

Special Consideration Policy

Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) Special consideration is specifically intended to support students who experience serious short term, adverse and unforeseen circumstances that substantially affect their ability to complete an assessment task to the best of their potential.

(2) This Policy and Procedure is one of a suite of processes designed to assist students who experience difficulties completing assessment tasks.

Section 2 - Scope

(3) This Policy and Procedure applies to:

- a. all students enrolled in award and non-award coursework programs, including any coursework component of a Higher Degree by Research
- b. all academic staff.

(4) Other University processes may assist students who are ineligible for special consideration such as:

- a. a [request for an extension](#) of time to submit an assessment task when there is a foreseeable event that will prevent a student submitting a scheduled assessment task
- b. an application to sit an [alternative exam](#) when there are approved foreseeable circumstances that will prevent a student sitting an examination
- c. participants in elite sports who have registered and are supported by the [Elite Athlete Program](#)
- d. students with chronic (long-term) illness or a disability (or caring for a person with a disability) that affects academic performance who can contact the [Equity and Diversity Centre](#) at the start of the teaching period to develop a Learning Access Plan (LAP) for ongoing support
- e. students wishing to have a review or a re-mark of an assessment task who should refer to the Review and Re-mark of Students Academic Work Policy.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(5) Special consideration is an equity measure to ensure that the assessment of students takes into account serious short term, adverse and unforeseen circumstances that impact negatively on a student's ability to complete an assessment task.

(6) Applications for special consideration are only considered for events that:

- a. are of short-term impact
- b. are outside the control of the student
- c. can be substantiated by official verifiable documentation

d. have had a significant impact on the student's ability to complete an assessment task.

(7) Information for students about all aspects of the special consideration process and all necessary forms are published on the University website.

(8) Applications for special consideration must be made within a specified time range and must be decided upon in a timely manner.

(9) Applications for special consideration are assessed for eligibility by either the Special Consideration team or the Subject Coordinator, and the outcome for the student is determined by the Subject Coordinator.

(10) The University applies a duty of care to reduce potential re-traumatisation of students when making special consideration applications and to minimise distress to staff handling requests.

(11) The University will not use or disclose personal information about a student that has been provided as part of a special consideration application except in accordance with relevant University privacy policies and privacy and health records legislation.

Section 4 - Procedures

Part A - Grounds for Special Consideration

Eligibility

(12) Categories of serious adverse and unforeseeable circumstances outside a student's control that are recognised by the University as acceptable grounds for applying for special consideration include, but are not limited to:

- a. acute illness or serious injury on the day of an examination or during the period immediately leading up to an examination or assessment due date
- b. bereavement or other serious emotional disturbance, e.g. witnessing or being the victim of a serious crime, sudden loss of accommodation or family violence
- c. hardship or trauma such as a car accident, sudden loss of income or severe disruption to domestic arrangements.

(13) The eligibility criteria are the same, regardless of the size of the assessment task.

(14) Students who have obtained Reasonable Adjustment through a Learning Access Plan from [Equity and Diversity](#) on the basis of one event or situation (e.g. a long-term medical condition) may apply for special consideration on the basis of:

- a. a different event or situation that is unforeseen and outside the scope of the Learning Access Plan, or
- b. an acute flare-up of the known condition that prevents a student from completing an assessment task. A [Medical Impact Statement](#) is required in this instance.

Ineligibility

(15) The following circumstances are not appropriate or eligible for special consideration:

- a. foreseeable events or circumstances that can be anticipated and planned for
- b. circumstances that are considered within a student's control
- c. discretionary activities such as travel plans or social events

d. decisions to take an enrolment overload.

(16) Examples of each of these types of circumstances that are ineligible grounds for special consideration can be found in the [Special Consideration Guidelines](#).

(17) Students who are ineligible for special consideration and who submit an assessment task late without permission from their Subject Coordinator are subject to the provisions of the Assessment (Late Submission of Tasks) Policy.

Part B - Submission Process

(18) Students seeking special consideration for assessment tasks worth less than 15% must discuss this with the relevant Subject Coordinator. Applications for special consideration for these small assessment tasks are not made using the University online application form, but follow the relevant School process.

(19) Applications for assessment tasks worth 15% or more are submitted using the Special Consideration online application form.

(20) Applications for special consideration must indicate:

- a. the assessment task the application applies to
- b. the grounds for special consideration
- c. the impact of the circumstances
- d. the supporting documentation that will be provided in the event of a delay in obtaining documentation.

(21) The impact of the adverse circumstance on the assessment task will be considered relative to the type and source of supporting documentation.

Timing

(22) Students must submit an application within three working days either side of the scheduled date of the assessment task. For example:

- a. an application for special consideration for an assessment task due on a Wednesday (day 0) would need to be submitted between 12:01 am the Friday before and 11:59 pm the Monday after the Wednesday due date.
- b. an application for special consideration for an assessment task due on a Monday (day 0) would need to be submitted between 12:01 am the Wednesday before and 11:59 pm the Thursday after the Monday due date.

