Faculty of Science
Guidelines for Application for Special Consideration

Introduction:
Students who have a serious illness or who have experienced misadventure which may affect their academic performance in a course or Unit of Study may request that they be given Special Consideration in relation to the determination of their results. It should be noted that brief illness or minor misadventure will not warrant Special Consideration unless it prevents the student submitting an assessment by the due date, or attending an examination as scheduled. Occasional brief illness is not regarded as sufficient to explain poor performance where work has been completed, nor does it justify failure to produce work as soon as the illness is past. Applications for Special Consideration 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.

Please note that the application for Special Consideration must be submitted within seven (7) days of the due date of the assessment or examination for which consideration is being sought.
No application received after this period has lapsed will be accepted unless exceptional circumstances (eg hospitalization), for which documentation must be provided, have prevented timely application.

The Faculty of Science Guidelines for Application for Special Consideration must be read in conjunction with the Academic Board Resolutions: Assessment and Examination of Coursework, Part 5 – Special Consideration due to Illness or Misadventure, which may be viewed at http://policy.rms.usyd.edu.au or in the Student Information Bulletin November 2003-October 2004, pages 3-7.

STUDENTS ARE STRONGLY ADVISED TO CHECK WITH THE SCHOOL IN WHICH THEY ARE SEEKING CONSIDERATION BEFORE LODGING AN APPLICATION, AS SCHOOL REQUIREMENTS IN SOME MATTERS (ATTENDANCE, LATE SUBMISSION, EXAMINATIONS, ACADEMIC PENALTIES) MAY DIFFER FROM THE INFORMATION PRESENTED IN THIS DOCUMENT.

Applying for Special Consideration:
1. The student must obtain a Special Consideration Application pack (containing an information sheet, the Application for Special Consideration form, the Professional Practitioners Certificate and the Academic Judgment Form) from the Student Information Office of the Faculty of Science or from the Faculty website at: http://www.science.usyd.edu.au/fstudent/postgrad/pdf/special_consideration_application_pack.pdf
   Please note that applications for Special Consideration for a Unit of Study taught by a School or Department within the Faculty of Science must be submitted to the Faculty of Science, regardless of the Faculty in which you are enrolled. Applications for a Unit of Study taught by a School or Department in a different Faculty must be submitted at that Faculty Office, even if you are a Science student. If you are unsure about where to submit an application, please contact the Student Information Office of the Faculty of Science.
2. The student will lodge the original of the application form and originals of any supporting documentation at the Student Information Office. Where it is not possible to obtain original documentation (e.g. death certificate, police report), submission of a certified copy will be permitted. All other forms submitted must be originals, including the Professional Practitioners Certificate (PPC).

Please note that it is also necessary to provide a copy of the application and all documentation for each piece of assessment for which consideration is being sought, to be stamped by the Faculty and forwarded by the student to the School for assessment (for example, if you are applying for consideration for three different pieces of assessment, you must submit the original documentation plus three copies of all documents). **The Student Information Office will not make copies of any documentation submitted.**

- **For consideration due to serious illness** a student must have a registered medical practitioner or counselor complete the Professional Practitioners Certificate which is attached to the application form. Please note that only the Professional Practitioner’s Certificate will be accepted in support of an application for Special Consideration on grounds of serious illness: **MEDICAL CERTIFICATES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.** Students are strongly advised to ensure that the medical practitioner completes this certificate on initial consultation by obtaining the form before the consultation.

- **For consideration due to misadventure**, a Professional Practitioners Certificate or other form of appropriate documentation (a police report or death certificate, for example) is required which indicates the likely duration and effect of the misadventure on the student’s performance.

Please note that only the supporting documents provided at the time of initial application for Special Consideration will be used to assess the request. It will not be possible to submit further documentation relating to an initial application once an application has been lodged with the Student Information Office, unless requested to do so by the School or Faculty. Only those circumstances brought to the attention of staff at the time of lodgement will be taken into consideration when formulating an academic judgment.

The Student Information Office will check the application at time of lodgement to ensure that the forms are complete and that supporting documentation is adequate and if so, will sign/stamp both the original application form as well as the student’s copies to confirm lodgement of the application at the Office. The student is advised that personal information (Name, SID, Assessment) on all forms must be completed before the forms are accepted at the Student Information Office; incomplete forms will not be accepted.

