



Policy

Student Support

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ACRONYMS

SSD Student Support Department

1. OVERVIEW

As a supported distance education institution, the Management College of Southern Africa (MANCOSA) aims to provide a personalised, innovative teaching and supportive learning environment in which students receive a quality educational experience which enables graduates to be personally professionally and socially successful. This occurs within a partnership framework in which students are responsible for their learning, proactively supported by MANCOSA, with the intention of fostering their independence and identifying and responding to individual student academic and support needs. MANCOSA seeks to support each student to achieve his/her potential through early identification of, and response to, personal and academic issues which have the potential to adversely affect their educational achievement.

2. DEFINITIONS

Academic Advisor: An Academic Advisor can be an academic, module or programme coordinator, an academic or student support manager, a postgraduate research supervisor who assists students in defining and reaching their academic goals.

Student Support Department (SSD): A dedicated support department that manages academic, administrative and pastoral support to all MANCOSA students.

3. THE POLICY

This policy is intended to provide staff and students with information regarding their responsibilities to ensure that adequate support is provided to meet the needs of the student. The policy also aims to assist in the identification of students who require additional personal or academic support and to ensure appropriate interventions are implemented to enable a student to realise his/her full academic potential to successfully complete the studies. The scope of the policy includes students who are enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate programmes.

4. ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documentation:

- Programme Handbook;
- Referencing And Library Guide;
- Module guides;
- MANCOSA policies.

5. MANCOSA RESPONSIBILITIES

MANCOSA will endeavour to identify students in need of additional support and is committed to ensuring that all interventions are respectful towards the student, timely, equitable, and consistent and a procedurally fair.

MANCOSA, as a supported distance education institution, will

- identify students who require additional support to increase student academic success;
- promote positive mental health and well-being of students through a range of educational and support initiatives;
- communicate clear information about support services to MANCOSA staff and students;
- encourage students with academic or personal support needs to access support from relevant internal and external support services;
- assist staff to develop informed views, behaviours and attitudes in relation to students requiring additional academic or individual support, as reasonable;
- have effective procedures in place for the disclosure of information in respect to students with academic or personal support requirements;
- have in place effective procedures for dealing with instances such as harassment of a student, unfair treatment, complaints or grievances.

While MANCOSA is committed to providing a supportive environment, there are, of necessity, limits to the extent of the support which can be provided and it is not the responsibility of MANCOSA to replicate services that already exist in the community. MANCOSA has its own policies and procedures for the maintenance of good conduct and safeguarding academic standards that apply to all students studying at MANCOSA irrespective of their specific supportive needs.

5.1. Academic Responsibilities

The dean will implement a process by which student progression is monitored including, but not limited to:

- progression rate;
- overall progress towards completion of qualifications;
- failure to complete subjects;
- English language proficiency;
- failure to complete module assessment;
- allegations of misconduct;
- student attendance at workshops or specific support classes.

5.2. Student Responsibilities

Students are expected to:

- carefully consider their choice of programmes and modules;
- have an awareness of their responsibilities with respect to student conduct issues;
- seek relevant support/professional assistance where a psychological issue has an impact, or has the potential to impact, upon academic progress;
- seek and follow advice from their module or programme coordinator or relevant staff member;
- fulfil academic requirements, including any enrolment-related issues;
- achieve the minimum progression rate as defined by MANCOSA rules;
- make MANCOSA aware in a timely fashion of any obstacles to completing their academic requirements;
- make contact as soon as possible with the relevant office should they receive any formal notifications regarding concerns of their academic progress.

5.3 Personal Support

5.3.1. Identification of students requiring personal support

MANCOSA will seek to identify students requiring additional personal support, ensuring that early intervention is provided in a timely, equitable and consistent manner.

Staff and students are encouraged to be alert to the possibility of individual psychological difficulties by MANCOSA students. In these instances, students could be referred to the MANCOSA counselling psychologist.

For the purposes of this policy, a student may be identified as warranting respectful personal support and intervention should their psychological or medical welfare be reasonably considered to warrant some form of intervention by appropriate MANCOSA staff.

A student may require additional personal support due to a number of factors. Examples include, but are not limited to,

- A medical condition or disability;
- A psychological predisposition or condition or disability;
- Aversive childhood conditions or personal life events;
- Social isolation, social anxiety or loneliness;
- Being a victim of bullying;
- Emotional instability following a physical or psychological trauma or event;
- Difficulty sustaining academic workload and multiple competing tasks;
- Poor resilience or maladaptive coping mechanisms;

- Substance abuse or addiction;
- Financial debt and or enduring financial hardship.

