Special Consideration Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This Policy establishes the principles that support students seeking to apply for Special Consideration when they have been impacted by Short-term Circumstances or Events that are serious, unavoidable and significantly disruptive to their ability to prepare for, undertake, or complete Assessment Tasks. The Policy outlines how applications will be assessed and the outcomes available when Special Consideration is approved.

(2) This Policy must be read in conjunction with the Special Consideration Supporting Evidence Schedule (the Schedule) and the Special Consideration Eligibility Guidelines (the Guidelines).

Background

(3) The University is committed to equity and fairness in all of its endeavours. This Policy reflects the University's commitment to supporting students when they experience events beyond their control that affect their ability to prepare for, undertake, or complete Assessment Tasks.

Scope

(4) 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.

(5) This Policy does not apply to students undertaking Macquarie University College English Language Programs.

(6) This Policy does not apply to students with a pre-existing disability or health condition who may be eligible for ongoing assistance and support. Such students should refer to the Student Accessibility Policy and seek support through Student Wellbeing. Exceptions are:

a. students with a Long-term or Chronic condition who experience a short-term exacerbation of that condition. These students may apply for Special Consideration when it is not reasonably practicable to put sufficient reasonable adjustments in place at the time of assessment; and
b. students with an Individual Education Access Plan (IEAP) that includes a Planned Extension. These students must activate that adjustment for an Assessment Task via a Special Consideration application.

Section 2 - Policy

General Principles

(7) Where a student experiences Short-term Circumstances or Events that are serious, unavoidable, and significantly

disruptive to their capacity to prepare for, undertake, or complete an Assessment Task, the University will, where practicable, provide an appropriate outcome that allows the student to demonstrate they have met the relevant Learning Outcome(s) of the unit.

(8) A successful outcome for a Special Consideration application may include an extension of the assessment deadline, which may be applied retrospectively where the student has submitted work while awaiting the outcome of their application, or a further attempt at the affected Assessment Task or an alternative Assessment Task. The outcome granted is subject to assessment of the application against the requirements of this Policy, and students may not nominate or request a specific outcome.

(9) Short-term Circumstances or Events that are serious, unavoidable, and significantly disruptive may be unexpected or anticipated in nature. Unexpected circumstances or events include, but are not limited to, personal, social or domestic issues such as physical or psychological illness, accident, injury, bereavement, family breakdown, jury service, and non-routine work commitments. See the Guidelines for further details.

(10) Anticipated circumstances or events, such as religious, legal , elite athlete, or caring commitments, may also qualify for Special Consideration where they significantly affect the student's capacity to undertake the relevant Assessment Task.

(11) Short-term Circumstances or Events are considered serious, unavoidable, and significantly disruptive when all the following conditions are met. They:

a. could not have reasonably been avoided or guarded against by the student;
b. were beyond the student's control;
c. caused Substantial Disruption to the student's capacity to prepare for, undertake, or complete the Assessment Task;
d. were Short-term lasting no more than twelve (12) calendar days; and
e. had a direct or continuing impact on the student's capacity to prepare for, undertake, or complete an Assessment Task during the Event Critical Study Period. This includes where the circumstances prevented the student from undertaking an Assessment Task that was scheduled on a specific date, such as a final examination, in class test/quiz, or in class presentation.

(12) A student may be recommended to apply to Withdraw Without Penalty (WWP) if their circumstances or events:

a. continue for more than twelve (12) calendar days; and
b. are prolonged and significantly disruptive; and
c. make it reasonably impracticable for the student to meet the Learning Outcomes of the unit.

(13) If a unit Convenor recommends a student to apply for WWP they must provide reasons as to why an alternative Assessment Task is not reasonably practicable in the student's particular circumstances.

(14) A recommendation to apply for WWP does not guarantee approval. WWP is determined under the Withdrawal Procedure. The student may choose to apply for WWP or proceed with an outcome under this Policy.

