

Part 5 - Special Consideration Due to Serious Illness, Injury and Misadventure

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Assessments are designed to provide feedback on performance or to establish that students have achieved an adequate standard to proceed or to graduate. The University's assessment system is designed to ensure that conditions are fair to all students, as consistent as possible and that individual students are not disadvantaged by adverse personal circumstances beyond their control or by the activities of other students.

5.1.2 Generally, serious illness, injury or misadventure will be taken into account when considering a student's performance in a course or unit of study. There is, however, a clear distinction between longstanding illness or difficulties which prevent students from attending classes or completing required work or which seriously interfere with their capacity to study for long periods and short-term illness, injury or misadventure that may prevent a well-prepared student from sitting for an examination or completing a particular assessment. In general, the provisions of Special Consideration are intended to apply to the latter situations.

5.1.3 Students who bear a primary carer responsibility toward another person at the time of the assessment may apply for Special Consideration based upon illness, injury or misadventure on the part of the person for whom they bear the responsibility, and which affects their ability to prepare for or perform the assessment in the same manner as if the illness, injury or misadventure was their own.

5.2 Principles for Dealing with Cases of Special Consideration

5.2.1 Special Consideration is a process that affords equal opportunity to students, including enrolled students, non-award students, study abroad students and students studying at the University of Sydney on an exchange program who have experienced circumstances that adversely impact their ability to complete an assessment task.

5.2.2 Students who are granted Special Consideration will nonetheless be required to demonstrate achievement of designated learning outcomes.

5.2.3 A student who is capable of attempting an examination should do so, notwithstanding any claim for Special Consideration.

5.2.4 All claims for Special Consideration should be genuine and should be made with good intent. Students seeking to use Special Consideration as a means of gaining an unfair advantage in the assessment of designated learning outcomes should be rejected, and may be subject to disciplinary action.

5.2.5 Other students should not be disadvantaged by the approval of a request for Special Consideration.

- 5.2.6** All claims for Special Consideration should be considered in the same manner across the University, but the response may vary depending on the circumstances of the illness, injury, misadventure and assessment.

For example a student who applied for Special Consideration in several units of study on the basis of a sprained wrist might receive different outcomes in a creative performance unit requiring fine motor control than in a conventional written exam.

- 5.2.7** Multiple and recurring claims for Special Consideration may be an indicator of a student at academic risk, as defined by the Academic Board policy "Student Academic Progression Policy".

- 5.2.8** Requests for Special Consideration should be lodged within five working days of the assessment. Where circumstances preclude this, a student may still apply, but must provide a reasonable case for the delay in application. The faculty will not decline an application on the grounds of lateness where a reasonable case is provided.

5.3 Responsibilities

5.3.1 Responsibilities of the University

The University has a responsibility and obligation to:

- 5.3.1.1 ensure that its policies on Special Consideration are publicised to all academic staff and students;
- 5.3.1.2 ensure that its policies on Special Consideration are implemented and applied consistently across all faculties;
- 5.3.1.3 promote best practice in considering applications for Special Consideration; and
- 5.3.1.4 ensure that fair and well-publicised procedures are applied for the consideration of any cases where students are applying for Special Consideration.

5.3.2 Responsibility of Faculties

Faculties have a responsibility and obligation to:

- 5.3.2.1 develop procedures for considering applications of Special Consideration which ensure:
 - 5.3.2.1.1 timeliness of consideration of applications of Special Consideration;
 - 5.3.2.1.2 fair consideration of applications of Special Consideration;
 - 5.3.2.1.3 accurate reporting of how an academic judgment was formed;
 - 5.3.2.1.4 respect for privacy; and

- 5.3.2.1.5 that all parties are informed of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the application of Special Consideration.
- 5.3.2.2 ensure consistent application of University policies and faculty procedures both at a faculty and department level.
- 5.3.2.3 ensure that there are clear and appropriate processes in place, consistent with the University's policies, so that students are treated fairly and equitably. These processes should be promoted widely and clearly in plain English.
- 5.3.2.4 ensure that two or more academic staff are involved in reaching an academic judgment regarding a student's formal Special Consideration application (see Sections 5.5.2 and 5.6) and that the process of determining that academic judgment is recorded in detail.

