Faculty of Science

Special Arrangements for Examination and Assessment
Application Guidelines

Introduction:

The Special Arrangements for Examination and Assessment policy is designed to support and assist students who are experiencing difficulty in meeting their assessment requirements due to competing essential community commitments.

The intent of this policy is to provide students with the opportunity of completing alternative assessment arrangements, whilst maintaining their essential community commitments. Applications for Special Arrangements may be made in respect of any or all factors which contribute to assessment in a unit of study, including assessment tasks, examinations and attendance requirements.

Special Arrangements may be made available to any student enrolled within a Faculty of Science unit of study, who is unable to meet assessment requirements or attend examinations, because of one or more of the following situations:

1. Essential religious commitments or essential beliefs;
2. Compulsory legal absence (e.g. jury duty, court summons, etc);
3. Sporting or cultural commitments, including political and union commitments, where the student is representing the University, state or nation;
4. Australian Defence Force Commitments (including Army Reserve).

Please note that the application for Special Arrangements must be submitted at least seven (7) days BEFORE the due date of the assessment or examination for which alternative arrangements are being sought. An application received after this period has lapsed will not be accepted/registered unless exceptional circumstances (eg hospitalization) have prevented timely application.

The Faculty of Science Guidelines for Application for Special Arrangement must be read in conjunction with the Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination: Special Arrangements which may be viewed at http://policy.rms.usyd.edu.au (See Teaching and Learning; Assessment, assignments, examinations & progression)

STUDENTS ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO CHECK WITH THE SCHOOL IN WHICH THEY ARE SEEKING SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS BEFORE LODGING AN APPLICATION, AS SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS IN SOME MATTERS MAY DIFFER FROM THE INFORMATION PRESENTED IN THIS DOCUMENT (FOR EXAMPLE; ATTENDANCE, LATE SUBMISSION, EXAMINATIONS, ACADEMIC PENALTIES).
Applying for Special Arrangements:

1. The student obtains an Application for Special Arrangements form from the Faculty of Science Information Office or from the Faculty website at www.science.usyd.edu.au.

Please note that an application for Special Arrangements for a unit of study administered by another Faculty must be submitted at that Faculty, and not at the Faculty of Science Information Office. The Faculty of Science will not be responsible for communicating, forwarding or redirecting erroneous submissions for Special Arrangements. Students are encouraged to confirm which Faculty administers a Unit of Study prior to the submission of a request for Special Arrangements.

2. The student lodges the original copy of the application form and original copies of any supporting documentation at the Faculty of Science Information Office. Where it is not possible to submit original documentation (e.g. Jury Summons, Court Summons, Notification of Selection for Representative Sporting Event), submission of a certified copy will be permitted. Certification will be performed by Faculty of Science Information Office. The original document and a copy must be presented to the Faculty of Science Information Office for certification. Documents certified by other individuals, institutions or organizations will NOT be accepted. All other forms submitted must be originals, including the Statement of Essential Religious or Ceremonial Commitment (SERCC).

All documents must be submitted in English.

Please note that it is also necessary to provide a copy of the application and all documentation for each unit of study in which Special Arrangements are being sought, to be forwarded to the School for assessment (e.g. if you are applying for alternative arrangements for three units of study, you must submit the original documentation plus three copies).

Also note that only the supporting documents provided at the time of initial application for Special Arrangements will be used to assess the request. It will not be possible to submit further documentation once an application has been lodged with the Faculty of Science Information Office.

The Faculty of Science Information Office will not make copies of any documentation submitted.

- A student seeking alternative arrangements due to an essential religious or ceremonial commitment must have a religious authority complete the Statement of Essential Religious or Ceremonial Commitment (SERCC). Examples of religious authority include, but are not restricted to, Priest, Imam, Minister, Rabbi, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Elder (Note: the Faculty of Science may seek further advice from the person or body which issued the supporting document used in the application).

