

Special Consideration Policy

Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) Special Consideration is an equity measure to ensure that the finalisation of results for students' Assessment Tasks makes appropriate allowance for adverse and unforeseeable circumstances that impact negatively on the students' ability to demonstrate their learning achievements.

(2) This Policy promotes equity, consistency and efficiency across the University in handling applications for Special Consideration through approved Special Consideration Procedures.

Section 2 - Scope

(3) Applies to:

- a. All campuses
- b. All award and non-award coursework programs, including any coursework component of a higher degree
- c. All academic staff
- d. All students, except research students

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(4) Students who believe their performance in an individual Assessment Task has been affected negatively by adverse and unforeseeable circumstances may apply for Special Consideration. Special Consideration is available for most Assessment Tasks, including individual examinations and assignments of all types, which are worth 15% or more of the total assessment for the subject concerned.

(5) For individual Assessment Tasks worth less than 15% of the total assessment for the subject concerned, affected students must negotiate directly with the relevant Subject/Instance Coordinator. Subject/Instance Coordinator have discretion to make appropriate concessions (e.g. extensions of time) without requiring the student to lodge an application for Special Consideration. Refer to Part A in the Procedures.

(6) Eligibility to apply for Special Consideration does not automatically imply students will receive it. To receive Special Consideration, a student must satisfy criteria specified in the Special Consideration Procedures and demonstrate at least one of the following three grounds for their application:

- a. Serious Illness
- b. Emotional Disturbance
- c. Misadventure.

(7) Eligibility for Special Consideration is determined centrally by the Special Consideration and Compliance Team.

(8) The University will receipt applications for Special Consideration and will confirm to each applicant whether s/he is eligible for special consideration. Students whose applications for Special Consideration are unsuccessful due to not

meeting the eligibility criteria will have access to appeal provisions specified in the Special Consideration Procedures. The University will protect the privacy of applicants for Special Consideration.

(9) The outcomes of a successful application for Special Consideration will be determined within the College responsible for the subject(s) for which Special Consideration is sought. Determination is normally by the relevant Subject Coordinator(s) unless determined otherwise by the College Board.

(10) The possible outcomes of a successful application for Special Consideration are as follows:

- a. Deferred Assessment Task
- b. Special Assessment Task
- c. Substitute Assessment Task
- d. Resubmission of the original Assessment Task (this applies only where the original Assessment Task was an essay or other comparable assignment, such as completion of computer coding or a multi-media work).
- e. Mark adjustment between one (1) and Five (5) Marks. Mark adjustment is available only where a student has demonstrated a majority of the learning outcomes required for the Assessment Task for which Special Consideration is sought.
- f. No outcome because:
 - i. it is not possible to provide an equivalent assessment;
 - ii. the student has achieved in the individual Assessment Task for which Special Consideration is sought a result consistent with the student's level of achievement in other Assessment Tasks in that subject; or
 - iii. the results for the individual Assessment Task for which Special Consideration is sought have been finalised and released to students. In this situation, Special Consideration may be awarded only in extraordinary circumstances
 - iv. another form of appropriate concession, such as an extension of time, has already been awarded for the same individual Assessment Task.
- g. In the case of a workplace-based subject and/or a clinical or teaching practicum (i.e. a subject taught in conjunction with a third party), an appropriate outcome will be determined by the Subject Coordinator on a case-by-case basis.

(11) There is no provision for appeal against the outcome awarded for Special Consideration and the decision is final. However, a student who is aggrieved may take action under the University's Student Complaints Management Policy and Procedure.

Section 4 - Procedure

Preamble

(12) Applications for Special Consideration are handled in a two-step process:

- a. Eligibility - one or more Special Consideration and Compliance officers assesses the student's eligibility for Special Consideration (see Part K); and
- b. Outcome - where eligibility is established, the Subject Coordinator of the relevant subject determines the outcome of the application for Special Consideration (see Part O).

General

(13) Students who believe they may need to lodge an application for Special Consideration are encouraged to keep the relevant subject co-ordinator(s) informed. Subject co-ordinators have a pastoral role which is often needed to help

students who find their performance affected by adverse and unforeseeable circumstances. Students approaching their Subject Coordinator must state clearly the circumstances by which they are affected but are not required at that point to provide any supporting documents.

