

# Special Consideration Policy

## Section 1 - Purpose and Context

(1) The Special Consideration Policy establishes a framework to support students with Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances which directly impact their studies.

(2) This Policy:

- a. applies to students studying a coursework program, including those studying a Western Sydney University program of study offshore or with a third-party provider
- b. does not apply to candidates studying a program which leads to a Higher Degree Research (HDR) award, or learners engaged in a microcredential or other short form of learning.

(3) This Policy complements other forms of adjustments, including:

- a. the [Disability Policy](#) which provides a framework to support students with pre-existing disabilities or chronic health conditions;
- b. the [Domestic and Family Violence Support Policy](#); and
- c. the [Student Administration Policy](#) which provides for Withdrawal without Academic and/or Financial Penalty in Extenuating Circumstances.

## Section 2 - Definitions

(4) For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions that apply can be found in the [Policy DDS Glossary](#), in addition to the following:

- a. Academic Reasonable Adjustment Plan (ARAP) is an individual plan established in consultation with the University's Disability Service. It is a legal document underpinned by the [Disability Discrimination Act 1992 \(Cth\)](#) and the [Disability Standards for Education 2005 \(Cth\)](#) which specifies a list of academic provisions designed to adjust for the impacts of a student's disability and/or health condition/s and/or mental health condition/s on their University study.
- b. Automatic Extensions refer to a student's entitlement to one automatic three day extension per subject for most individual assessment tasks. Automatic Extensions under this Policy are separate to any entitlement to any extension provision included in a student's ARAP or CVS.
- c. Carer Verification Statement (CVS) refers to a statement from Welfare Services which confirms a student's carer responsibilities.
- d. Census date refers to the date at which student load and financial liability is calculated. Census date is the last date for a student to withdraw from a subject without incurring financial penalty.
- e. Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances refers to serious and unavoidable circumstances which have a direct impact on a student's ability to demonstrate their learning. Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances does not include Routine Life Events.
- f. Extenuating Circumstances are defined by Commonwealth legislation as circumstances which are beyond a

student's control, arise or worsen on or after the Census date for the term and which make it impracticable for the student to complete their studies. Refer to Student Administration Policy for more information.

- g. Routine Life Events refer to typical everyday activities that are reasonably predictable and can be guarded against. Examples of routine life events include work commitments, travel plans and also include circumstances such as misreading a Subject Outline or timetable. Routine Life Events also include the day-to-day impact of a student's disability, mental health, or chronic health condition which is supported by a student's ARAP. Special Consideration is available to students with disabilities who experience Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances that are not accommodated for in their ARAP.
- h. Special Consideration refers to mechanisms that help minimise the impact of Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances on student learning
- i. Trauma-informed approach means an approach that is designed to decrease the inadvertent re-traumatisation that can occur from implementing standard organisational policies, procedures, and interventions with individuals who have experienced trauma. Trauma informed processes aim to reduce further harm by avoiding practices that re-traumatise or blame victims for their efforts to manage their traumatic reactions. A trauma informed approach is based on the principles of safety, trust, choice, empowerment, collaboration, and respect.

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

(5) The University recognises that students will experience events and circumstances that adversely affect their academic performance in assessment tasks.

(6) The University is committed to:

- a. a trauma-informed approach to managing the impact of Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances on a student's study;
- b. responding sensitively, sympathetically and appropriately in recognition of a student's cultural traditions and practices; and
- c. providing accurate advice on the actions students can take, staff they may contact and accessible support services, if their circumstances are having an adverse impact on their education.

(7) The University does this by providing students the opportunity to demonstrate the attainment of learning through the provision of Special Consideration.

### Special Consideration

(8) Special Consideration will be provided to students experiencing Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances. Special Consideration will not be provided in response to Routine Life Events.

(9) The primary forms of Special Consideration available are:

- a. An extension of time to participate or complete an assessment task;
- b. Being excused from a compulsory teaching activity;
- c. Being offered an opportunity to complete a different, academically equivalent assessment task; or
- d. Being offered a deferred or supplementary examination or assessment;
- e. Being exempted from an assessment and:
  - i. Provided average marks for the task based on previously completed assessment tasks; or
  - ii. Having no marks applied for that assessment task
- f. Noting the Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances but not providing an adjustment.

(10) The type of Special Consideration provided will depend on the extent that the Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances impacted a student's learning or their ability to demonstrate their learning.

(11) Special Consideration must not compromise the integrity of the student's program of studies at the University, and must not disadvantage the student or any other student in achieving expected learning outcomes.

(12) The University will not ordinarily permit the award of additional marks for an assessment or any form of concession in marking without requiring an alternative assessment.