Special Arrangements will ONLY be considered in this circumstance if the commitment falls on the same day as an assessment task or examination. Special Arrangements will NOT be made if the commitment falls before or after the assessment task or examination.

Students may elect to include details on preparation time required for the essential commitment (for example, travel time) BUT the Faculty of Science is under no
**obligation** to make additional arrangements for preparation time. This information should be noted on the Application Form (‘Total period for which Special Arrangements are being sought’) and supporting documentation detailing the tasks and time required to prepare must be submitted (in addition to the documents listed above).

A completed Special Arrangements Application Form and Statement of Essential Religious or Ceremonial Commitment (SERCC) must be submitted at least seven (7) days **BEFORE** the due date of the assessment or examination.

- **A student seeking Special Arrangements due to a compulsory legal absence,** must submit a certified copy of the Summons, Subpoena or Court Order to Appear (Note: the Faculty of Science may seek further advice from the person or body which issued the supporting document used in the application).

Special Arrangements will **ONLY** be considered in this circumstance if the commitment falls on the same day as an assessment task or examination. Special Arrangements will **NOT** be made if the commitment falls before or after the assessment task or examination.

Students may elect to include details on preparation time required for the essential commitment (for example, travel time) **BUT** the Faculty of Science is **under no obligation** to make additional arrangements for preparation time. This information should be noted on the Application Form (‘Total period for which Special Arrangements are being sought’) and supporting documentation detailing the tasks and time required to prepare must be submitted (in addition to the documents listed above).

A student seeking Special Arrangements due to Jury Service may request the Faculty of Science Information Office to produce a statement confirming their enrolment with the University of Sydney. This statement **MAY** assist the student in being excused from Jury Service. This request must made at the time of lodgement (of a Special Arrangements Request) and it will be processed by the Faculty of Science Information Office within seven (7) days.

If empanelled (for jury service), the student is required to contact the Faculty of Science Information Office and advise of the potential duration of that commitment. The Faculty of Science Information Office will then outline the options available to the student for further study in the current semester (Also see Section 2. *Longstanding commitment and Special Arrangements*).

A completed Special Arrangements Application Form and supporting documentation must be submitted at least seven (7) days **BEFORE** the due date of the assessment or examination.

- **A student seeking Special Arrangements due to sporting, cultural, political or union commitments** (where the student is representing the University, state or nation), must submit supporting documentation from the organising sporting, cultural, political or union body. This statement must detail the nature, dates and duration of the event or commitment. This statement must also be issued on the letterhead of the organising sporting, cultural, political or union body and contain the name, signature and contact details of the author (Note: the Faculty of Science may seek further advice from the person or body which issued the supporting document used in the application).
Special Arrangements will **ONLY** be considered in this circumstance if the commitment falls on the same day as an assessment task or examination. Special Arrangements will **NOT** be made if the commitment falls before or after the assessment task or examination.

Students may elect to include details on preparation time required for the essential commitment (for example, travel time, training camps etc) BUT the Faculty of Science is **under no obligation** to make additional arrangements for preparation time. This information should be noted on the Application Form (‘Total period for which Special Arrangements are being sought’) and supporting documentation detailing the tasks and time required to prepare must be submitted (in addition to the documents listed above).

A completed Special Arrangements Application Form and supporting documentation must be submitted at least seven (7) days **BEFORE** the due date of the assessment or examination.

- **A student seeking Special Arrangements due to Australian Defence Force Commitments (including Army Reserve)** must submit documentation from the student’s brigade or unit. This statement must detail a commencement date for service and potential duration of the commitment. This statement must also be issued on the letterhead of the student’s brigade or unit and contain the name, signature and contact details of the author (Note: the Faculty of Science may seek further advice from the person or body which issued the supporting document used in the application).

Special Arrangements will **ONLY** be considered in this circumstance if the commitment falls on the same day as an assessment task or examination. Special Arrangements will **NOT** be made if the commitment falls before or after the assessment task or examination.

