



ACADEMIC PATHWAYS PROGRAM SPECIAL CONSIDERATION POLICY

SECTION 1 - PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

- (1) The College recognises that there will be serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances (including sporting and cultural events) beyond a student's control which are of such severity or gravity that they may impact adversely on academic performance.
- (2) To pass units, students must demonstrate that they have achieved the unit learning outcomes; merely applying for special consideration on the basis of serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances will not demonstrate that the learning outcomes have been achieved. Granting special consideration recognises extenuating circumstances, and provides alternative ways in which a student may be assessed, so that they are not disadvantaged.
- (3) The underlying principle of this policy is that all students have the right to equity and fairness when undertaking the assessment components of their studies. The policy has been instituted to support students who, under normal circumstances, would reach their usual demonstrated performance level but are significantly affected by serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances beyond their control.
- (4) This policy does not cover the situations where a student:
 - a. has been prevented from meeting an assessment deadline; or
 - b. has been unable to undertake a compulsory component of their course other than in the case where serious misadventure is the cause.

These situations are covered in guidelines that are part of *The College's [Academic Pathways Program Assessment Policy](#)*.

SECTION 2 - DEFINITIONS

- (5) For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply to examinations:
 - a. "Final Examination" - a formal, supervised assessment activity used to assess student learning outcomes which normally takes place at the conclusion of a formal teaching period, during the formal examination period.

- b. "Formal Examination Period" - refers to The College end of session examinations. In this policy, examinations conducted during the teaching session are considered to be assessment tasks. [or ... "an examination conducted during the teaching session is considered to be an assessment task".
- c. "Deferred Examination" - an examination granted to a student as a concession for inability to attend the final examination in a unit due to serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances. Deferred examinations are held after the formal examination period.
- d. "Supplementary Examination" - an examination offered by The College to a student as a possible outcome of a special consideration application. The College will administer and invigilate supplementary examinations.
- e. "Serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances" - are any unexpected events that are outside a student's capacity to prevent or overcome and which demonstrably affect their capacity to complete teaching/learning and/or assessment tasks, or achieve the level of attainment typical of their previous performance in the unit.

Factors contributing to or constituting serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances must directly relate to the timing of unit teaching/learning and/or assessment requirements. These can include:

- i. shorter-term medical conditions or events;
- ii. psychological trauma, impairment or incapacity arising from an event;
- iii. physical trauma leading to impairment or incapacity resulting from an accident;
- iv. financial hardship arising from substantial change to economic circumstances beyond the student's control;
- v. substantial change to routine employment arrangements or status beyond the student's control; and/or
- vi. substantial unanticipated change to routine accommodation or residential arrangements or status beyond the student's control.

The following factors would not normally be considered as contributing to or constituting extenuating circumstances:

- i. routine demands of employment and employment-related travel;
- ii. difficulties adjusting to university life, to the self-discipline needed to study effectively, and to the demands of academic work;
- iii. stress or anxiety normally associated with examinations, required assessment tasks or any aspect of course work;
- iv. routine financial support needs;
- v. lack of knowledge of requirements of academic work;
- vi. difficulties with English language;

vii. difficulties with visa arrangements that could have been reasonably anticipated; and/or

viii. scheduled anticipated changes of address, moving home, house moves, etc.

Circumstances which can be grounds for a special consideration application other than serious misadventure or accident may also include:

- i. sporting or cultural commitments only where a student has been selected, through a formal documented process, to represent or participate in a state, national or international event;
- ii. military commitments where a student is a member of the armed forces involved in a compulsory exercise;
- iii. military reserve commitments where a student is required to attend a compulsory exercise;
- iv. emergency service commitments only where a student is required to attend an emergency situation and the requirement to attend is specified in supporting documentation;
- v. legal commitments, where a student is called for jury duty or is subpoenaed to attend a court, tribunal or hearing, and the requirement to attend is specified in supporting documentation; and/or
- vi. compulsory involvement in a ceremony or significant cultural activity of a unique nature (excluding those specified in Clause 6(d)) where the requirement to attend is specified in supporting documentation from a relevant official or leader of the event/activity.

