

Guidelines on Medical Certificates

1. Purpose

These guidelines define the principles and procedures governing the submission of medical certificates for Master and PhD students of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (hereinafter: “the Institute”) in connection with their studies.

They are intended to ensure equitable access to the study programmes, fair treatment and transparency in the handling of requests, in accordance with Swiss law and institution commitments to inclusion, non-discrimination and academic integrity.

2. General Principle

A medical certificate may be requested from a student by the Institute to substantiate a fact or a situation affecting the course of study (absence from an assessment, request for leave...) as set out in the Academic Regulations and their Implementation Guidelines.

3. Definition

A **Medical certificate** is “*a document relating to a person’s state of health, drawn up by a doctor or another legally authorised healthcare professional on the basis of their observations, grounded in their medical knowledge, and intended to prove a medical fact with legal implications*”¹.

The principles set out in these guidelines also apply to any other document that may be regarded as a Medical certificate (e.g. a medical report, a psychological report drawn up by another university, etc.) where its purpose is to record a person’s condition as assessed by a healthcare professional.

4. Principle governing the consideration of Medical Certificates

¹ Mercedes Novier, Le certificat médical dans les relations de travail, in : Dunand/Mahon (éd.), Les certificats dans les relations de travail, Collection CERT, 2018, p. 78.

Taking into account, in particular, the *Guide pratique des bases juridiques pour le quotidien médical* drawn up by the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences, a valid Medical Certificate must:

- Be issued in writing;
- Be issued by a doctor or a legally authorized healthcare professional;
- Be accurate;
- Include the date of the medical consultation;
- Be limited to medical considerations, avoiding value judgements and conclusions that are not medical;
- Be valid for a limited period in case of temporary incapacity (in principle, a maximum of one month). If the incapacity extends beyond the initially certified period, a new Medical Certificate must be provided;
- Specify or imply that the incapacity relates to the studies;
- Contain all necessary information such as information about the patient enabling them to be identified (student full name and date of birth), start and end dates of the incapacity period, percentage of incapacity, nature of the incapacity (accident/illness), date of issue, and the doctor's name, signature, stamp and their professional details, such as their qualification or specialization and the address of their medical office.

The Medical Certificate may be submitted in French or English, or officially translated into one of these languages. The Institute reserves the right to request a translation by a sworn translator.

Retroactive medical certificates are not usually accepted, except in exceptional circumstances (e.g. emergency hospitalization) and, as the case may be, for a limited period.

The Institute is entitled to reject a Medical Certificate that is not considered conclusive, particularly if there are doubts as to its authenticity, the wording is too vague, or it has been issued retrospectively without justification.

In principle, a Medical Certificate can only be issued following an in-person consultation. The Institute reserves the right to reject certificates issued following a telephone request or via telemedicine or to make them subject to conditions.

5. Submission and Deadlines

Students shall inform the relevant person or service of their incapacity or absence as soon as possible.

They must submit their Medical Certificate to the relevant service as soon as possible and no later than five (5) working days after the start of their incapacity or absence.

Late submission may not be considered unless there is a valid reason (e.g. emergency hospitalization).

If a student feels unwell during an exam but decides to complete it, they will not be able to provide retrospectively a Medical Certificate.

6. Consequences of falsifying a Medical Certificate

It should be noted here that the forgery of, or the use of, a forged medical certificate constitutes a criminal offence that is prosecuted ex officio (Articles 251 and 252 of the *Swiss Criminal Code*).

It should also be noted that a doctor who issues a medical certificate that is untrue is also liable, depending on the circumstances, to criminal prosecution (Article 318 of the *Swiss Criminal Code*).

7. Data Protection

The Institute's [Privacy Policy](#) applies to the processing of Medical Certificates submitted by students.

Approved by the Academic Committee on 13 October 2026