A student may demonstrate a need for personal intervention in a number of ways. Any psychological interventions must be conducted by a qualified health professional. Academic or professional staff must refer such a student to the relevant registered professional for assistance. Symptoms may include but are not limited to (it must be noted that a number of symptoms may manifest the need for intervention, rather one particular one):

- Unpredictable or irrational thoughts, moods, attitudes and or behaviours;
- Persistent low mood, low motivation and or loss of interests;
- Disorientation, delusional, dissociated thoughts and or behaviours;
- Withdrawal from social situations and communication with others;
- Acute stress or anxiety or panic attacks;
- Extreme, distorted thinking or excessive, unwarranted worrying;
- Persistent disruptive volatile physical or verbal behaviour;
- Violent tendencies or threatening to act upon violent thoughts towards another person, animal or property;
- Marked change in hygiene and general appearance;
- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
- Marked change in academic performance or attendance;
- Alarming material presented in a student's written work or class presentation;
- Persistently late to class or in turning in assessments and being highly disorganised.

5.3.2. Personal Support Identification Systems

Students requiring added support may be identified by:

a) Students Services Department staff or academics with reporting methods such as

- email advice or internal memo sent to an programme coordinator, academic manager or the dean.

b) Staff and Students

MANCOSA staff and students have a responsibility for reporting indications of students possibly 'at personal risk' and must not be subjected to any acts of retaliation for reporting concerns.

c) Self-reporting

Students who are aware that they are personally struggling and require additional support are expected to seek relevant assistance and or limited professional counselling support by MANCOSA at their earliest convenience, where a known physical or psychological impediment is likely to impact on their ability to successfully complete their academic studies.

5.3.3. Management of Students who are identified as requiring additional personal support

Staff may encounter students who are experiencing a good deal of stress as they try to balance the demands of study with other issues in their lives such as relationships, family, work, health, social or money matters. MANCOSA staff should respond to students who are exhibiting possible signs of distress, though how staff respond to the individual student will depend upon the nature and level of their distress, as well as the professional competency of the relevant staff member. All staff members should be aware of their own personal and professional limitations. Academic and general staff members are encouraged to consult with the counselling psychologist if they are unsure about the appropriate management of any student.

MANCOSA offers a range of personal support services where students may be referred such as:

- MANCOSA counselling services;
- Pastoral care.

5.4. Academic Support

5.4.1. Identification of students requiring academic support

A student may be identified as requiring additional academic support if they are not progressing in their studies, are potentially at risk of exclusion, or where their emotional or medical welfare is reasonably considered to warrant some form of intervention.

A student may require additional academic support due to a number of factors. These may include, but are not limited to,

- a medical illness, injury, health or psychological condition or disability;
- a significant life stressor;
- behaviour which is consistently disruptive, volatile or otherwise in breach of the MANCOSA Code of Conduct and is considered to be academic misconduct;
- English language proficiency;
- questionable academic behaviour, capacity or achievement which might be reflected by:
 - provisional enrolment or pattern of deferral;
 - unapproved over-enrolment;
 - change to a new field of study that may challenge previously successful approaches to learning;
 - student fails at least 50% of credit points attempted in the semester just completed;
 - failure to attend workshops and assessment components of a subject;
 - failure in the same subject twice;
 - minimal participation in workshops, where relevant;
 - the inability to complete the programme within a reasonable timeframe;
 - pattern of seeking medical certificates or counselling referrals around the examination period.

5.4.2. Academic Support Identification Systems

Students requiring additional academic support may be identified by:

a) Student reports such as

- Provisional students;
- Overload students;
- Students with disabilities;
- Students requesting multiple deferred exams.
- Probationary students
- Academic Action list (Students placed on warning)

b) Academic Progress Reports submitted by relevant academic staff every semester

c) Informal

- via academic staff attendance reports
 - requests for extensions
 - declining grades.

d) Student self-reporting

Students who are aware that they are academically struggling and require additional academic support are expected to seek relevant assistance at their earliest convenience.

5.4.3. Management of Students who are identified as requiring additional academic support

5.4.3.1. Referral to Academic Support

MANCOSA provides services to assist students who are struggling with the demands of study. Academic assistance includes the following areas:

- Student learning
- Study
- Library
- Research/ dissertation/ projects.

Students may be referred by a staff member or be a self-referral.

5.4.3.2. Academic Monitoring

Once a student has been identified as requiring personal or academic support through the abovementioned identification systems the student support centre will contact the student.

It is important that students obtain academic support as quickly as possible once a need has been identified or the SSD has been in contact so appropriate strategies can be implemented before the student becomes at risk of academic failure.