(14) Special Consideration will be given only:

- a. for individual Assessment Tasks, whether the student is required to complete them individually or as part of a group ; and
- b. where there is a sufficiently strong and well-substantiated case and
- c. where other Policies or Procedures do not take precedence (see below).

(15) When awarded, it will take one of the forms described in the Part O.

(16) Special Consideration is not available for:

- a. problems of a student's own making (e.g. avoidable issues relating to visa requirements);
- b. day-to-day issues which a reasonable person would expect to have minimal impact on assessment performance;
- c. minor illnesses or medical conditions for which over-the-counter remedies are available;
- d. discretionary activities such as travel plans, social events or visits with relatives or friends; assessment difficulties resulting from deliberate choices, such as decisions not to attend classes or to submit assignments, or decisions to take an enrolment overload.

(17) Special Consideration is not the primary support mechanism for students who have a disability or an ongoing medical condition (including a psychological condition). These students are supported by the Disabilities, Mental Health Illness and/or Ongoing Medical Conditions, available from <http://www.latrobe.edu.au/policy>.

(18) These students should contact the Equality and Diversity to find out what ongoing support are available in the form of 'Reasonable Adjustment'. These adjustments may be formalised in a Learning Access Plan (LAP). Students may not need to complete an application for Special Consideration for each Assessment Task.

(19) Special Consideration does not apply to requests for alternative examination arrangements for students who:

- a. are permanently or temporarily disabled
- b. are unable to sit an examination on a given date because of
- c. armed services duty
- d. jury duty/court appearance
- e. responsibilities as an emergency services employee or volunteer
- f. religious or cultural obligations
- g. elite athletic or artistic commitments

(20) an examination clash with an examination at another institution. These are covered under Alternative Examination Arrangements.

Part A - Discretionary Arrangements for Assessment Tasks Worth Less Than 15%

(21) The Special Consideration Policy and Procedures apply only to individual Assessment Tasks which are worth 15% or more of the total assessment for the subject(s) concerned. For an individual Assessment Task worth less than 15% of the total assessment for the subject concerned, a student who feels that his or her their performance has been

affected negatively by adverse and unforeseeable circumstances must should negotiate directly with the relevant lecturer Subject Coordinator for an appropriate concession. The following conditions apply:

- a. The student must state why the concession is sought but is not required to supply supporting documentation. The student may, if they choose, provide supporting documentation to strengthen their case.
- b. If the Subject Coordinator agrees to change the conditions for the Assessment Task, s/he must clearly convey the new conditions to the student.

(22) The decision of the Subject Coordinator lecturer is final. There are no appeal provisions. However, a student who is aggrieved may take action under the University's Student Complaints Management Policy and Procedure.

Part B - Allowable Grounds for Special Consideration

(23) The broad categories of adverse and unforeseeable circumstances recognised by the University as legitimate grounds for Special Consideration include:

Category	Examples
Serious illness (including psychological illness) or injury (of the student or a dependent)	Illness on the exact day of an exam; illness during the period leading up to an exam, or over the period available for completion of an assignment.
Emotional disturbance	Death in the family; serious financial difficulty; loss of accommodation; being the victim of a serious crime.
Misadventure	Car accident; transport breakdown; serious disruption during the examination (e.g. fire).

(24) It is not appropriate to apply for Special Consideration on the basis of foreseeable events, such as religious obligations or elite sporting commitments, which are addressed through provisions for Alternative Examination Arrangements (see 'General').

Part C - Time Limits for Special Consideration

(25) Students normally must lodge their application for Special Consideration no more than three working days after:

- a. the date of the Assessment Task (for examinations, tests, oral presentations, etc.); or
- b. the due date for the Assessment Task (for essays, written assignments, computer coding assignments, etc.); or
- c. the date of the unforeseen event (in the case of workplace-based subjects and/or clinical or teaching practica where the participation itself is an Assessment Task).

