owner: Head(s) of Responsibility Centre(s) in which the rules functions.

² Rules Curator: Administrative head of the division responsible for the implementation and maintenance of the rules

1. INTRODUCTION

This regulation wants to reconcile the demands on the modern student-athlete with Vision 2030, with inclusivity, innovation, focus on the future and transformation as main characteristics. The main strategic priorities and themes of Stellenbosch University (SU) are broadening access, sustaining momentum of excellence and enhancing our positive impact on society. The objectives remain expanding our knowledge base, promoting student success, increasing diversity and improving our systemic sustainability.

Over the years, SU has produced student-athletes who have performed at the highest level. The performance levels and preparation requirements expected of the modern student-athlete, who must compete at the highest level with the best in the country and even the world, have increased significantly in intensity. Students who are also exceptional athletes must meet the demands of the degree programmes they are enrolled for (classes, practicals, tests, exams, continuous preparation) as well as the ongoing demands of performing well as athletes (training, mental preparation and participation). It is increasingly challenging to meet the demands of an academic *and* a sports career as demanded by structures that only take into account people who are gifted in one area.

It is necessary to establish regulations that offer student-athletes the opportunity to be successful in multiple areas and in this way contribute to the success of the University's institutional priorities. The establishment of similar regulations and guidelines is general practice at other leading universities, both nationally and internationally.

Acknowledgement is given to the existing practice where requests regarding absence, postponement of tests, late submission of assignments and so forth are in general already handled with understanding.

This regulation supports the delivery of graduates who have the graduate attributes that SU strives after. This includes the shaping of developed and cultivated people whose potential has been unlocked in a balanced way. It also acknowledges top athletes as a category of students who possess these attributes.

In addition, the regulation acknowledges that the exposure and media coverage SU enjoys due to sport achievements contribute to the institution's positive positioning in South Africa and have an influence on the recruitment of new students.

2. APPLICATION OF THE REGULATION

Important starting points are:

- 2.1 That within this regulation, the academic responsibility of the top student-athlete is viewed as a given at all times. It is accepted that the top student-athlete will make appropriate arrangements to ensure his/her academic progress;
- 2.2 That there are various common needs among the different sports codes that can be placed under a shared framework; but

2.3 That certain sport codes may have specific needs that will need to be addressed on an individual basis.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 Top student-athlete: any *bona fide* student that complies with the SU requirements of Category A¹ leave;

3.2 PACER programme: an existing programme that offers top student-athletes the necessary empowerment through self-development to help ensure their success with regard to their academic work, sport and personal life.

4. PURPOSE OF THE REGULATION

To establish regulation guidelines for the management and support of the academic needs of top student-athletes at SU.

5. AIMS OF THE REGULATION

The University encourages and supports its students to excel in academic and non-academic areas for the benefit of the individual and the institution. SU considers the holistic well-being of student-athletes to be of paramount importance and assumes that every position and/or employee mentioned in the regulation will act correctly and professionally to assist our top student-athletes. The objectives of the regulation are:

- a) To contribute towards the development of competitive and high-performance student-athletes in an integrated, systemic-holistic way with the aim of optimising their performance and contributions in four important areas: academics, sport, personal life and community interaction.
- b) To be recognised nationally and internationally for excellence and innovation by providing the student-athletes with an environment in which exceptional academic, sport and wider community-based performance, achievements and contributions can be achieved.

6. REGULATION PRINCIPLES

A flexible approach, based on mutual cooperation between the top student-athlete and all other role players, is applied with regard to the academic needs of top student-athletes. This means that in all cases realistic and practically attainable arrangements are made; also with regard to the accreditation of Maties Sport staff members as examination officers (invigilators) for examinations and tests during sports events (tours and tournaments) (see 6.1.4). Final approval resides with the Dean or his/her designated staff member.

Furthermore, it is important that Maties Sport refrain from providing academic advice and this be facilitated by the appropriate units, e.g. Faculties, Department, Student Support Services, etc.

¹ Verwys na: Riglyne vir die oorweging van aansoeke deur studente om verlof tot afwesigheid (VTA)

6.1 Where possible, arrangements are made from the outset with prospective students who fall in this category. These arrangements include the following:

- 6.1.1 Registration of the top student-athlete in a structured extension of his/her degree programme. In such a case the extension is normally limited to one additional year added to the normal timeframe of the degree programme;
- 6.1.2 Interruption of studies, where the student-athlete, whether for a semester or a full year, cannot participate in his/her chosen degree programme;
- 6.1.3 These special concessions are arranged with the permission of the relevant university environment(s) such as Faculty Officers in the Registrar's Office;
- 6.1.4 The top student-athlete, with the support of a Maties Sport manager, timeously² concludes a formal arrangement with the faculty(ies)/department to establish a more flexible approach to the writing of tests and examinations and arrangement of alternative assessment, where necessary and possible;
- 6.1.5 In cases where the top student-athlete does not fulfil his/her obligations, the faculty has the right to render the agreement void;
- 6.1.6 Top student-athletes and Maties Sport managers notify lecturers/departments timeously³ of any possible clashes between tests and sport obligations;
- 6.1.7 Lecturers/departments strive to accommodate the relevant top student-athlete as far as possible in terms of unforeseen and often untimely changes to schedules of the relevant sports code, for example attendance of national training camps and rescheduling of competitions;
- 6.1.8 Role players strive to appoint a staff member at Maties Sport (normally one of the sports managers) to coordinate the academic support of top student-athletes, which includes the role of academic coaches, liaising with faculties on special arrangements relating to the academic progress of top student-athletes, leave of absence, tests, examinations and the structuring of degree programmes within the relevant faculty's guidelines.