Students may elect to include details on preparation time required for the essential commitment (for example, travel time) BUT the Faculty of Science is **under no obligation** to make additional arrangements for preparation time. This information should be noted on the Application Form (‘Total period for which Special Arrangements are being sought’) and supporting documentation detailing the tasks and time required to prepare must be submitted (in addition to the documents listed above).

A completed Special Arrangements Application Form and supporting documentation must be submitted at least seven (7) days **BEFORE** the due date of the assessment or examination.

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3. The Faculty of Science Information Office checks the application at time of lodgement to ensure that a student’s documentation is adequate and if so, will sign and stamp both the original application form as well as the student’s copies to confirm lodgement of the application at the office. The Faculty of Science Information Office will then enter the details contained on the application form into the Special Arrangements database, which will be used to monitor the progress of the application.

4. The student takes the stamped and dated application form and documentation to the relevant Unit of Study Coordinator for assessment. Please note that this must be done for each Unit of Study in which alternative arrangements are being sought.
5. The Unit of Study Coordinator plus the Chair of Discipline (or their nominee) assess the evidence provided in the application and make a decision (referred to as the ‘Academic Judgement’). The Academic Judgement will be written on the Academic Judgement Form, data-entered by the School administration staff, and returned to the Faculty of Science Information Office for confidential storage.

6. When an Academic Judgement has been entered into the Special Arrangements database, the Faculty will communicate the decision to the student via an e-mail to the student’s University e-mail address.

It is expected that a response will be emailed to the student within fourteen (14) days of receipt of application.

Faculty procedures relating to application for Special Arrangements:

1. An application for Special Arrangements is a request:

   Students are advised that an application for Special Arrangements is a request, and does not constitute permission, nor does it guarantee that alternative arrangements will be granted. The Unit of Study Coordinator and the Chair of Discipline (or their nominee) evaluate the reasons for absence and how that absence may impact on a student’s performance. The academic assessors also determine the result of the application for Special Arrangements in accordance with Faculty guidelines regarding possible outcomes (see below).

   Schools are encouraged to deal with each application for Special Arrangements on a case-by-case basis and to provide a flexible response to applications.

   Wherever possible, Schools are required to supply a student seeking Special Arrangements with the learning materials and resources that would have normally been provided / obtained during the delivery of that program, but for the external commitment.

2. Longstanding commitment and Special Arrangements:

   The Faculty makes a clear distinction between short-term and longstanding commitments which prevent students from attending classes, completing required work or seriously interfering with their capacity to study.

   In cases of an extended absence, the relevant School should discuss the option of withdrawal without failure with students. Unit of study and course co-ordinators would be best placed to determine when a student’s absence from the University would reach the point of making it improbable, if not impossible, for the student to meet the requirements of the unit and/or course even with special arrangements for assessment and examination.

   International students may need to seek advice regarding visa requirements prior to making any changes to their enrolment. Assistance can be sought from the International Office.

   An ‘Extended Absence’ is defined, for the purposes of Special Arrangements, as being a period of more than two weeks (Also see section 3. Minimum attendance requirements).
3. **Minimum attendance requirements:**

The *Faculty of Science Handbook 2005*, p. 42, outlines the Faculty of Science attendance policy as follows: “Students enrolled in courses and units of study under the administration of the Faculty of Science are expected to attend a minimum of 80 per cent of tutorials, seminars and practical sessions etc associated with those courses or units, unless granted exemption by the Dean or Head of the relevant department. The Head of Department may set additional requirements for the minimum number of assessment items such as practical reports, tutorial papers, seminars, essays, exercises, quizzes etc which must be completed. On the recommendation of the relevant Head of Department the Dean may determine that a student fails a unit of study because of inadequate attendance or insufficient assessment items completed.” This effectively permits a student to miss two weeks of attendance and/or attendance-related assessment without jeopardising successful completion of the course. If a greater period is missed, the School may exercise the option of awarding the grade of AF (Absent Fail) for the given unit of study.