(26) Late applications will not be accepted except in extreme circumstances. The late application must be supported by documentation (e.g. evidence of hospitalisation) justifying why the application could not be submitted within the three working day time limit

Except in extraordinary circumstances (e.g. where the applicant was physically incapable of submitting the application at an earlier date), Special Consideration may not be sought for Assessment Tasks after finalisation of the result:

- a. In the case of examinations and other Assessment Tasks that are not returned to the student and for which the result is not finalised until after the end of the teaching period, 'finalisation of the result' refers to the release of the result for the subject in which the Assessment Task was undertaken.

(27) In the case of tests, essays and other assignments for which the result of the Assessment Task itself is released to

the student, 'finalisation of the result' refers to the release of the result for the Assessment Task.

Part D - Eligibility to Apply for Special Consideration

(28) Students' eligibility for Special Consideration does not depend on their level of achievement within the relevant Assessment Task.

(29) With the exceptions listed in 'General' above, students who consider that their performance in an Assessment Task was affected by adverse and unforeseeable circumstances (see Part B) may apply to the University for Special Consideration. The application must:

- a. be completed by the student impacted (see clause 33 below for the process in the case of group assignments); and
- b. be submitted using the online application form prescribed by the University from time to time; and
- c. be lodged within the time limits in Part C above; and
- d. provide reasons for the failure to attend or complete the Assessment Task, or grounds for the belief that the Assessment Task as completed does not reflect fairly the student's capabilities; and
- e. attach documentation that supports the application, including a medical certificate where the application involves illness or injury - see Part L.

(30) Documentation should not include photographic evidence (e.g. of assault; injury; or traumatic events, natural disasters or political turmoil which it is reasonable to assume are common knowledge through media coverage).

(31) Eligibility to apply for Special Consideration does not mean that Special Consideration necessarily will be awarded: see Part K.

Part E - Special Consideration for Group Assessment Tasks

(32) Where relevant, an application for Special Consideration must indicate clearly that it is for a group Assessment Task. The application must identify all members of the group by their full name. Where such an application is approved, the relevant Subject Coordinator will ensure that consideration is awarded as appropriate to all members of the group. The impact on members other than the applicant may be deemed greater when the Assessment Task is marked by way of a single group mark than when individual marks are awarded to each member of the group.

Part F - Limits on Special Consideration

(33) A student is not entitled to both Special Consideration and another form of appropriate concession, Reasonable Adjustment or Learning Access Plan for a single adverse event or situation.

Part G - Special Consideration for Students with Long-term Disabilities or Medical Conditions

(34) A student who has obtained a Reasonable Adjustment or Learning Access Plan on the basis of one event or situation (e.g. a long-term medical condition) may seek Special Consideration on the basis of another, different, event or situation that is unexpected and unforeseen.

(35) A student with Reasonable Adjustment for a chronic condition may be eligible for Special Consideration for an acute flare-up of the condition.

Part H - Lodging of Applications for Special Consideration

(36) All applications for Special Consideration must be lodged via the process, and on the online application form, prescribed by the University from time to time.

Part I - Receipting of Applications for Special Consideration

(37) The University will:

- a. promptly acknowledge receipt of every application for Special Consideration
- b. record the receipt on the Student Information System against each subject to which the application relates
- c. reference the application to the Assessment Task within the subject to which it relates.

Part J - Confidentiality of Applications for Special Consideration

(38) Applications for Special Consideration, together with any supporting documentation, will be maintained centrally in a confidential file. The supporting documentation will be available only to Special Consideration and Compliance staff.

Part K - Process and Criteria for Determining Eligibility for Special Consideration

(39) Eligibility for Special Consideration is determined centrally by one or more Special Consideration and Compliance staff. The officer(s) will be guided by reflection on what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances and will assess eligibility for Special Consideration solely on the merits of the case at hand, without reference to assessment results, either for the subject for which Special Consideration is sought or for other subjects.

(40) In general, an applicant will be judged eligible for Special Consideration where the applicant:

- a. meets eligibility criteria as per Part D above;
- b. submits the application online; and
- c. provides supporting documentation sufficient to satisfy the decision maker(s) that the circumstances forming the basis for the application would have had an adverse effect on the student's ability to complete the Assessment Task or on the student's performance in the Assessment Task.