(15) All applications for Special Consideration must be supported by Evidence as described in the Schedule and be submitted by the deadline prescribed in Section 3 – Procedures. The Schedule outlines acceptable forms of supporting Evidence. Applications for Special Consideration must comply with the Schedule in force at the time of application, applications that do not comply will not be considered.

(16) Students may be required to demonstrate Exceptional Circumstances per further requirement/s set out in the Schedule.

(17) A student may not lodge more than one (1) application for Special Consideration for the same Assessment Task, other than in the case of Exceptional Circumstances.

(18) Students are expected to manage their commitments so as to meet Assessment Task deadlines and are encouraged to plan ahead where foreseeable circumstances may affect their studies.

(19) Special Consideration is not a mechanism to appeal against the result of an Assessment Task or request a review of a mark or grade (refer to the Assessment Procedure and Appeals Policy for further information).

(20) All documentation (in hardcopy or electronic form) relating to a Special Consideration application will be treated in accordance with the Privacy Policy.

Section 3 - Procedures

Responsibilities and Required Actions

Applying for Special Consideration

(21) Students who experience Short-term Circumstances or Events may lodge an application for Special Consideration in accordance with this Policy.

(22) All Special Consideration applications must be lodged online via the Service Connect portal and must include supporting documentary Evidence specified in the Schedule.

(23) Students with an IEAP that includes a Planned Extension must activate the Planned Extension by lodging a Special Consideration application on or before the due date of the Assessment Task. Students are strongly encouraged to lodge the application well in advance of the due date and should not leave activation to the last minute as processing may not be immediate.

(24) Unlike other Special Consideration applications, an application to activate a Planned Extension cannot be lodged after the due date has passed. An application submitted solely to activate a Planned Extension is administrative in nature and will not be assessed against the eligibility criteria outlined in this Policy.

(25) Students must ensure that all applications and supporting documentation submitted under this Policy are genuine, accurate, complete, and made in good faith. Submitting misleading, fraudulent, or falsified information or documentation, including fabricated or altered supporting Evidence may result in the application being declined or withdrawn and considered as a breach of the Student Code of Conduct.

(26) An application for Special Consideration will only be accepted in the following circumstances:

a. it meets the eligibility criteria outlined;
b. it is lodged either before or no later than seven (7) calendar days after the Assessment Task due date, examination, or test date; and
c. the Assessment Task has not been already undertaken or submitted except:
    i. where Exceptional Circumstances apply; or
    ii. for Assessment Tasks not scheduled on a specific date, such as an essay or report, students continued working on the Assessment Task while waiting for the outcome of their application and submitted the Assessment Task as soon as they are able (given they may receive a Retrospective Extension to the original due date).

(27) An application for Special Consideration may be refused under any of the following circumstances:

a. it does not meet the eligibility criteria outlined;
b. it is not submitted in the required manner or within the timeframe required;
c. it is not supported by appropriate documentary Evidence;
d. the student has already undertaken or submitted the Assessment Task; and/or
e. the circumstances or events described indicate a prolonged impact for which an outcome under this Policy is not appropriate.

(28) Students who experience illness or significant disruption while undertaking an Assessment Task that was scheduled on a specific date, such as a final examination, in class test/quiz, or in class presentation must:

a. cease their work and report the circumstances without delay:
    i. in a supervised setting (e.g. examination or other timed task), by notifying the supervisor or invigilator; or
    ii. outside a supervised setting, by notifying the Unit Convenor or teaching staff responsible for the unit (e.g. the Course Authority);
b. submit an application for Special Consideration by the deadline specified and meeting the requirements set out in this Policy and the Schedule; and
c. not resume the Assessment Task after stopping and reporting. A student who continues working on the Assessment Task after reporting their circumstances will not be eligible for Special Consideration for that task in relation to the same reported circumstances.