7. REGULATION PROVISIONS

The regulation should be read in the context of, among others, the following documents and regulations:

- 7.1 Institutional Intent and Strategy (2013–2018);
- 7.2 Learning and teaching strategy (2013-2018);
- 7.3 Assessment regulations and practices at Stellenbosch University (2012);
- 7.4 Regulations for internal and external moderation;

² Normally no later than during the first week of the presentation of the module.

³ Normally no later than during the first week of the presentation of the module.

- 7.5 Current examination regulations (with extension of the regulation in terms of the sitting of examinations by top student-athletes) (see 6.1.6 above);
- 7.6 Guidelines on the consideration of applications from students for leave of absence as contained in Part 1 of the Yearbook;
- 7.7 Guidelines for lecturers on consideration of applications from athletes (with the support of a sports manager) for leave of absence in cases where the Registrar classified the application as Category B (Appendix A);
- 7.8 Regulation on students with special learning needs (disabilities) (2011).
- 7.9 Recruitment & Retention Strategy (2015)

8. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

All conflicts are referred to the Chief Director: Maties Sport and to be resolved in consultation with Deans and or designated staff member.

9. REGULATION GOVERNANCE

a. Owner

The Vice-Rector (Learning and Teaching) is the owner of the regulation. The Vice-Rector delegates the overhead responsibility for the execution of the regulation to the Chief Director: Maties Sport.

b. Commencement date

The preceding versions of the regulation were implemented with effect from August 2009, with changes applied in 2013. Further amendments to the regulation are due to the new SU format of policies, as well as new competitions such as Varsity Sports.

c. Revision

The regulation is revised every five years, or earlier if necessary.

d. Action in case of non-compliance

Each case of non-compliance is referred to the Chief Director: Maties Sport. The Chief Director will communicate with the faculties if necessary to render the granting of leave of absence void and to amend the student records accordingly.

9.1. Roles

The management of the regulation is handled as follows by the following persons:

Chief Director: Maties Sport	Final responsibility in terms of monitoring, evaluation and reporting to the Vice-Rector: Teaching and Learning.
Sports manager	Handles the top student-athletes' requests and the necessary applications with the designated individual at Student

	Administration, as stipulated in Appendix A and includes the Chief Director: Maties Sport in all communication.
Top student-athlete	Follows the required procedures/provisions as stipulated in Appendix A and communicates with the sports managers to ensure that the process is concluded successfully.
Faculty officers in Registrar's office	Refer any special and/or emergency cases to Registrar/Dean and or designated person(s).
Student Administration Officer	After applications have been submitted, the student administration officer will refer the required approval or rejection to the sports manager for handling and communication to the top student-athlete.

9.2. Implementation

9.2.1 The Registrar's Office

- a. Each application for leave of absence as a result of sport activities should be accompanied by a motivation and the leave applied for should be clearly identified. The relevant sport managers should send the applications directly to the designated Student Administration Officer.
- b. If an application is to be processed in good time, it should reach the Registrar as early as possible, however at least one week before the period of absence commences.
- c. The name(s) of the student(s) involved, their subjects, and all academic obligations and appointments during the intended absence should accompany the application.
- d. If there is any doubt, the Registrar consults with the Dean and/or Vice-rector (Learning & Teaching), and urgent or problematic cases are decided by the Registrar in consultation with the Dean.

9.2.2 The Faculty

The Dean or his/her designated authority, ensures that the arrangements, as stipulated in 6.1.4 to 6.1.7, between the relevant lecturers and the top student-athletes, as identified in 9.1, are made.

9.2.3 Maties Sport

The Chief Director: Maties Sport:

- a. With co-responsibility and the support of sport managers, administers special requests from top student- athletes;
- b. Determines whether the relevant student complies with the regulation to be considered for special treatment;

- c. Notifies the relevant dean / faculty secretary of a student's status as top student-athlete as well as his/her needs;
- d. The written agreement with the student-athlete that embodies the arrangements made in terms of 9.2.3 and is safeguarded by the Chief Director: Maties Sport.

9.3. Monitoring

Sports managers are responsible for monitoring the top student-athletes. If necessary, discussions will be held with the top student-athlete as well as the relevant faculty officer, where necessary, to ensure that a balance is maintained and that the academic programme is not neglected.

9.4. Reporting

The Maties Sport PACER programme plays an important role and offers top student-athletes the required empowerment through self-development to help ensure their success in terms of their studies, sport and personal lives. This includes the role of the sports managers to refer individual cases to the PACER programme and to communicate with the dean, lecturers and faculty officers, if necessary. Semester reports will be provided to the Vice-Rector: Teaching & Learning as well as the deans for all high performance athletes as approved by Maties Sport on an annual basis.