(41) The Special Consideration and Compliance staff will consider the extent to which the supporting documentation substantiates the case for Special Consideration (see Part L and M). This may include, for example, considering:

- a. precedents (i.e. decisions taken previously on substantially similar cases);
- b. the relevance and appropriateness of the documentation;
- c. the degree of impact on the Assessment Task, according to the supporting documentation; and
- d. the degree of concurrence between the timing of the adverse circumstance and the timing of the Assessment Task(s) for which Special Consideration is sought.

(42) The decision of the Special Consideration and Compliance staff will be emailed to applicants' University email addresses, normally within three working days of the decision.

(43) Where an application is successful, the Special Consideration and Compliance staff will also advise the Subject Coordinator for the relevant subject(s) that Special Consideration should be considered. This advice will indicate:

- a. the Assessment Task for which Special Consideration is sought; and
- b. the grounds for the application (serious illness, emotional disturbance, misadventure); and
- c. whether the degree of impairment has been assessed as mild, moderate or severe, or a statement that there is insufficient evidence to assess the degree of impairment; and
- d. where the application is for a group Assessment Task, the names of the other students in the group.

(44) Notification will be forwarded as soon as practicable, and normally within three working days of the Special Consideration and Compliance staff decision.

Part L - Requirements for Supporting Documentation

(45) Where the application for Special Consideration is made on medical (including psychological) grounds, the applicant should request their practitioner to provide their supporting statement in the [Medical Impact Statement](#) form prescribed by the University from time to time. However, professional practitioners have discretion to present their statement in whatever form they see fit, and these statements will also be accepted.

(46) The content of the University form for professional practitioners should include as a minimum:

- a. the date of the consultation; and
- b. an indication of whether the diagnosis is based on an examination by the practitioner or a self-report by the applicant; and
- c. the severity of the impact of the condition upon the student's ability to prepare for, or to complete, the specific Assessment Task(s); and
- d. the duration of the impact.

(47) Requests for Special Consideration on other grounds must be supported by documentation appropriate to the circumstances (e.g. a death certificate or funeral notice to confirm a death; a police report or letter from a counsellor to confirm involvement in a traumatic event).

Part M - Difficulty Obtaining Official Supporting Documentation

(48) An applicant who has trouble getting supporting documentation to attach to a timely application for Special Consideration may:

- a. indicate that fact on the application and submit the required documentation within five working days from the date of the application; or
- b. attach to the application a Statutory Declaration explaining in detail the grounds on which Special Consideration is requested, what supporting documentation has been sought, when it was sought, and why it cannot be provided. Applicants should be aware that it may be difficult for the decision-making officer(s) to make a positive decision on the basis of a Statutory Declaration alone.

Part N - Awarding of Special Consideration

(49) A Subject Coordinator who receives advice of a successful application for Special Consideration will award the applicant one of the outcomes possible under the Special Consideration Policy. Students awarded any form of Special Consideration other than a mark adjustment must comply with any reasonable conditions set for the Assessment Task awarded.

(50) The possible outcomes of a successful application for Special Consideration are as follows:

- a. Deferred Assessment Task

- b. Special Assessment Task
- c. Substitute Assessment Task
- d. Resubmission of the original Assessment Task (this applies only where the original Assessment Task was an essay or other comparable assignment, such as completion of computer coding or a multi-media work)
- e. Mark adjustment between one (1) and Five (5) Marks. Mark adjustment is available only where a student has demonstrated a majority of the learning outcomes required for the Assessment Task for which Special Consideration is sought.
- f. No outcome because:
- g. it is not possible to provide an equivalent assessment;
- h. the student has achieved in the individual Assessment Task for which Special Consideration is sought a result consistent with the student's level of achievement in other Assessment Tasks in that subject; or
- i. the results for the individual Assessment Task for which Special Consideration is sought have been finalised and released to students. In this situation, Special Consideration may be awarded only in extraordinary circumstances
- j. another form of appropriate concession, such as an extension of time, has already been awarded for the same individual Assessment Task.
- k. In the case of a workplace-based subject and/or a clinical or teaching practicum (i.e. a subject taught in conjunction with a third party), an appropriate outcome will be determined by the Subject Coordinator on a case-by-case basis.