(29) Students who experience illness or significant disruption while undertaking an Assessment Task that was not scheduled on a specific date, such as an essay or report must:

a. cease their work and report the circumstances without delay by notifying the Unit Convenor or teaching staff responsible for the unit (e.g. the Course Authority);
b. submit an application for Special Consideration by the deadline specified and meeting the requirements set out in this Policy and the Schedule; and
c. resume the Assessment Task when no longer affected by illness or significant disruption while waiting for the outcome of their application, and submit as soon as they are able to, as a Retrospective Extension may be applied to the original due date.

(30) Following the Procedures outlined does not guarantee that Special Consideration will be approved. The application will still be assessed against the eligibility requirements of this Policy, including whether the circumstances were serious, unavoidable, and caused a Substantial Disruption to the student's capacity to complete the Assessment Task.

(31) Students who have already undertaken or submitted an Assessment Task without reporting any issues will only be considered for a further attempt to undertake that Assessment Task in Exceptional Circumstances.

(32) Each request for Special Consideration will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis with careful consideration given to the nature and validity of the Exceptional Circumstances claimed and the extent to which those circumstances materially affected their performance in the initial assessment. A Statement of Fact is not, of itself, sufficient Evidence for such a request.

(33) Late applications for Special Consideration submitted more than seven (7) calendar days after the Assessment Task due date, examination or test date, will not be accepted unless in Exceptional Circumstances where accompanying formal Evidence is provided to explain the reason for the late submission (refer to the Schedule).

(34) Applications relating to Assessment Tasks due or scheduled within the relevant Teaching Period will not be

accepted once unit results have been officially released to students and published via eStudent for that Teaching Period. This applies regardless of whether the application would otherwise meet the specified requirements or qualify under the late application provisions.

(35) The only exception is where the disruption occurred on or around the due date or scheduled date of the Assessment Task, and that date falls after the release of unit results, and the student demonstrates Exceptional Circumstances.

(36) Applications may only be submitted on behalf of a student by an authorised representative if the student is incapacitated, or by the Assessment Support Team for administrative purposes.

Evidence

(37) A Special Consideration application must be supported by appropriate Evidence at the time of submission. Evidence requirements are specified within the Schedule and may include:

a. original supporting documentation;
b. a medical certificate;
c. a completed Professional Authority Form (PAF);
d. appropriate Evidence for non-medical circumstances; or
e. a Statement of Fact.

(38) Where a student is unable to provide appropriate supporting documentation by the Special Consideration application deadline due to circumstances outside their control, the reason for the delay must be clearly stated in the application. The documentation must be submitted no later than three (3) calendar days after the application is submitted. The application will only be assessed once all required supporting documentation has been received.

(39) Where supporting documentation is not provided and the student has not provided an explanation to justify the additional delay, the application will be declined. Applications where a student is unable to provide documentation due to Exceptional Circumstances will be assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether late submission of supporting documentation will be accepted.

(40) The Evidence must:

a. identify the circumstances;
b. include exact date(s) and duration of the circumstances or events, which must be consistent with the details provided in the student's Special Consideration application;
c. explain the severity and impact of the circumstances;
d. clearly describe how the circumstances have adversely affected either the student's capacity for effective study or ability to prepare for, undertake, or complete the Assessment Task; and
e. where relevant, include the date(s) on which the student was seen by the professional providing the Evidence and the professional's details.

(41) During assessment of an application, a student may be asked to provide additional Evidence and/or information. Any such request will specify a submission deadline. If the additional Evidence and/or information is not received by the deadline, the application will be declined. If it is received by the deadline, the application will be assessed against the relevant criteria.

(42) The University reserves the right to request and retain the originals of supporting documentation and will conduct regular audits of supporting documentation submitted electronically.

(43) The University is entitled to verify any Evidence provided as part of an application. In applying, the student gives

their consent for the University to verify their supporting Evidence, which extends to contacting the issuing professional or institution. If supporting Evidence cannot be verified it will not be accepted.

(44) Submitting misleading, fraudulent, or falsified Evidence in support of an application may result in the application being declined or withdrawn, and may also be considered as a breach of the Student Code of Conduct and result in disciplinary action.