5.3.3 Responsibility of Students

Students have a responsibility and an obligation to:

- 5.3.3.1 become familiar with University policy and faculty procedures relating to Special Consideration;
- 5.3.3.2 act in accordance with the principles of Special Consideration as set out in this Resolution;
- 5.3.3.3 provide the relevant information to their faculty offices as soon as practicable and certainly within five working days of the due date of the assessment for which Special Consideration is sought (see also 5.2.8);
- 5.3.3.4 act honestly when applying for Special Consideration;
- 5.3.3.5 recognise that a claim for Special Consideration does not guarantee that the claim will be accepted and that general advice to students able to attempt the assessment is to do so, irrespective of whether a claim is lodged, and
- 5.3.3.6 ensure that all documentation is complete and includes all information required by the Faculty to make a fair decision. Information not supplied by the student with the original application will not be taken into consideration, unless the additional information is noted in the original application but was not available at the time the application was submitted.

5.4 Serious Illness, Injury or Misadventure

- 5.4.1 Special Consideration is a process designed to effectively facilitate and provide students with appropriate means to demonstrate their academic achievements in assessment tasks in units of study, without an impairment on their ability.

It should be noted that only well-attested serious illness, injury or misadventure during a semester or occurring at the time of an examination will warrant Special Consideration for academic performance. The academic judgement as to whether Special Consideration will be granted will depend upon both the nature of the illness, injury or misadventure and its timing with respect to the assessment. For instance, a short acute illness supported by a medical certificate on the day of the examination would normally be accepted as causing an impairment to a student's ability to demonstrate academic achievement, but the same illness occurring several weeks before an assessment would be unlikely to cause such an impairment. The exact nature of misadventure will vary. For instance, serious illness or death of a close family member close to the assessment would clearly warrant consideration.

Occasionally there will be circumstances of a longer term nature, the impact of which on a student's ability to study and undertake assessments without impairment may be protracted and widespread. Such circumstances could include, for example, extended periods of recuperation from illness, or bereavement.

Under these circumstances, students should feel free to approach their academic advisor/s or counsellor to discuss relevant options and to determine how best to proceed. The intent of these discussions is to provide both the opportunity and forum in which particular needs of the student, and the impact of the relevant life event, can be holistically assessed within a context of ensuring academic achievement. In particular, where circumstances have prevented study for a significant proportion of the semester, an academic judgement, to which the student is a party, must be made as to whether the requirements of the student's study can be met by continuing at that time.

It is possible that one or even a number of Special Consideration applications may not serve the student's interest in these circumstances, and other options for study management may need to be discussed. These options could include for example, discontinuing with permission, or temporary leave of absence (see the *University of Sydney (Coursework Rule) 2000 (as amended)*). International students may need to seek advice regarding visa requirements prior to making any changes to enrolments. Assistance can be sought from the International Office.

5.4.1.1 Students can apply for Special Consideration for any assessment. The relevant Faculty will decide which of the forms of Special Consideration detailed in sections 5.5 and 5.6 is the appropriate response to a successful claim.

5.4.2 Special Consideration will not be given in the following instances:

5.4.2.1 occasional brief or trivial illness of a one or two week duration that occur one week or more before an assessment is due or an examination undertaken;

- 5.4.2.2 to balance workloads from other units of study, disciplines or Faculties. It is expected that in semester assessment tasks in units of study, disciplines or Faculties will normally be timetabled to enable orderly completion. However in cases where this is not possible, students are encouraged in the first three weeks of semester to develop an individual study timetable. Academic staff are expected, upon request, to give advice and to assist students to develop a viable work plan for the timely completion of all set assessment tasks;
- 5.4.2.3 Information and communications technology-related problems, except where they could not have been prevented, avoided or the effects minimised by reasonable diligence on the part of the student; and
- 5.4.2.4 Jury Service, Military Service, National sporting, religious or cultural commitments and other unforeseen events are dealt with as Special Arrangements described later in this policy (see Part 7).

5.5 Claims for Special Consideration

Simple Extensions may be offered, where Faculties or staff deem it appropriate.