Part O - Result Where Special Consideration is Awarded

(51) Where a student is awarded Special Consideration for an Assessment Task completed after the end of a teaching period, such as a final examination, the student will receive for the subject the grade SPE (Special Assessment Examination – Centrally Managed Examination) or SPA (Special Assessment Alternative – Non-Centrally Managed Examination or Other Assessment).

(52) No mark or final grade will be awarded until the extra assessment awarded has been completed. (This provision does not apply where the Special Consideration granted is a mark adjustment or no outcome. In these cases, the student will be awarded their earned appropriate mark and the appropriate La Trobe University grade.)

(53) In all other cases where Special Consideration has already been granted during the teaching period (i.e. for items of continuous assessment), students will be given their finalised mark and grade in the usual way.

Part P - Time Lines for Assessment Tasks Resulting from Successful Applications for Special Consideration

(54) The minimum period of notice for a centrally managed special examination, or for any other deferred, special or substitute assessment taking the form of an examination or test, is normally five working days. The notice must include the detail usually provided to students in respect of an examination or test.

(55) Centrally managed special examinations will be conducted during the University's scheduled period for special examinations as published from time to time. As far as possible, other forms of final assessment awarded as Special Consideration should also be completed during the relevant special examination period.

(56) The results of all final Assessment Tasks awarded as an outcome of a successful application for Special Consideration must normally be finalised by the week after the completion of the official special examination period.

(57) Items of continuous assessment for which Special Consideration is awarded normally must be completed and submitted prior to the return of results to the other students in the class.

In the case of re-submits or Deferred Assessment Tasks, the time available to complete the work must be reasonable, given the length and complexity of the assignment and the amount of work already completed.

Part Q - Special Consideration for an Assessment Task Awarded Under Part O

(58) Further Special Consideration normally is not available for an Assessment Task awarded as a result of a successful application for Special Consideration. Exceptions will be made only in extraordinary circumstances (e.g. where the applicant provides evidence of total incapacitation or injury at the time the Assessment Task was to be sat, presented or submitted).

(59) The results of any Assessment Task awarded under this Part normally must be finalised no more than a week after completion of the Assessment Task.

Part R - Special Consideration After Release of Results

(60) Special Consideration normally is not available for an Assessment Task once the results for that Assessment Task have been released. Exceptions will be made only where the applicant can demonstrate that it was physically impossible to apply in a timely fashion.

(61) The results of any Assessment Task awarded under this Part normally must be finalised no more than a week after completion of the Assessment Task.

Part S - Recording of the Outcomes of Applications for Special Consideration

(62) Annotations will be made on the Student Information System (SIS) against each subject to which an application for Special Consideration applies.

(63) Annotations will indicate:

- a. when the application was received; and
- b. whether the application was successful; and
- c. if successful, the outcome of the application. Where an applicant appeals against a rejection of the application because the student did not meet the eligibility criteria (see Part T), the following additional annotations will be recorded:
 - d. when the appeal was received; and
 - e. whether the appeal was successful; and
 - f. the outcome of the appeal.

Part T - Appeals

(64) Students whose application for Special Consideration is unsuccessful because they did not meet the eligibility criteria may appeal to the Deputy Director, Student Administration or nominee if they can provide evidence that the decision:

- a. was prejudiced or biased; or
- b. did not assess the application according to the criteria set out in these Procedures.

(65) The appeal must be made within ten working days of notification of the decision. Students who are not satisfied

with the result of the appeal may ask for a review of the decision by the University Ombudsman via Student Complaints and, from there, by Ombudsman Victoria.

(66) There is no provision for appeal against the outcome of a successful application for Special Consideration and the Subject Coordinator.

(67) Review and Re-mark of Students' Academic Work Policy and Procedures apply to the results of special assessment.

Part U - Privacy Protections

(68) Documentation that students provide as part of an application for Special Consideration is strictly confidential and is subject to the protections of privacy legislation. Documentation supporting applications for Special Consideration should focus as far as possible on the impact of the adverse circumstances on the Assessment Task, rather than on the details of the circumstances (which may be highly personal). Where a student has no supporting documentation except a Statutory Declaration (see Part M), it will be necessary to give a reasonable amount of detail.

