INTRODUCTION

Yeronga SHS is a safe, disciplined and inclusive educational environment where young people can focus on achieving excellence in a range of academic, sporting and cultural pursuits. The diverse and complex cultural mix of Yeronga SHS requires that we cater for a wide range of learning abilities and needs. Through our curriculum model students have a real choice in determining the course that best meets their individual needs and helps them to achieve their goals.

Whilst a number of our students have little or no difficulties in accessing the curriculum, some students need additional learning support. To help each student reach their full potential it is essential that the school provides a range of opportunities and experiences that focus on improving learning outcomes with appropriate assessment to ensure students’ abilities are accurately demonstrated. Once the school has identified a barrier to students’ learning, teaching personnel must put in place appropriate special consideration to address this.

This Assessment Assistance and Special Consideration Policy has been developed to achieve consistency, fairness and predictability where all teachers, parents and students are aware of the process of adjustments made to assessment items in response to their need.

CONTEXT

This document is framed within the context of Education Queensland policy which states,

“Inclusive education recognises and actively addresses injustice and disadvantage, responds to uniqueness of individuals so all students can access schools and participate to achieve learning outcomes and to develop skills to work and live productively and respectfully with others from a range of backgrounds, abilities and cultures.” (Policy Document: CRP-PR-009: Inclusive Education)

“Special consideration means making reasonable adjustments to standard assessment requirements to ensure equitable assessment for all students. Equity in assessment requires that all students have an opportunity to demonstrate their current knowledge and skills.” (QSA Policy on Special Consideration for School-based assessments in Senior Certification)

“Exemption should...be allowed when there is sufficient alternative information to make a judgement about an exit level of achievement without the particular piece of assessment.” (QSA Policy on Special Consideration for School-based assessments in Senior Certification)

Definition of Special Consideration

Special consideration is the granting of exemption to, or the provision of special arrangements for, students with a barrier to learning. Barriers to learning include, but are not limited to:

- learning difficulties
- verified disabilities
- language backgrounds other than English (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse)
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait islander background
- refugee status
- acute or chronic illness of a physical, emotional or psychological nature
- other extenuating circumstances (e.g. extreme hardship).

YERONGA POLICY STATEMENT

This policy aims to reduce the effects of the barriers to learning that some students experience. This means the application of special consideration in relation to assessment items to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. This does not provide students with an advantage over their peers but enables them to demonstrate the full extent of their learning.

Assessment items include all tasks that contribute to semester marks and to testing and examination situations.
Assessment assistance/special consideration will be provided in the following situations:

1. **Students with Disabilities**

   The Education Adjustment Program (EAP) is a process for identifying and responding to the educational needs of students with disabilities. The EAP has been developed by the Department of Education Training and the Arts (DETA) to recognise school and teacher responsibilities to make adjustments for students with disabilities to enable them to access the curriculum, achieve curriculum outcomes and participate in the life of the school.

   **The EAP supports schools to:**

   - Identify students who meet the DETA criteria for diagnosis of disability – Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Hearing Impairment (HI), Intellectual Impairment (II), Physical Impairment (PI), Speech-Language Impairment (SLI), Vision Impairment (VI) or a combination of these.
   
   - Report the educational adjustments they are providing to meet the teaching and learning needs of these students.

   All students who have been verified by the EAP must have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) which outlines how teachers can meet students’ educational goals. These goals include both teaching and assessment. The EAP and IEP work together to ensure that students are given opportunities to demonstrate their learning by operating on the idea that adjustments (special considerations) must be made to teaching practices and assessment items to ensure inclusivity.

2. **Students with Learning Difficulties and Learning Disabilities**

   Students with learning difficulties and learning disabilities must be given access to modified programs that include adjustments to the teaching and learning process in the regular classroom. Special consideration, including assessment assistance from Learning Support, is also made available to a student with learning difficulties or learning disabilities. Special consideration allows the student to demonstrate knowledge of the curriculum that they would have difficulty demonstrating under normal assessment conditions.

   Students with learning difficulties or learning disabilities include:

   - students who are experiencing short term or persistent problems in literacy, numeracy and/or learning how to learn
   - students who have been clinically diagnosed with language disabilities or difficulties e.g. auditory processing disorders
   - students who have been identified by a medical professional as having ADD or ADHD
   - students with temporary physical impairments who need to access help.

3. **English as Second Language/International students**

   A high percentage of students at Yeronga SHS are from non-English speaking backgrounds and speak a language other than English at home. Many of these students are multilingual, with English being their second, third or fourth language. Students with cultural and linguistic diversity usually access the ESL (English as a Second Language) Unit or the International Student Unit at Yeronga SHS.

   These units provide English language support to students, with the aim of enabling them over a period of time to participate fully in mainstream classrooms. Special consideration enables the students to demonstrate the full extent of their learning by removing language barriers wherever it is not the knowledge of English content words that are being assessed.

4. **Refugee Students**

   *Refugees are young people who have come from war-torn countries and who have multiple and complex disadvantages. Their needs arise primarily from socio-economic, educational access as well as cultural and language factors. Factors that impact on their educational outcomes include persecution, fear of death, torture, trauma, rape, war lawlessness, loss of family and friends, interrupted or no education, responsibility for younger siblings, poor health, deep insecurity, gruelling flight to escape and many re-settlement issues.*

   ([Refugee Resettlement Advisory Council (2002). Strategy for Refugee Young People, Canberra, Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs])
5. Students experiencing acute or chronic illness of a physical, emotional or psychological nature

Students who are unwell and have a medical certificate for the period of their illness can apply for special consideration. If that illness is so debilitating and ongoing and the school has adequate information to determine an exit result, then it may be appropriate to exempt a student from submitting a piece of work.

6. Other extenuating circumstances

Some students experience extreme hardships or have responsibilities that far exceed what is expected for the majority of their same age peers. The impact on their learning is enormous and does not allow the student to adequately demonstrate their true abilities. Such cases may include, but are not limited to, students who are primary carers for sick parents, siblings or, indeed, their own children. Similarly, some students may have been subjected to abuse or have experienced death in their family, and these experiences have had a detrimental effect on their learning. These cases should be considered on an individual basis and, when appropriate, special consideration given.

PROCEDURES

Implementation and management of this policy will incorporate the following procedures.

- **Identification**
  Students who could be eligible for assistance and special consideration once identified must be referred to appropriate personnel, who may include the Head of Special Education Services – ESL, Head of Senior Schooling, Guidance Officer and/or Resource Teacher.

- **Registration**
  The school will record students eligible for assistance and special consideration into a register. The register will be available in hard copy for long term identified need e.g. hearing impaired student or refugee arrival. It will also be available on One School, which will additionally show short-term and temporary need. *For some identified students formal registration may not occur because of privacy issues. In these cases specific support staff may advocate for these students in a confidential manner.*

- **Documentation**
  Registration for assistance and special consideration will be accompanied by relevant supporting documentation where appropriate. E.g. EAPs, Visa category and date of arrival, medical certificates, etc. This documentation will be kept by relevant support staff, or the principal.

- **Staff/Student/Parent/Caregiver Awareness**
  All staff will be in-serviced in the *Assessment Assistance & Special Consideration Policy* to ensure that they are aware of the support available for students and the adjustments that may be put in place. Students will be made aware of the policy and the special consideration available through the *Student Handbook* or through appropriate support personnel. Parents and caregivers will be made aware of this policy in the enrolment pack.

- **Recording Assistance Received**
  The *Assessment Assistance & Special Consideration Form* will be stapled to the student’s assessment submission to indicate the type of support given.