(13) Special Consideration granted to a student will not result in an additional costs for the student.

## **Automatic Extensions**

(14) The University will provide students with an automatic three day extension on request ("Automatic Extension") for most assessment tasks, excluding:

- a. assessment items that are delivered in class during term, or that must be completed within a specified timeframe (for example, exams, online quiz with a set window, presentations, practicals, simulations and viva voces);
- b. end of term examinations delivered in the formal examination period (refer to [Examinations Policy](#) for information on Deferred Exams); and
- c. Any group assessment.

For students completing a modular learning program with The College, a two day extension will be provided rather than a three day extension

(15) Applications for Special Consideration for non-eligible assessment tasks outlined in clause 14, or for any subsequent extension requests in the same subject, will be referred to the Subject Coordinator for consideration.

(16) Students need to apply for an Automatic Extension using the Special Consideration Application form. Students studying with Western Sydney University Online will need to apply directly in the Learning Management System (LMS).

(17) Where a student has made an error in their Special Consideration application, for example nominating an incorrect due date, Subject Coordinators can write to the student to correct the application.

(18) Students who have a seven day extension adjustment in their ARAP or CVS may apply for an Automatic Extension in addition to the seven day extension provided in their ARAP or CVS.

## **Supporting Documentation**

(19) Supporting Documentation is required for applications for Special Consideration, aside from Automatic Extensions which do not require Supporting Documentation.

(20) The type of Supporting Documentation will depend on the Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances that a student is experiencing. Refer to [Supporting documentation webpage](#) for more information.

(21) The Registrar (or nominee) may issue a direction to accept Special Consideration applications without Supporting Documentation.

## **Repeated Special Consideration Applications**

(22) The University may audit the number of notifications submitted by a student and may refer the student to support services or take other action as appropriate. Any referral will be sensitive to a student's individual circumstances and a record of these referrals should be kept on the student's file.

## **Extenuating Circumstances That make It Impracticable For Students To Complete Their Studies**

(23) Students who are experiencing Extenuating Circumstances that make it impracticable for them to complete their studies:

- a. Prior to Census should consider withdrawing from the subject or taking a Leave of Absence; and
- b. On or after the Census date, should refer to the Withdrawal without Academic and/or Financial Penalty outlined in the [Student Administration Policy](#).

(24) International student visa holders withdrawing from study should seek advice from the [Department of Home Affairs](#) on the impact to their visa.

## **Section 4 - Procedures**

### **Applying for Special Consideration**

(25) Students who experience Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances which require Special Consideration, must apply for Special Consideration using the Special Consideration Application Form.

(26) Applications for Special Consideration must be submitted within five working day of:

- a. the start of the Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances; or
- b. the assessment due date or date of missed compulsory teaching activity.

(27) Applications for Special Consideration, except for Automatic Extensions, will be:

- a. Assessed by Student Services Hub to determine whether the grounds for the application meet the definition of Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances; and then
- b. Referred to Subject Coordinators to determine the appropriate Special Consideration in the circumstances.

(28) Applications for Automatic Extensions are automatically approved and are not reviewed by Student Services Hub or Subject Coordinators. Subject Coordinators will be notified of all approved Automatic Extensions.

### **Outcome of Special Consideration Applications**

(29) Students will be notified of the outcome of their Special Consideration application in writing generally within five working days. The notification will include any Special Consideration awarded such as revised due dates or other provisions.

(30) While waiting on the outcome of a Special Consideration application, it is in a student's interest to continue to work on assessment tasks and attend all mandatory activities.

(31) Where a student experiences ongoing disruption and cannot complete an assessment task with Special Consideration provision granted, the Subject Coordinator should recommend the student:

- a. access relevant student support services including Student Welfare Service, and/or
- b. consider withdrawing from the subject (refer to the [Student Administration Policy](#) for guidance, including guidance on withdrawing without academic penalty).

## **Appealing Special Consideration Decisions**

(32) Students may appeal a decision to decline Special Consideration in line with the [Academic Appeals Procedures](#).

## **Section 5 - Guidelines**

(33) Supporting Documentation webpage

(34) Special Consideration webpage

(35) [Academic Appeals Procedures](#)

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Current
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## Glossary Terms and Definitions

**"Program"** - A program of study consisting of at least four subjects or 40 credit points leading to an award of the University (Foundation Studies Program, Undergraduate Preparation Program, Diploma, Advanced Diploma, Undergraduate Certificate, Associate Degree, Bachelor Degree, Bachelor Honours Degree, Graduate Certificate, Postgraduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma and Masters by Coursework Degree) which when successfully completed is conferred on the graduand by the Board of Trustees.

**"Subject"** - The subject of study in a program in which a student enrolls.