(45) Students must retain all original documentation for a six (6) month period and must supply original documents to the University within ten (10) working days of such a request being made.

Assessment Process

(46) The assessment of whether a student's circumstances or events were serious and unavoidable will be made fairly, equitably, and consistently according to the principles outlined in this Policy and requirements set out in the Schedule.

(47) When processing an application for Special Consideration , professional staff may seek input from relevant academic staff to inform a fair and consistent outcome.

Outcomes

(48) When an application for Special Consideration is approved, where practicable, the University will, provide the student with an outcome that would allow them to demonstrate they have met the relevant Learning Outcome(s) of the unit.

(49) The University will determine the most appropriate outcome having regard to the student's circumstances, the Learning Outcomes of the Assessment Task and/or unit, and the overall integrity of the assessment. Students may not nominate or request a specific outcome.

(50) The relevant decision-maker may determine any of the following outcomes for a Special Consideration application:

a. no action, including where an application does not meet the requirements of this Policy;
b. an extension of the Assessment Task deadline subject to the following:
    i. the extension granted will be proportionate to the impact and duration of the circumstances affecting the student during the Event Critical Study Period as evidenced in the application and supporting documentation; and
    ii. for Assessment Tasks not scheduled on a specific date, such as an essay or report, students should continue working on the Assessment Task while waiting for the outcome of their application and submit as soon as they are able, as a Retrospective Extension may be applied to the original due date;
c. a supplementary Assessment Task being a further attempt at the Assessment Task that takes the form of the original as closely as possible and assesses the same Learning Outcomes in accordance with the Assessment Policy subject to the following:
    i. the student must make themselves available to undertake the Supplementary Assessment. The time, date, deadline, and format set by the University are not negotiable;
    ii. where the original Assessment Task is a Final Examination, the Supplementary Assessment will take the form of a Supplementary Final Examination; and
    iii. only one (1) Supplementary Assessment will be granted per Assessment Task except in Exceptional Circumstances as defined.
d. an alternative Assessment Task, which may differ in format from the original Assessment task, designed to assess the same Learning Outcomes as the affected Assessment Task. Where this outcome is granted:

i. the student must undertake the alternative Assessment Task and make themselves available to do so at the time and date set by the University; and
ii. the time, date, deadline, and format of alternative Assessment task are not negotiable;

e. reweighting of completed assessment, where marks from the student's own completed Assessment Tasks are redistributed, aggregated, or averaged to derive an overall mark. Reweighting may only draw on Assessment Tasks that assess Learning Outcomes equivalent to those of the affected Assessment Task. Reweighting will not exceed 60% of the total unit assessment in accordance with the Assessment Policy;
f. in Exceptional Circumstances, the final mark for the unit being excluded from calculations for Honours, WAM, or Academic Standing.

(51) Where an approved Special Consideration outcome involves an extension of the Assessment Task deadline, a Supplementary Assessment, or an alternative Assessment Task, the completion of that outcome may, in some circumstances, delay the release of the student's final unit results. Students should be aware of this possibility when making decisions about their studies.

Withdrawal or Rescission of Special Consideration Application

(52) Once Special Consideration has been approved the student may not withdraw the application or decline the outcome determined. This does not affect the student's right to appeal the outcome.

(53) Except for when a student is granted an extension of the assessment task deadline, where a student attempts or submits the original Assessment Task after Special Consideration has been approved, the University will rescind the outcome granted. This operates as an automatic consequence of attempting or submitting the original task and does not constitute a withdrawal of the application by the student.

Notification of Special Consideration Application Outcome

(54) The University will aim to communicate the outcome of a Special Consideration application to the student's University email address within five (5) calendar days of receiving the application and all necessary supporting Evidence. During peak periods or where an application is complex the outcome may take longer.

Appeals

(55) A student may appeal the outcome of a Special Consideration application in accordance with the Appeals Policy and the Assessment Procedure except where a student is found to have provided misleading, fraudulent, or falsified information or documentation in support of an application.