(69) Special Consideration and Compliance staff must take appropriate steps to ensure that confidential information is made available only to those staff who need that information to make or justify an informed decision.

(70) The University will securely retain documentation relating to each Special Consideration application for fifteen years after administrative use has concluded.

Part V - Applicability to Distant Students

(71) Where the Special Consideration Policy and Procedures apply to a distant student (e.g. an offshore student, or a domestic student not based on or near a campus of the University), the University may, as necessary, implement them in a modified manner that reflects their intent while taking account of circumstances. The implementation may not unfairly advantage or disadvantage either the distant student or local students. The distant student should be advised in writing of the modification and the reason for it.

Section 5 - Definitions

(72) For the purpose of this Policy and Procedure:

- a. Assessment: the evaluation of any work submitted for examination in order to determine:
 - i. whether a student has passed or failed;
 - ii. whether a student has otherwise satisfied the examiners; or
 - iii. what grade a student is to be awarded in relation to that work. For types of Assessment, refer to the University's Assessment Policy.
- b. Assessment Task: any piece of work assigned to students in a subject which is given a mark or grade that counts towards the final result for the subject. This may take the form of an examination, a test, an essay, or any other form consistent with the University's Assessment Policy and Procedures.
- c. Deferred Assessment Task: an Assessment Task that, with the permission of the Subject Coordinator and without academic penalty, a student sits or submits at a later date than the original sitting or submission date.
- d. Emotional Disturbance: distress caused by a traumatic event, such as a divorce or a death in the family.
- e. Five Marks: for purposes of this policy, means 5 of the total 100 marks representing the maximum achievable marks for a subject. Where an academic staff member marks out of an aggregate greater than 100, the allowable mark adjustment would be proportionate (e.g. the maximum possible mark adjustment where a subject was marked out of 500 would be 25).

- f. Misadventure: an accident or other event of ill fortune, other than a Serious Illness or Emotional Disturbance (e.g. a transport breakdown on the way to an examination).
- g. Reasonable Adjustment: change to assessment processes to enable a student with a disability or long-term medical condition to demonstrate their learning to the best of their ability.
- h. Serious Illness: acute illness, whether physical or mental, causing sufficient distress to require treatment by a doctor or other registered health care professional. Note that students with a serious illness which is chronic (long-term) should contact the University's Disability Support Unit to seek Reasonable Adjustment, rather than lodge a Special Consideration application for every Assessment Task.
- i. Special Assessment Task: an Assessment Task awarded as an outcome of a successful application for Special Consideration that is similar in weighting, duration/length, difficulty and subject matter coverage to the original assessment task and it must address the same learning outcomes. It must take the same form as the original assessment task. For example, if the assessment task for which Special Consideration has been granted is a formal examination of two hours' duration, the special assessment also will take the form of a formal examination of two hours' duration.
- j. Special Consideration: depending on context, (1) a special concession in assessment, sought by a student claiming that his or her performance in an examination or in another Assessment Task was affected adversely by illness or another cause; or (2) the administrative form ('Application for Special Consideration') by which a student may apply for a special concession in assessment; or (3) the outcome of a successful application for Special Consideration (e.g. 'Special Consideration given').
- k. Subject Coordinator: includes any other officer or committee appointed by a Faculty Board to carry out the functions attributed to the Subject Coordinator.
- l. Substitute Assessment Task: an Assessment Task awarded as an outcome of a successful application for Special Consideration where the original assessment environment (such as a performance or clinical or teaching practicum) cannot be replicated. While materially different from the original Assessment Task, the Substitute Assessment Task must address the same learning outcomes as the original Assessment Task.
- m. Working Day: any day other than Saturday or Sunday or a public holiday that is observed by the University.

Section 6 - Stakeholders

Responsibility for implementation – Subject Coordinators; Director, Student Administration; and Special Consideration and Compliance team.

Responsibility for monitoring implementation and compliance – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic); and Executive Director, Student Services and Administration.

Status and Details

Status	Historic
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