The following circumstances would not normally be regarded as grounds for a special consideration application:

- i. demands of sport, clubs, social or extra-curricular activity (other than to represent or participate in state, national or international sporting or cultural events);
 - ii. recreational travel (domestic or international); and/or
 - iii. planned events, such as weddings.
- f. "Special Consideration" - refers to those situations where a student wishes to formally advise The College that they have suffered unforeseen serious misadventure or accident, or have extenuating circumstances and, as a result, have:
- i. been prevented from meeting an assessment deadline;
 - ii. performed below their usual standard during an assessment, including formal examinations; or
 - iii. been unable to undertake a compulsory component of their unit.
- g. "Teaching Session" - refers to the time from the first week of lectures up to the commencement of the end of session examinations.

- h. “Designated Coordinator” - refers the staff member who has been delegated the responsibility for assessing applications for special consideration for that teaching session and for determining outcomes.
- i. “The College” - Western Sydney University The College a division of Western Sydney University Enterprises Pty Limited.
- j. “The University” - Western Sydney University.

SECTION 3 - POLICY STATEMENT

- (6) The policy applies to all students enrolled in programs delivered by the Academic Pathways Program including on-shore, off-shore and external-study students. The policy refers to both the teaching session and the formal examination period.
- (7) The policy addresses special consideration requests from students who are affected by serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances during a teaching session and the formal examination period. Special consideration should not be utilised repetitively in order to manage longer-term illness, disabilities or ongoing severe disruptive circumstances. In such circumstances, students should refer to Western Sydney University's [Disability Policy](#) and should seek advice from staff in Counselling and Disability Services.
- (8) Students with disabilities should contact Disability Services. Students can also access a College Student Adviser, in the first instance, and then a College/University Counsellor, Student Welfare Officer or Student Advocate for information, advice, support and referral. Special consideration provisions apply to all College students including those registered with Disability Services.
- (9) It is the student's responsibility to notify The College of serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances and to obtain documentation that demonstrates the severity and/or gravity and timing of the circumstance(s). The documentation should also demonstrate how the misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances have disrupted previously satisfactory work by a student during the teaching session.
- (10) On the basis of the information provided by the student, the following may be taken into account:
 - a. the severity of the event;
 - b. the student’s performance of other items of assessment in the unit; and
 - c. the history of previous applications for special consideration.
- (11) All staff who deal with special consideration applications are required to maintain confidentiality of information presented by students.

Delegations to Approve Special Consideration Applications

- (12) Assessment that "serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances" have been proved and documentary evidence provided: Designated Coordinator.
- (13) Determination of outcomes, other than a Re-assessable Fail, of all requests for special consideration: Designated Coordinator.

- (14) Award of a Re-assessable fail as the outcome of a special consideration application: Designated Coordinator.
- (15) Approve or dismiss applications for a deferred examination: relevant Designated Coordinator.

SECTION 4 - PROCEDURES

Part A - Applications

- (16) Applications are available on The College website or from the Student Centre.