Section 4 - Guidelines

(56) Nil.

Section 5 - Definitions

(57) The following definitions apply for the purpose of this Policy:

a. Assessment Task means a task that requires students to demonstrate their capabilities against Learning Outcomes. Common task types include, but are not limited to, essays, presentations, class tests, quizzes, laboratory reports, performances and examinations. A unit may include multiple tasks of the same type (e.g., a unit may include more than one quiz).
b. Course Authority is the person assigned by a Faculty or equivalent to perform leadership of a course.

c. Event Critical Study Period means the ten (10) calendar days immediately preceding, and including, an assessment due date or the date of a scheduled Assessment Task (including, but not limited to, a Final Examination, in-class test or quiz, or in-class presentation). This period reflects the intense academic phase of a study session characterised by the lead-up to, or culmination of, key academic work. Exceptions may be considered on a case-by-case basis having regard to the duration, severity and evidentiary validity of the circumstances presented.
d. Evidence means documentation specified in the Special Consideration Supporting Evidence Schedule that demonstrates the severity and impact of a disruption to study.
e. Exceptional Circumstances refers to circumstances that are more severe, unusual, or compelling than those ordinarily required to qualify for Special Consideration. A student must demonstrate Exceptional Circumstances in any application that:
    i. requests additional special consideration after a prior approval of the same assessment; or
    ii. is made after an on-time assessment submission or attempt; or
    iii. is lodged more than seven (7) calendar days after the assessment due date.
f. Final Examination means an examination held within a specified examination period that is defined by the University and administered centrally.
g. Individual Education Access Plan (IEAP) means a plan developed in conjunction with Student Wellbeing that documents Reasonable Adjustments for students with a pre-existing disability or health condition including Planned Extensions.
h. Learning Outcomes means the specified knowledge, skills, and understandings a student must demonstrate to successfully complete a unit as published in the relevant Unit Guide.
i. Long-term or Chronic Condition means a medical, psychological, or other health condition that is ongoing or recurring in nature, has lasted or is expected to last for an extended period, and which may periodically impact a student's ability to undertake Assessment Tasks or meet academic requirements. A Long-term or Chronic Condition is distinct from a short-term illness or injury.
j. Planned Extension means a pre-approved extension that may be applied to certain long-form written Assessment Tasks to provide students with additional time where required. A student activates a Planned Extension for an Assessment Task via submission of a Special Consideration application. Further guidance is set out in the Special Consideration Eligibility Guidelines.
k. Professional Authority Form (PAF) is a form to document Evidence of medically related disruptions (physical or psychological).
l. Retrospective Extension means an extension of an assessment deadline applied after the original due date has passed, calculated from the original due date, and proportionate to the period of impact evidenced in the Special Consideration application.
m. Short-term Circumstances or Events are serious, unavoidable and significantly disruptive to a student’s capacity to undertake assessment activities. They are ordinarily no more than twelve (12) calendar days in duration.
n. Statement of Fact is a statement provided by the applicant to describe the nature of the circumstances or event, explain the severity and how they have been impacted in relation to their capacity to complete their assessment. It can be completed by the student and does not need a medical professional or other person to complete. Conditions and restrictions of use are set out in the Schedule.
o. Substantial Disruption means a significant impact on a student's ability to prepare for, attend, or complete an Assessment Task, where the impact is directly caused by the circumstances described in the Special Consideration application. Normal academic pressures (for example, heavy workload, multiple deadlines, general stress or anxiety, or other predictable challenges of student life) do not constitute Substantial Disruption.
p. Teaching Period is a period of time that will represent a portion of a study period during which teaching and learning activities are scheduled.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	24th November 2026
Review Date	24th November 2031
Approval Authority	Academic Senate
Approval Date	24th November 2026
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Rorden Wilkinson Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Responsible Officer	Leanne Piggott Pro Vice-Chancellor (Dean of Students)
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