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

(24) If a student is applying for special consideration because they were unable to complete a group assessment task they must list all members of the group by their full name in the application. Where an application is approved, the Subject Coordinator will ensure that special consideration is awarded as appropriate to all members of the group.

(25) Students who commence an examination and are unable to complete it for medical reasons must notify an invigilator in the exam venue and declare they are unfit to continue the examination. They must then make a special consideration application within three working days beginning the day of the examination.

Documentation

(26) Supporting documentation must be provided for every application and must be official and verifiable. The

documents must address the eligibility criteria regarding the adverse effect on the student, and the concurrent timing and impact of the adverse circumstances.

(27) Applications can be submitted without supporting documentation but cannot be considered by the relevant staff until the supporting documentation is received, which must be within five working days of submitting the application.

(28) Documentation must not include photographic evidence under any circumstances, and graphic or distressing details should be redacted from supporting documentation wherever possible for the wellbeing of staff and students.

(29) Supporting documentation in a language other than English must be accompanied by a full English translation by a [NAATI-accredited translator](#) or a La Trobe University staff member with relevant language expertise.

Documentation for applications on medical grounds

(30) Requests for special consideration on medical grounds are to be supported by the University's prescribed [Medical Impact Statement](#) completed by a health practitioner who is registered by the relevant National Medical Board, or a medical certificate which includes as a minimum:

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

(31) Backdated Medical Impact Statements will not be accepted unless a health practitioner confirms a pre-existing condition which the health practitioner has been managing.

(32) Medical Impact Statements that are obtained by methods other than a physical, face-to-face consultation with a health practitioner will not be accepted as documentary evidence unless there are reasonable access reasons (e.g. students living in remote areas).

(33) Statutory Declarations are not accepted for applications submitted for special consideration on medical grounds.

Documentation for applications on grounds other than medical

(34) Requests for special consideration on grounds other than medical must be supported by official and verifiable documentation by recognised authorities and appropriate to the circumstances (e.g. a death notice or funeral notice to confirm a death and evidence of the nature of the relationship with the deceased; a police report or letter from a social worker, psychologist or lawyer). Statements must include the dates of the events in question.

(35) Students who are granted special consideration on the basis of a bereavement may submit further applications for special consideration in relation to the loss of the same person for up to six months from the bereavement without providing additional supporting documentation. In any subsequent application the student should state that they have already had special consideration approved in relation to their bereavement. If it is more than six months after their bereavement a Medical Impact Statement from a treating health practitioner, such as a psychologist, is required.

(36) When a student is unable to provide any official and verifiable documentation a Statutory Declaration may be submitted, except for applications on medical grounds, and must explain in detail:

- a. the grounds on which special consideration is requested
- b. what supporting documentation has been sought

- c. when it was sought
- d. why it cannot be provided.

(37) Students should be aware that applications relying solely on a Statutory Declaration are difficult to assess and reliance on just a Statutory Declaration may have an adverse impact on the outcome of the application.

(38) Where students have experienced or witnessed violence or serious crime, a letter may be completed in consultation with a [Speak Up](#) staff member, if required by the student to reduce potential for re-traumatisation. In such cases, students will not be required to submit any further documentation with their application.

(39) The University assumes students will continue their assessment tasks to the best of their ability and attempt to meet due dates while their special consideration application is under assessment in case their application is unsuccessful. [Late penalties](#) will apply if an application is not eligible.

(40) Students who require assistance with completing an application and uploading supporting documentation for special consideration should seek assistance from [ASK La Trobe](#), the Equity and Diversity Centre or [Indigenous Student Services](#).

Part C - Outcomes

(41) Special consideration applications are assessed in a two-step process. First, eligibility for special consideration is assessed by the Special Consideration team or the Subject Coordinator depending on the weighting of the assessment task (see clauses 18 and 19). Second, the outcome for eligible applicants is decided by the Subject Coordinator.

Assessing eligibility for special consideration

(42) Where a special consideration application is deemed to satisfy eligibility criteria by the Special Consideration team they will advise the Subject Coordinator of:

- a. the assessment task
- b. the grounds for special consideration
- c. level of impact
- d. summary of evidence used to assess the degree of impairment

(43) The Special Consideration team may seek additional information from Subject Coordinators when assessing applications for eligibility.

(44) If a Subject Coordinator has a reasonable belief that contradictory or inconsistent information has been supplied to support the application, they may request a review of the application with the Special Consideration team and/or APVC Coursework.

(45) Where an application and/or supporting documentation do not satisfy the eligibility criteria, the Special Consideration team will inform students by their student email. It is the responsibility of the student to monitor their student email for a response to their application.

Determining outcomes for students

(46) The following information will be used by the Subject Coordinator to determine an outcome for an eligible application:

- a. the level of impact of the circumstances on the student's ability to complete or perform the assessment task
- b. the degree of concurrence between the timing of the adverse circumstance and the timing of the assessment

task

- c. what is most appropriate for the individual student given the circumstances and
- d. what the University can feasibly and reasonably provide.