Supporting documentation should be attached to demonstrate the nature and severity of the serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances (see Clause 5e).
- (17) Applications due to illness must be submitted no later than 5:00 pm on the second working day after the expiration of the Medical Certificate.
- (18) Any applications for hand-in tasks must be accompanied with all work completed on the task to date.
- (19) Applications due to reasons other than for illness must be submitted on the day the task was scheduled in the manner outlined on the form.
- (20) Students who can provide evidence to support extenuating circumstances affecting submission of the application may be granted permission to submit applications after this time.
- (21) All documentation must be lodged with the application for it to be considered.
- (22) A request for special consideration for an examination relates to situations where a student:
 - a. believes their studies and academic work have been adversely affected so that they will be unable to perform in the examination at their usual standard; or
 - b. was unable to complete a formal examination due to ill health or other cause.
- (23) A request for a deferred examination should only be made in exceptional circumstances where the severity and/or gravity of the misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances is of such an extreme nature that the student will not be able to sit the examination and where a rescheduling of the examination is demonstrated to be the only reasonable option. The College will not consider cases where a student is unable to attend an examination due to circumstances such as a vacation, ceremony or family event.
- (24) Students who believe their examination performance has been affected by ill health may request special consideration. A supplementary or deferred examination will not be granted if a student has entered the examination room.
- (25) Access to a supplementary or deferred examination is a privilege determined on a case-by-case basis. It is not a right. A supplementary or deferred examination is a significant concession to a student.
- (26) Students should note that the submission of an application does not automatically mean that special consideration for a supplementary or deferred examination will be granted.

- (27) The Designated Coordinator will review documentation and assess whether the criteria for serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances are demonstrated and, if so, make a judgement on the special consideration request outcome.

Acceptable Documentation for Applications

- (28) Appropriate documentation is required to verify claims made in any special consideration application. Information should relate to relevant provisions of this policy.
- (29) All applications should be submitted using the relevant application form, with any supporting documentation or request for confidentiality attached. The application forms are available on The College website or from The College Student Centre.
- (30) Documentation and certificates signed by family members will not normally be accepted. Documents must be in English and, if not, supplied with a certified translation.
- (31) If medical information is provided, it should have sufficient detail so that the severity and gravity of the condition in relation to teaching/learning and/or assessment tasks can be reasonably ascertained. The documentation must clearly indicate:
- a. the date on which the student first sought attention and information about further visits if appropriate;
 - b. the dates the student is unable to attend classes and/or complete assessment tasks;
 - c. the severity and/or gravity of the condition, degree of incapacity and its duration or probable duration in relation to the student's capacity to study, sit an examination or complete an assessment task; and
 - d. within the limits of confidentiality, a description of the nature and seriousness of the student's problem.
- (32) The College's proforma can also be used to provide supporting documentation from other appropriately qualified professionals such as psychiatrists, physiotherapists, registered psychologists, social workers and counsellors.
- (33) For causes other than sickness (e.g. road accident, court hearing or death of a relative), students are required to submit written evidence. Where supporting documentation is not immediately available, students must submit the special consideration application within the time-period and provide a personal statement that clearly outlines the events relating to the special consideration. The relevant documentation is to be provided as soon as it becomes available. Documentation relating to serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances should provide evidence to support the claim and indicate the severity and/or gravity of the circumstances, and the extent of the impact on the student. Where the extenuating circumstances have arisen from substantial changes to the student's financial situation, the application should be supported by documentation.
- (34) Students should note that special consideration requests or requests for deferred examinations normally will not be considered if documentation does not provide sufficient information to support the claims made in the application. The College will not approach doctors, hospitals, police etc to obtain documentation on behalf of the student. The College may seek verification from these agencies that the documentation has been issued to the student.

Part B – Outcomes

During the Teaching Session

Special Consideration for an Assessment Task in One Unit of Study

- (35) Where the Designated Coordinator determines that special consideration will be granted for an assessment task, the outcome may include:
- a. no action;
 - b. setting a different (but academically equivalent) assessment task;
 - c. granting an extension of time to complete an assessment task;
 - d. omitting the assessment task from the final grade calculation; or
 - e. aggregating or averaging the marks obtained for completed assessment tasks to achieve a percentage.
- (36) The Designated Coordinator is required to document their determinations for special consideration for the whole or part of the teaching session.
- (37) For special consideration for the whole or part of the teaching session, the application should be submitted as soon as the student is aware that they are experiencing serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances that will affect their studies for the session.
- (38) The Designated Coordinator may interview the student where this would assist them in making their decision. The Designated Coordinator may consult with other relevant staff.