4. **Outcomes from Special Arrangements:**

Outcomes for an Application for Special Arrangements may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **a.** Alternative dates for submission of assessments;
- **b.** Provision of alternative assessment tasks;
- **c.** Alternative examination times/arrangements;
- **d.** Exemption from submission of assessment, with marks determined by the School; or
- **e.** Comparing assessment performance for work submitted under Special Arrangements with other assessment in the course and making an adjustment to the result in an individual piece of assessment or to the final result for a Unit of Study. Such adjustment will only be made if performance in the other assessment tasks indicates that the student would have been reasonably expected to gain a higher grade but for the student’s essential commitment.

How the mark for an assessment task submitted under Special Arrangements policy will be affected by the granting alternative arrangements will be indicated on the Academic Judgement Form completed by the academic assessors; it will also be entered into the Special Arrangements database by School administrative staff. The Faculty will use the database to formally communicate the outcome of the request for special arrangement to the student.

5. **Penalties for late submission:**

It is expected that unless other arrangements have been made (eg through an application for Special Arrangements), students will submit all assessment for a unit of study on the due date. If a student is unable to prepare, submit or sit for a piece of assessment due to an essential community commitment, the student may apply for an extension of the due date to the unit of study co-ordinator through the Special Arrangements application process. An extension will only be granted for a maximum period equal to the length of the attested commitment (i.e., if you are required to attend court and provide evidence for a period of two days, you may be granted an extension of up to two days). If the assessment is completed or submitted within the period of extension, no academic penalty will be applied to that piece of assessment.
If an extension is either not sought, not granted or is granted but work is submitted after the extended due date, late submission of assessment will result in an academic penalty. Unless otherwise determined by the unit of study coordinator or the School, a penalty of 10% of the maximum mark will be deducted from the student’s result for each 24 hour period after the stated deadline (i.e. if a piece of assessment is submitted two (2) days after it is due, the assessment will be marked as though submitted on time, then 20% of the maximum mark will be deducted from the student’s result). Please also note that no late submission will be accepted after the piece of assessment has been marked and returned to other students enrolled in the unit of study. Schools may decide to disallow late submission of any assessment or impose different penalties than those indicated, provided the School procedure is made known and available to all students.

6. **Special Arrangements relating to exams:**

   If a student is unable to sit an end-of-semester exam due to an essential commitment, they must apply for Special Arrangements following the procedure outlined above, including submission of appropriate supporting documentation, **at least seven (7) days BEFORE the date of the exam.** If a student does not sit an examination and is not granted Special Arrangement, a grade of AF (Absent Fail) or F (Fail) will result for that examination.

   Schools who have approved an application for Special Arrangements will then arrange for the student to sit an alternative examination at a date to be determined by the School; where this is not possible, the School must determine whether other means of assessment will be employed or an average or aggregate mark will be assigned for the missed assessment.

   Any alternative method employed by the School must be indicated on the Academic Judgement Form completed by the academic assessors, and communicated to the student as part of the response to the application for Special Arrangements within fourteen (14) days of application.

7. **Please note that Special Arrangements will not be granted in following instances:**

   a. where the application for alternative arrangements (or any part thereof) is submitted to, or received by, the Faculty of Science Information Office outside the specified timeframe (i.e. later than seven (7) days before the date of the assessment or examination).
   b. the essential commitment listed on the application form (or its supporting documentation) pre-dates the Due Date for the assessment task or examination.
   c. the essential commitment listed on the application form (or its supporting documentation) post-dates the Due Date for the assessment task or examination.
   d. the application is based on competing workloads from other units of study, disciplines and faculties;
   e. the application is based on competing employment and study commitments;
   f. when adequate standards of documentation have not been met;
   g. when the circumstances pertain to planned commitments, such as elective surgery, holiday, weddings or work, where the student could reasonably be expected to have scheduled the commitment or their studies to not adversely affect their studies;
8. **Appeal process against a Special Arrangements decision:**

a) Appeal against a Special Arrangements Decision Made at the Point of Lodgement

Should an application for Special Arrangements fail to meet any aspect of the requirements outlined above, the Faculty of Science Information Office must decline that application at the point of lodgement. The potential applicant will then be issued with a statement detailing the grounds on which that application was declined. Any **Appeal Against a Special Arrangements Decision Made at the Point of Lodgement** must:

1. be submitted to the **Faculty of Science Information Office** within seven (7) calendar days of the student’s application being declined. Should the appeal be received after this time has passed, it will be rejected.