9.5. Disclosure

Disclosure takes place by handling the regulation as follows:

- a. Communication to the relevant student-athlete regarding outcome of the application;
- b. Having a copy of the application (either approval or non-approval thereof), available at the sports managers' offices;
- c. Sports managers discussing the regulation with top student-athletes at the beginning of the year/season as well as at club meetings; and
- d. Sports managers discussing the regulation with head coaches to prevent any imbalance or misunderstanding about academic requirements.

9.6. Revision

The regulation will be revised every five (5) years, but if necessary and as a result to changes within the SU context, it may be revised earlier.

9.7. Conduct in case of non-compliance

Given the direct impact on the top student-athlete, the responsibility for following the required procedure and provisions rests with the top student-athlete. If these are not followed, the faculty determines the negative impact thereof on the academic programme. Decisions on further actions do not lie with Maties Sport but with the relevant faculty.

APPENDIX A

Appendix A is a copy for convenience of the reader, however the official reference is in the yearbook.

A. THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES MUST BE CONSIDERED BY LECTURERS WHEN DECIDING HOW TO EVALUATE APPLICATIONS MADE BY STUDENT-ATHLETES THAT HAVE BEEN CLASSIFIED AS CATEGORY A BY THE REGISTRAR:

If the university grants a student this category of leave, lecturers are duty-bound to accommodate such student if he/she misses lectures, practical work, seminar work and/or tests as a consequence of such absence.

Note:

Students will receive no leave of absence, for whatever reason, which will entail them missing the second examination opportunity. This stipulation is in accordance with the official policy of SU regarding examinations, as set out in Part 1 of the Yearbook.

Grounds for consideration include:

1. Absence due to proven illness
2. Absence due to the death of a close family member of the student (i.e. death of a parent, sibling or grandparent)
3. Absence due to compulsory attendance, e.g. as a witness in a court hearing.
4. **Absence as a result of sport activities, under the following circumstances and as a consequence of:**
 - 4.1 trials/national championships for the assembly of a national (representative) team;
 - 4.2 competing as a member of a national team in a local match/event against another country;
 - 4.3 competing as a member of a national team internationally (on tour);
 - 4.4 preparations for competing on an international level, such as in the case of a rugby test, where the team members gather on the Wednesday before the Saturday on which the test is to be played; and
 - 4.5 representing and preparing for competing on behalf of another country (e.g. Namibia).

In instances A4.1 to A4.5 it should, in the opinion of the Faculty (in consultation with the relevant departmental head), be academically feasible for the student to supplement the work that has been missed. (When considering leave for longer periods, the justifiability of allowance for such leave from an academic point of view should be investigated. Practical work usually poses problems, because it cannot be easily repeated. For absence resulting from longer tours especially, interruption of study should be considered.)

B. THE FOLLOWING GUIDELINES MUST BE CONSIDERED BY LECTURERS WHEN DECIDING HOW TO EVALUATE APPLICATIONS MADE BY STUDENT-ATHLETES THAT HAVE BEEN CLASSIFIED AS CATEGORY B BY THE REGISTRAR:

This category of leave is usually granted to a student-athlete on condition that he/she is able to make the necessary arrangements with the relevant lecturers regarding the work that he/she may possibly miss during the period in question (including lectures, practical work, seminar work and tests).

If lecturers require additional information in order to make an appropriate decision, they should contact the Chief Director: Sport or his/her designated assistant.

Grounds for consideration for absence due to:

1. Individual participation in international sporting events by invitation.
2. Participation in representative sport on provincial level.
3. Participation in representative sport on first-league or comparable level, but only in exceptional cases, e.g. when league arrangements are changed as a result of decisions by provincial and national sport governing bodies.
4. Representation of SU on national and international level.

C. GUIDELINES WITH REGARDS TO LEAVE OF ABSENCE

1. Any proposed absence of the applicant may not, in light of his/her academic record, prejudice his/her reasonable chance to fulfil the relevant academic obligations satisfactorily.
2. Applications for leave of absence by a student should not be made repeatedly, but should be limited to a reasonable minimum number of times per semester.
3. Should the application be approved, the student should be emphatically reminded that, in light of the allowed absence, the responsibility for satisfactory academic progress remains with him/her.

D. DECLARATION OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SU REPRESENTATION AND NATIONAL REPRESENTATION:

1. **SU representation** is applicable when the relevant student has been included in one of the University's official sports teams. This includes, for example, the following:
 - 1.1 Local leagues such as Western Province or Boland
 - 1.2 Inter-university competitions, such as University Sport South Africa (USSA), Varsity Cup and Varsity Sports
 - 1.3 National competitions such as national club championships
 - 1.4 International and continental competitions, such as the Federation of Africa Universities Sports (FASU), Confederation for University and College Sports Association Zone IV

(CUCSA), International University Sports Federation (FISU) championships, World Games, etc.

2. **National representation** takes place when the relevant sportsperson represents South Africa in a sport in any official capacity.