

Disruption to Studies Policy

NOTE: The [Policy Suspension or Variation Instrument - COVID-19 Policy Response 2021](#) is currently in place for this policy. For reference, the following expired [Policy Suspension or Variation Instrument - Special Consideration Policy](#) document is available here.

Section 1 - Purpose and Context

(1) Western Sydney University recognises that students may experience life events that adversely affect their academic performance in assessment tasks. The University provides support services to assist students through their studies and encourages students to use those services when necessary.

(2) This policy provides the principles for assisting students who have been significantly adversely affected by a serious and unavoidable disruption to their studies that is beyond their control, to demonstrate the Subject Learning Outcomes through Disruption to Studies provisions.

(3) The policy only applies to serious and unavoidable disruptions that arise after a term has commenced. Students with a pre-existing disability or chronic health condition, or prolonged adverse circumstances, may be eligible for ongoing assistance and support under the [Medical Assistance Policy](#) and the [Disability Policy](#), accessed through the University's [Services and facilities for current students webpage](#).

(4) This policy also does not cover the following situations:

- a. where a student is absent from a Final Examination, which is covered by the [Examinations Policy](#), and they wish to apply for a Deferred Exam. Refer to the [Deferred Exam Procedures](#);
- b. minor illnesses or misadventure that may prevent a student meeting an assessment deadline and where the granting of an assignment extension should be considered (covered in the Guidelines to the [Assessment Policy](#));
or
- c. when a student has been unable to attend a compulsory component of their subject (covered in the Guidelines to the [Assessment Policy](#)) except where a serious and unavoidable disruption is the cause.

(5) The policy and procedures should be read in conjunction with the [Disruption to Studies Procedures](#), [Medical Assistance Policy](#), [Disability Policy](#), [Assessment Policy](#), [Student Code of Conduct](#), [Examinations Policy](#) and [Academic Records Issuance Policy](#).

Section 2 - Definitions

(6) The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

- a. Disruption to Studies Provision means an additional opportunity granted as an outcome of a Disruption to Studies application, to demonstrate that Subject Learning Outcomes have been met.
- b. Critical Study Period means the period leading up to an assessment deadline during which the student would reasonably be expected to be undertaking or preparing for the assessment task/s.
- c. Supplementary Assessment means an additional exam or another type of equivalent assessment organised by

- a School which may be granted as a Disruption to Studies Provision or as a final assessment task in a program.
- d. Refer also to the Glossary in the Policy DDS.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(7) The University is committed to providing equity and fairness to students in all aspects of its teaching and learning.

(8) The University will provide students who have experienced a serious and unavoidable disruption to their studies with an opportunity to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes for the subject (known as Disruption to Studies Provision).

(9) A Disruption to Studies Provision may include a Supplementary Assessment, Deferred Exam or another assessment item. The University will not permit the award of additional marks for an assessment or any form of concession in marking without undertaking an alternative assessment.

(10) The University will monitor the granting of disruption to studies provisions to ensure the objectives of this policy are met.

Serious and Unavoidable Disruption

(11) The University will classify a disruption as serious and unavoidable if it meets all the following criteria:

- a. it was caused by health issues, hardship, trauma, bereavement or other unavoidable circumstances;
- b. it could not have reasonably been anticipated, avoided or guarded against by the student;
- c. it was beyond the student's control;
- d. it caused substantial disruption to the student's capacity for effective study and/or completion of assessment items; and
- e. it occurred during a critical study period and was at least three consecutive days in duration and the disruption clearly affected preparation or study towards the assessment or exam, preventing completion of that assessment or Deferred Exam or it affected a student's performance in a Deferred Exam.

(12) The following circumstances are not considered to be serious and unavoidable disruptions:

- a. misreading the Learning Guide or exam timetable;
- b. short-term minor illnesses, such as a mild cold;
- c. unspecified health conditions or generalised symptoms of being unwell, tired or stressed, including stress from exams;
- d. routine work commitments;
- e. ordinary incidences of life such as anticipated change of address;
- f. travel plans;
- g. an accident involving short-term injury; or
- h. vehicle break down.

(13) The University will respond sensitively, sympathetically and appropriately in recognition of its students' cultural traditions and practices where relevant.

Section 4 - Procedures

(14) Staff and students must comply with the [Disruption to Studies Procedures](#) to implement this policy.

Section 5 - Guidelines

(15) [Supporting documentation webpage](#).

(16) [Disruption to Studies Provisions Schedule](#).

(17) [Curriculum Advice to Students Procedures](#).

Acknowledgement

The University gratefully acknowledges Macquarie University from whose policy directory the concept of 'disruption to studies' and accompanying guidelines was drawn.

Status and Details

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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Program" - A program of study consisting of at least four units or 40 credit points leading to an award of the University (Foundation Studies 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.

"Term" - A session at the University that runs for a set length of time during which teaching and assessments occur.