(47) Students are advised of the outcome of their application via a system-generated email. Outcomes may take the form of one of the following:

- a. extension of an assessment task due date
- b. removal of late penalty
- c. substitute, internal assessment task (organised by the Subject Coordinator)
- d. resubmission of the original assessment task
- e. exemption whereby the affected assessment component will be waived and other components of assessment in the subject will be re-weighted
- f. a one-off arrangement 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)
- g. special examination (SPE) scheduled within the next special examination period or at another appropriate time (organised by Student Operations and Improvement)
- h. no outcome as another accommodation has already been made

(48) If the outcome of an application for special consideration is to sit a special examination in the next scheduled examination period after an initial attempt of the exam was made, the results of the first examination will not be taken into consideration.

(49) If the application for special consideration for an incomplete exam is declined, the original exam paper will be assessed as usual.

(50) If an application for special consideration is rejected, the student will be notified of the reason for the decision and, where appropriate, any other options available to their circumstances.

(51) When a special consideration outcome is granted, the Subject Coordinator is responsible for applying the appropriate administrative codes on the student's record in the Student Information System, in accordance with the [Assessment Schedule - Grades and Administrative Codes](#).

(52) Mark adjustments will not be made under any circumstances.

(53) No mark or final grade will be released until any extra assessment that is required has been completed.

(54) Where information in an application raises concerns about a serious or imminent threat to a student's health and wellbeing, or a student applies repeatedly for special consideration in a teaching period, the Subject Coordinator or Special Consideration team may provide relevant information to the University's support service, [Speak Up](#). Speak Up staff will endeavour to contact the student to offer appropriate levels of assistance or advice to lessen or prevent serious threat to the student's health and wellbeing.

Additional special consideration for the same task

(55) Additional special consideration may only be granted for the same assessment task one further time, and only where extraordinary circumstances have made it impossible for the student to attempt their first special assessment task or special examination. For example:

- a. where the applicant provides evidence of total incapacitation or hospitalisation at the time the special assessment task was scheduled

- b. where an additional [Medical Impact Statement](#) is submitted testifying there has been no improvement or a worsening of the original condition or severity of circumstances. Any additional [Medical Impact Statement](#) must be signed and dated by the student to give permission to the University to contact the health professional for verification of the severity of the circumstances.

(56) Applications for additional special consideration for the same task are assessed by the Deputy Director, Student Administration or nominee, in consultation with the Equity and Diversity Centre as required.

(57) The results of any assessment task awarded under this section must be finalised no more than a week after completion of the assessment task.

(58) A student is not eligible for both Special Consideration and another form of appropriate concession or adjustment.

Part D - Reviews

(59) If a student is dissatisfied with the outcome of their application for special consideration they may seek a review as follows:

- a. If the decision is in relation to their eligibility for special consideration they may apply for a review by the Deputy Director, Student Administration or nominee, via the Special Consideration Application Form within 10 working days of receiving the decision
- b. If the decision is in relation to the assessment of their case by the relevant Subject Coordinator they may seek a review from the Course Coordinator or School Director, Teaching and Learning.

(60) Where students are dissatisfied with the outcome of any review of their application for special consideration as described above they may apply to the University Ombudsman, or the Victorian Ombudsman, for a further review.

Part E - Privacy

(61) Staff handling special consideration applications will take appropriate steps to ensure that confidential information is held securely, and only made available to those staff who need that information to make an informed decision or to refer a student for additional support under clause 54 of this policy.

(62) The University securely retains documentation relating to each special consideration application for seven years after administrative use has concluded.

Section 5 - Definitions

(63) 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, bereavement, or being a victim of or witnessing a serious crime.
- e. Misadventure: an accident or other event of ill fortune, other than a Serious Illness or Emotional Disturbance (e.g. a public transport breakdown on the way to an examination).
- f. [Medical Impact Statement](#): the form prescribed by La Trobe University for Health Practitioners to complete which requests the information required to assess the severity and duration of a medical condition on a student's ability to complete an assessment task.
- g. Professional Judgment: the application of relevant training, knowledge and experience, within the context provided by auditing, accounting and ethical standards, in making informed decisions about the courses of action which are appropriate in the circumstances of the audit engagement.
- h. 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.
- i. Serious Illness: acute illness, whether physical or mental, causing sufficient distress to require treatment by a doctor or other registered health care professional.
- j. Special Assessment Task: an Assessment Task awarded as an outcome of a successful application for Special Consideration which is similar in weighting, duration/length, difficulty and subject matter coverage to the original assessment task addressing 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.
- k. Special Consideration: a special concession in assessment, sought by a student claiming that his or her performance in an examination or in another Assessment Task was adversely affected by illness or another cause.
- l. Subject Coordinator: includes any other officer or committee appointed by a College to carry out the functions attributed to the Subject Coordinator.
- m. 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.
- n. Working Day: any day other than Saturday or Sunday or a public holiday which is observed by the University.

Section 6 - Stakeholders

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

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

Status and Details

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