3. The Student Information Office will enter the details contained on the application form into the Special Consideration database, which will be used to monitor the progress of the application.

4. Once the form has been stamped by the Student Information Office, the student will take the stamped and dated application form and documentation to the relevant Unit of Study Coordinator or School Administration Office for assessment. Please note that this must be done for each Unit of Study for which consideration is being sought.
5. The Unit of Study Coordinator plus the Head of School/Chair of Discipline or their nominee will assess the evidence provided in the application and make a decision (referred to as the ‘academic judgment’). The academic judgment of the application for Special Consideration will be written on the Academic Judgment Form, data-entered by the School administration staff, and returned to the Faculty office for confidential storage.

6. When an academic judgment has been entered into the Special Consideration 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 received by the student within fourteen (14) days of initial application.
FACULTY GUIDELINES RELATING TO
APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL CONSIDERATION

1. An application for Special Consideration is a request:
Students are advised that an application for Special Consideration is a request, and does not guarantee that consideration will be granted. The Unit of Study Coordinator and the Head of School (or their nominee) will evaluate how serious the reasons for Special Consideration are and how they may have impacted on a student’s performance or attendance. The academic assessors will also determine the result of the application for Special Consideration in accordance with Faculty guidelines regarding possible outcomes (see below).

2. Longstanding Illness and Special Consideration:
The University makes a clear distinction between longstanding illness or misadventure which prevent students from attending classes or completing required work or which seriously interferes with their capacity to study for long periods, and short-term serious illness or misadventure that may prevent a well-prepared student from sitting an examination or completing a particular assignment. Students who, because of serious illness or misadventure, are prevented from attending classes for prolonged periods should seek an interview with the relevant Unit of Study Coordinator. Even if they do not exceed any specified permitted period of absence, they may need to consider whether their best academic interests are served by discontinuing with permission from the course until they are able to resume their studies effectively. International students may need to seek advice regarding visa requirements prior to making any changes to enrolment. Assistance can be sought from the International Office.

3. Minimum attendance requirements:
The Faculty of Science Handbook 2004, p. 34, outlines the Faculty of Science attendance requirements 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.”
Please note that these requirements extend to attendance as well as assessment; where a Unit of Study has sessions at which attendance is mandatory (eg laboratory demonstrations), nonattendance may result in academic penalty or failure of the Unit of Study as determined by the School, unless the School determines otherwise, Faculty requirements permit a student to miss two weeks of attendance and/or attendance-related assessment without jeopardising successful completion of the Unit of Study. If a greater period is missed, the School will be able to exercise the option of awarding the grade of AF (Absent Fail) for the given Unit of Study.

4. Penalties for late submission:
It is expected that unless other arrangements have been made (eg through an application for Special Consideration), students will submit all assessment for a Unit of Study on the due date. If a student’s preparation of a piece of assessment is impaired in advance of this date, the student may
apply for an extension of this due date. An extension will only be granted for a maximum period equal to the length of attested impairment (ie, if you were impaired for three days, you may be granted an extension of up to three 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, the 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 (ie, 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). Please note that no extensions will be granted after a piece of assessment is due unless evidence is provided that circumstances prevented timely submission, and 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 guidelines are made known and available to all students.

5. Outcomes from Special Consideration:
Where the nature of either the assessment or impairment do not allow for an extension of the deadline for submission, other possible outcomes from a request for Special Consideration include:
   a) offering alternative assessment;
   b) exemption from submission of assessment, with marks adjusted as determined by the School; or
   c) comparing assessment performance for work submitted under Special Consideration 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 other assessment tasks indicates that the student would reasonably have been expected to gain a higher grade if performance had not been impaired.

How the mark for an assessment task submitted under Special Consideration will be affected by the granting of consideration will be indicated on the Academic Judgment Form completed by the academic assessors; this information will also be entered into the Special Consideration database by School administrative staff. The Faculty will use the database to formally communicate the outcome of the request for Special Consideration to the student, including the manner in which consideration will affect assessment.