5.5.1 Simple Extensions

- 5.5.1.1 An informal claim for Special Consideration in the form of a Simple Extension is a claim relating to a non-examination based assessment task for which an extension of less than five working days is sought.
- 5.5.1.2 A request for a Simple Extension may be granted following agreement with the lecturer or teacher most immediately involved with the assessment. An application for an extension must:
 - 5.5.1.2.1 clearly set out the basis for the claim; and
 - 5.5.1.2.2 be recorded in writing (including by the exchange of emails).
- 5.5.1.3 In assessing whether to grant an extension, the lecturer or teacher most immediately involved with the assessment will ensure when determining the extent to which the student's ability to prepare was affected, that their judgement will be balanced with equity, fairness and consistency for all students.
- 5.5.1.4 A student whose request for a simple extension is not granted by the lecturer or teacher most immediately involved with the assessment may make a formal request for Special Consideration.

5.5.2 All Other Forms of Special Consideration

5.5.2.1 In all cases except for those referred to in 5.5.1.1, or where a Simple Extension has not been granted, students may formally apply for Special Consideration in respect of assessment because of illness, injury or misadventure.

5.5.2.2 An application for Special Consideration must:

5.5.2.2.1 use the specified form;

- 5.5.2.2.2 a) clearly set out the basis for the claim on the specified form;
- b) be supported by a Professional Practitioner Certificate completed by a registered health practitioner or counsellor within the scope of their practice, who is not a family member. The Professional Practitioner Certificate includes:
- date of consultation;
 - an evaluation by the practitioner, counsellor, psychologist etc. as to the severity, duration and effect on the student's ability to attend classes, learn or complete assessment requirements;
 - the date the Certificate was written and signed;

The Certificate should only be issued in respect of an illness or injury observed by the health practitioner or reported by the patient and deemed to be true by the health practitioner.

- c) where a certificate as in b) above is not appropriate, the application should be supported by a Statutory Declaration, and where possible accompanied by other appropriate supporting documents;
- d) be recorded in writing, and
- e) comply with section 5.3.3.

5.5.2.3 Faculties who accept as valid the claim for Special Consideration shall at their sole discretion identify and apply the most appropriate response from those described in section 5.6.

5.6 Forms of Special Consideration

5.6.1 Replacement Assessment

5.6.1.1 A claim for a replacement assessment is a claim relating to an examination-based assessment, typically a final examination (section 4.2). Examinations of the form, for

example, of weekly quizzes may more appropriately be accommodated under section 5.6.3, particularly 5.6.3.2.

- 5.6.1.2 Replacement assessment should assess the same skills and knowledge, with appropriate preparation, as the original assessment, irrespective of the form of the replacement assessment.
- 5.6.1.3 The Faculty is responsible for setting the date of the replacement assessment. If a student is unable to attend the replacement assessment because of illness, injury or misadventure, they may lodge a further application for Special Consideration.
- 5.6.1.4 A student may withdraw a claim for replacement assessment made prior to, during or immediately after an assessment (typically an examination) at any time prior to the release of the results for that assessment. A student may seek academic advice regarding the withdrawal of a claim for Special Consideration, except from an academic who is associated with the assessment.
- 5.6.1.5 Where a successful claim for Special Consideration is made prior to, during or immediately after an assessment (typically an examination), any replacement assessment will be treated by the Faculty as a first attempt and the original attempt at the assessment will be deemed not to have occurred.
- 5.6.1.6. Both the Faculty and the student will use their best endeavours to complete the replacement assessment within six weeks of the date of the final examination in that unit of study, or within such longer period as the Faculty may decide. The student, because of further illness, injury or misadventure may be unable to attempt the replacement assessment within the specified time, or the Faculty may be unable to construct a valid form of assessment. In such cases, the Faculty will, where reasonable, determine alternative means of assessment. If this is not possible, the Faculty will award a grade of DNF to the student.

5.6.2 Formal Extensions

- 5.6.2.1 A formal claim for an extension is a Special Consideration claim relating to a non-examination based assessment task.
- 5.6.2.2 In assessing whether to grant an extension, the Faculty should take into account the extent to which the student's ability to prepare was affected. The Faculty will determine the duration of the extension.
- 5.6.2.3 Extensions of up to 20 working days may be granted. Longer extensions will normally only be granted if it does not unfairly advantage the student against others in the cohort. If unfair advantage would occur (regardless of the length of extension), an alternative assignment

should be set. For example, if an extension would extend past the release of other class results for the same assignment and this could be of advantage to the student applying, an alternative assignment will be given.