2. be submitted as a formal letter in hard copy format (preferably typed). Emails and Faxes are NOT acceptable.

3. be addressed to:

   **Associate Professor Christopher Gillies**
   **Pro-Dean - Faculty of Science**
   **C/O Faculty of Science Information Office**
   **Carslaw Building F07**
   **University of Sydney NSW 2006**

4. contain your name, contact details, student number, student e-mail address, course in which you are currently enrolled and date.

An **Appeal Against a Special Arrangements Decision Made at the Point of Lodgement** must clearly demonstrate where the Faculty of Science Information Office Administrative Staff Member failed to correctly apply or follow the rules established for the provision of Special Arrangements as outlined within the Academic Board and Faculty of Science Special Arrangements Guidelines.

The appeal will be considered by the Pro-Dean or Pro-Dean’s nominee, within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the appeal and the result communicated via e-mail to the student’s University e-mail address.

Please note that appeals which introduce new circumstances or material which is not directly relevant to the original application, or which was not included in the original application, will be rejected.

b) Appeal against a Special Arrangements ‘Academic Judgement’

The unit of study Coordinator plus the Head of School / Chair of Discipline (or their nominee) assess the evidence provided in an application and make a decision, referred to as the ‘Academic Judgment’. The Faculty will communicate the Academic Judgement to the student via an e-mail to the student’s University e-mail address.

Any appeal against a **Special Arrangements Academic Judgement** must:

1. be submitted to the **Faculty of Science Information Office** within seven (7) calendar days of the student being informed of the outcome (ie. the day the Faculty emailed
you with details of the Academic Judgement). Should the appeal be received after this time has passed, it will be rejected.

2. be submitted as a formal letter in hard copy format (preferably typed). Emails and Faxes are NOT acceptable.

3. be addressed to:
   
   Associate Professor Christopher Gillies  
   Pro-Dean - Faculty of Science  
   C/O Faculty of Science Information Office  
   Carslaw Building F07  
   University of Sydney NSW 2006  

4. contain your name, contact details, student number, student email address, course in which you are currently enrolled date and copy of the Academic Judgement received.

The appeal will be considered by the Pro-Dean or the Pro-Dean’s nominee, within fourteen (14) days of receipt of the appeal and the result communicated via e-mail to the student’s University e-mail address.

Please note that appeals which introduce new circumstances or material which are not directly relevant to the original application, or were not included in the original application, will be rejected.

9. **Academic Dishonesty**

   Please note that submitting a misleading, fraudulent or tampered document is considered a form of academic dishonesty. Any student who is found to have provided forged, tampered or altered documents in order to obtain special arrangements for assessment or examination will be subject to the University’s procedures for dealing with cases of misconduct as set out in Chapter 8 of the University of Sydney By-law 1999 (as amended). The request will not be granted and the matter will be referred to the relevant Head of School, with the possibility of severe academic penalty. Criminal matters may be referred directly to the New South Wales Police.

10. **Consent**

   The Faculty of Science reserve the right to contact any party cited in support of an application for Special Arrangements in order to verify the validity of that application. By signing the application the student consents to the Faculty of Science verifying any element of information provided; verifying the authenticity of any documentation provided by the applicant; and taking any action where documentation is irregular in any aspect.

   Students must provide contact details to enable the Faculty of Science to seek further advice from the person or body which issued supporting documentation used in the application.