6. Special Consideration relating to exams:
Please note that the following is an indication of general Faculty guidelines only, and that Schools may have guidelines or procedures that differ from the information presented here. Students are strongly advised to check with each individual School regarding Special Consideration for examinations before deciding to miss an examination or sit a final examination despite impairment.

Unless otherwise advised by a School’s own Special Consideration guidelines, if a student is unable to sit an end-of-semester exam, they must apply for Special Consideration following the
procedure outlined above, including submission of appropriate supporting documentation, within seven (7) days from the date of the exam. If a student does not sit an examination and is not granted Special Consideration, a grade of AF (Absent Fail) will result for that examination. If a student is able to attend an examination, even if performance is impaired during that examination, the student is strongly advised to sit the examination and lodge an application for Special Consideration. If consideration is granted, final results may be adjusted, or assessment may be based on a supplementary examination or alternative means of assessment, as advised by the School.

Where possible, Schools are encouraged to allow students who have been granted Special Consideration to sit an alternative examination at a date to be determined by the School; where this is not possible, the School must determine whether another means of assessment will be employed or a mark will be calculated for the missed assessment. The manner in which the School will assess a missed examination will be indicated on the Academic Judgment Form completed by the academic assessors, and communicated to the student as part of the response to the application for Special Consideration within fourteen (14) days of application.

Please note that Special Consideration will not be granted in respect to any additional assessment. Unsatisfactory performance in, or absence from additional assessment will result in failure of that assessment.

7. Please note that Special Consideration will not be granted in the following instances:
   a) occasional, brief or trivial illness of a one- or two-day duration that occur seven (7) days or more before an assessment is due or exam undertaken;
   b) workloads from other units of study, disciplines and faculties, except where the request for special consideration is made within the first three weeks of semester;
   c) employment where the request for special consideration is made less than four weeks before the date of assessment;
   d) illnesses and misadventures that have prevented students from acquiring a Pass level of knowledge/skills (including all illnesses/misadventures resulting in the student missing six weeks or more of lectures or tutorials);
   e) adequate standards of documentation and processes have not been met;
   f) requests for extensions made after the assignment is due or an assessment has taken place (except where the circumstances prevented earlier submission, no special consideration requests shall be processed if submitted more than seven (7) days after the assessment is due);
   g) the supporting documentation post-dates the period for which special consideration is sought;
   h) the performance of the student was equivalent or superior to that demonstrated in other assessments in the unit of study;
   i) the circumstances pertain to planned commitments, such as elective surgery, holiday or work, where the student could reasonably be expected to have scheduled the commitment or their studies to not adversely affect their studies;
   j) computer-related problems, except where a police report is provided indicating that burglary or calamity has resulted in the loss of a computer and backups from the students’
place of residence (NB: it is assumed that students keep regular back-ups of their work, so theft of a laptop is not grounds for special consideration).  

k) Jury Service, Military Service, National Sporting and religious or cultural commitments which prevent a student from attending scheduled examinations would not normally be considered as cases of misadventure. Whilst faculties are encouraged to consider significant religious and cultural events when scheduling examination dates they may make allowances for these circumstances and consider these applications on a case by case basis. Students affected by these circumstances should approach the Unit of Study coordinator or Head of School for advice concerning their continuing enrolment in the Unit of Study.

8. Appeal process against a Special Consideration decision: 

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

   Should an application for Special Consideration 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 Consideration 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 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 Dean of the 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) and date.

   An Appeal Against a Special Consideration 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 Consideration as outlined within the Academic Board and Faculty of Science Special Consideration 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 are not directly relevant to the original application, or were not included in the original application, will be rejected.
b) Appeal against a Special Consideration ‘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.

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

Any appeal against a **Special Consideration 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 Dean of the 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 fraudulent application for Special Consideration is considered a form
of academic dishonesty. The request will not be granted and the matter will be referred to the
relevant Head of School or Unit, with the possibility of severe academic penalty. Please also note
that the Faculty of Science and the University of Sydney reserve the right to contact the
professional practitioners or other parties cited in support of any application for Special
Consideration to verify the validity of that application. The student’s consent to this is understood
to be implicit in the lodgement of an application for Special Consideration.