5.6.3 Reweighting or Averaging

5.6.3.1 A claim for a reweighting or averaging is a claim relating to assessments that repeat on a regular basis. Repetitive assessments are typically assessments that occur throughout the semester, for instance, weekly class tests, tutorial participation marks, or laboratory work in which each assessment alone is not worth a high percentage of the total unit mark.

5.6.3.2 The non-completion of some minor component of assessment must not compromise the integrity of the assessment of the curriculum. Therefore, there may be situations where re-weighting is not permitted on academic grounds: this will be declared in the description of assessment for that unit of study or curriculum. In these cases, students will complete an alternative assessment.

5.6.3.3 Should a student miss more than one third of the regular assessment component, the student will be required to submit an alternative assessment. The mark for this alternative assessment will replace the missed component of the repetitive assessment.

5.6.4 Groupwork

Where one or more members of a group suffer an illness, injury or misadventure,

5.6.4.1 There are two possible injured parties to be considered with respect to groupwork;

a) the member or members suffering illness, injury or misadventure; and

b) the remaining members of the group whose ability to complete the task as originally assigned might be impacted by the absence of one or more members. They may be considered to have experienced a form of misadventure. Ideally, for any illness, injury or misadventure, both parties would submit claims for Special Consideration. Each claim of Special Consideration should note that it is in respect of group work and will be made as described in section 5.5.2.

5.6.4.2 Where the Faculty judges that the illness, injury or misadventure has no impact on the functioning of the group or its ability to complete the task as assigned, no Special Consideration is necessary.

- 5.6.4.3 Where the Faculty judges that the illness, injury or misadventure does not impair the continued functioning of the group but the ability to complete the task, as assigned, on time is impaired, typically an extension of time may be appropriate. If not, an alternative assignment will be required.
- 5.6.4.4 Where the Faculty judges that the original group can no longer function, the assessment task will be redefined for the remaining active members of the group, based on the contributions they were to make and assessment will be based on this redefined task. The teacher, on the merits of the situation, may allow an extension of time.
- 5.6.4.5 In the above case (5.6.4.4) those members of the group who suffered the original illness, injury or misadventure will, if their claim for Special Consideration is accepted, be given alternate assessment.
- 5.6.4.6 In those cases where a group submits a claim for Special Consideration on the basis of an absence of one or more members, but this is not matched by a Special Consideration application from one or more of its members, the claim from the group should be assessed on its merits, as above, even though the Faculty may have no knowledge of missing members suffering an illness, injury or misadventure.

5.7 Students with a Disability

- 5.7.1** Students with a disability¹ who wish to obtain reasonable adjustments for their disability must register with and seek the support of the Disability Services Office (see also Part 6).
- 5.7.2** A student with a disability may, notwithstanding his or her registration with the Disability Services Office, and prior provision of reasonable adjustments for the disability, make a claim for Special Consideration

¹ The definition of disability is based on the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)* and includes; deafness/hearing impairment; blindness/vision impairment; physical disability; specific learning disability; psychiatric disability; acquired brain injury; chronic medical conditions and temporary disability.

Services are provided through Disability Services where:

- A student has a disability as defined in the *Disability Discrimination Act (1992)*; AND that disability impacts on the student's University studies; AND the student has supporting documentation, i.e., medical documentation describing the disability and any corresponding need for services and/or adjustments.

When assessing whether an adjustment is 'reasonable', the Disability Services Officer will consider in consultation with academic or other staff if appropriate:

- The inherent requirements of the course that demonstrate core learning outcomes
- The extent to which a disability impacts upon study, and
- The effect, if any, of the adjustment on other students or the teaching and learning process.

Disability Services also assists students with temporary disabilities (i.e., broken limb) to access reasonable adjustments and services.

due to illness, injury or misadventure, in accordance with this Resolution.

5.8 *Aegrotat* and Posthumous Awards

In exceptional circumstances involving serious illness or death, award of *aegrotat* and posthumous degrees and diplomas may be made. In this circumstance, the Dean, acting on behalf of the Faculty, would then authorise the Registrar to certify that the conditions for the award of the degree or diploma had been met.