

Special Consideration Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This Policy establishes the principles that support students seeking to notify the University when they experience short-term, unexpected, Serious and Unavoidable Circumstances, which affect their performance in assessment.

Background

(2) The University is committed to equity and fairness in all aspects of its learning and teaching. It recognises that students may experience events beyond their control that adversely affect their academic performance in assessment activities. To assist students through their studies, the University provides support services. Whilst advice and recommendations may be made to a student, it is ultimately the student's responsibility to access these services as appropriate, and to make known to the University any circumstance which may affect their performance in assessment in good time for it to be considered as appropriate.

(3) This Policy applies only to short-term, Serious and Unavoidable Circumstances that arise after a study period has commenced, and where specific assessment task/s have been affected. Students are expected to plan their work so that they can meet assessment deadlines at the same time as other obligations which they may have, both inside and outside the University.

(4) Students with a pre-existing disability / health condition or prolonged adverse circumstances may be eligible for ongoing assistance and support. Such support is governed by the [Student Disability Support Policy](#) and may be sought and coordinated through Student Wellbeing. It is recognised that students with chronic / long-term conditions may experience an acute episode of their condition, and that it may not always be possible for the University to put sufficient arrangements in place to provide a reasonable adjustment at the time of assessment. Such eventualities are covered by this Policy.

Scope

(5) This Policy applies to:

- a. all coursework students, including those on sub-degree, undergraduate, postgraduate taught, and non-award provision;
- b. all types of assessment, including examinations and coursework;
- c. staff involved in the administration, teaching, assessing or managing units of study at the University; and
- d. Student Wellbeing staff.

Section 2 - Policy

General Principles

(6) The purpose of Special Consideration is to enable the University to support students who have been impacted by circumstances that are unexpected, unavoidable, significantly disruptive and beyond the student's control, and which may affect their performance in assessment.

(7) Special Consideration is intended to provide support to a student whose assessable work has been affected by Serious and Unavoidable Circumstances. It is not a mechanism to appeal against an assessment outcome. Serious and Unavoidable Circumstances may result from events that are personal, social or domestic in nature and may include illness (either physical or psychological), accident, injury, societal demands (such as jury service), bereavement, family breakdown or unexpected changes in employment situations.

(8) Special Consideration will not be granted when students are unable to complete an assessment task due to planned or foreseeable absence (e.g. holidays, recreational activities or normal work commitments or changes).

(9) All applications for Special Consideration must be substantiated by original, independent documentary Evidence in the format and by the deadline prescribed in the [Special Consideration Procedure](#).

(10) In order to support students who have experienced Serious and Unavoidable Circumstances, the University will attempt to provide affected students with one (1) additional opportunity to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes of a unit or units. An additional opportunity provided under such circumstances is referred to as Special Consideration, and may be granted after careful evaluation of the supporting Evidence.

(11) Students with a pre-existing disability / health condition or prolonged adverse circumstances are advised to seek support from Student Wellbeing and should also refer to the [Student Disability Support Policy](#).

Fit to Sit Model

(12) Macquarie University operates under a 'Fit to Sit' model. This means that, in sitting an examination and / or in-class test or otherwise submitting an assessment, a student is declaring that they are fit to do so. It is the responsibility of the student to determine whether they are Fit to Sit an examination or test, or otherwise submit an assessment. Therefore, if a student is feeling unfit to sit the examination or test, or otherwise submit the assessment, they should not do so.

(13) Nonetheless, a student may submit an application for Special Consideration if they can demonstrate that:

- a. they were unfit to make reasonable judgement on their fitness to undertake the assessment, due to mental illness or other exceptional circumstances; or
- b. they were taken ill during the assessment (in the case of an examination or test), and this can be independently corroborated.

(14) In cases where a student is taken ill during an examination / class test, the student must advise the examination supervisor, who will record the case on the Examination Room Report Form.

Appeals

(15) A student may appeal an adverse outcome of a Special Consideration application in accordance with the [Academic Appeals Policy](#) and the [Assessment Procedure](#).

Section 3 - Procedures

(16) Refer to the [Special Consideration Procedure](#).

Section 4 - Guidelines

(17) Nil.

Section 5 - Definitions

(18) Commonly defined terms are located in the University [Glossary](#). The following definitions apply for the purpose of this Policy:

- a. Event Critical Study Period means an intense academic phase during the study session characterised by the lead-up to or culmination of key academic work.
- b. Evidence means documentation outlined in the [Special Consideration Supporting Evidence Schedule](#) that demonstrates the severity and impact of a disruption to study.
- c. Fit to Sit means being fit to sit an examination or test, or otherwise submit an assessment.
- d. [Professional Authority Form \(PAF\)](#) is a form to document Evidence of medical related disruptions (physical or psychological).
- e. Serious and Unavoidable Circumstances means the University classifies circumstances as serious and unavoidable if they:
 - i. could not have reasonably been anticipated, avoided or guarded against by the student; and
 - ii. were beyond the student's control; and
 - iii. caused substantial disruption to the student's capacity for undertaking assessment for the unit(s); and
 - iv. occurred during an Event Critical Study Period and were at least three (3) consecutive days duration or a total of five (5) days within the teaching period; and / or
 - v. prevented completion of an assessment task scheduled for a specific date (e.g. final examination, in class test / quiz, in class presentation).
- f. Special Consideration means the provision of one additional opportunity for a student to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes of a unit or units.

Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Rorden Wilkinson Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
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