Special Consideration for a Whole Unit of Study

- (39) Where the determination is that special consideration will be granted for the whole unit, the outcome may include:
- a. no action;
 - b. granting an “R” Re-assessable Fail grade. Where a re-assessable fail grade is granted, this must be approved by the Manager, Academic Pathways Program (not applicable to University Foundation Studies);
 - c. setting a different (but academically equivalent) assessment task or tasks;
 - d. aggregating or averaging the marks obtained for completed assessment tasks to achieve a percentage;
 - e. omitting an assessment task from the final grade calculation;
 - f. granting an extension of time to complete assessment tasks;
 - g. giving the student a final grade of “I” to be resolved by no later than the next census date; or
 - h. exempting the student from attendance at compulsory residential school, practical sessions, etc.

- (40) Students will be notified via their student email address of the determinations made on their request for special consideration.

During the Formal Examination Period

- (41) These procedures apply to formal end of session College examinations only; they do not apply to examinations conducted during the teaching session.
- (42) The Designated Coordinator will consider the application for special consideration and have the authority to uphold or dismiss special consideration requests during the formal examinations period.
- (43) If a special consideration application is upheld, the Designated Coordinator will determine the most appropriate accommodation/action that should be taken in response to the student's circumstances. This outcome may include:
- a. no action;
 - b. granting an "R" Re-assessable Fail grade in which case marks obtained for completed assessment tasks may be aggregated or averaged to achieve a percentage;
 - c. omitting the examination from the final grade calculation;
 - d. giving the student a final grade of "I" to be resolved by no later than the next census date; or
 - e. recommending the student sit a supplementary examination. Where a supplementary examination is set The College will email the student with details.

Deferred Examinations

- (44) The relevant Coordinator will consider all applications for deferred examinations (except for any practical examination requests) and, for each application, will make one of the following determinations:
- a. that the student be allowed to sit a deferred examination; or
 - b. that the application for a final examination deferred examination has been rejected; such a decision will be final and not subject to review.
- (45) Deferred examinations will be held shortly after the normal examination period. The scope, structure and duration of a deferred examination for a unit will be the same as the examination for the same unit held in the formal examination period.
- (46) Where possible, the student will be notified at least two (2) working days prior to the deferred examination.
- (47) Where a student cannot sit a deferred examination, because the documented duration of the incapacity will extend beyond the period set aside for deferred examinations, The College will arrange an alternative assessment task or an individual supplementary examination at a time that suits the student. Note that this option is not available for students whose request for a deferred examination has been rejected.

Students Unable to Attend the Deferred Examination

- (48) Where a student has been granted a deferred examination but illness or misadventure prevents them from attending the examination there will be no further deferment of that examination. In extenuating circumstances, the student may submit a Special Consideration application form.
- (49) The Designated Coordinator will assess the application against the criteria for "serious misadventure, accident and extenuating circumstances" and, if the application is eligible for special consideration, forward it to the relevant Manager who will consider the application. The outcome may be one of the following:
 - a. omitting the assessment task from the final grade calculation;
 - b. arranging a supplementary examination to be run by The College;
 - c. setting a different (but academically equivalent) assessment task; or
 - d. giving the student a final grade of "I" to be resolved by no later than the next census date.
- (50) Students will be notified within five (5) working days following the final decision.

SECTION 5 - GUIDELINES

Related legislation/policies/procedures

- a. The College's [Academic Pathways Program Assessment Policy](#)
- b. The University [Disability Policy](#)
- c. The University [Special Consideration Policy](#)
- d. The College's [Academic Pathways Program Special Consideration Policy](#)
- e. The University [Assessment Policy - Criteria and Standards-Based Assessment](#)

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STATUS AND DETAILS

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Summary of Changes from Previous Version

Updated the definition of The College

Removed all reference to the Bachelor First Year courses

Changed to the date medical evidence should be provided to The College to align with the Western Sydney University policy.

Clause (18) added