



Special Consideration Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the rules for managing the exceptions to be made for students whose performance in assessment tasks has been affected by compassionate or compelling circumstances.

1.1 This policy has been developed to meet the following legislative and regulatory requirements:

- [ESOS Act including National Code 2018](#): Standard 8 – Overseas Student visa requirements specifically sub-clause 8.16.1 and Standard 9 – Deferring, suspending or cancelling the overseas student’s enrolment specifically sub-clause 9.2.
- [HESF 2021 \(Threshold Standards\)](#) Standard 1 Student Participation and Attainment

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all students of Western Sydney University International College (WSUIC) and refers to both its teaching sessions and the formal examination period.

2.2 This policy 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 including the cases other than where serious misadventure is the cause.

For instances related to item 2.2 the above please refer to the **WSUIC Assessment and Moderation Policy**

3. Definitions

3.1 *“Special Consideration”*

Refers to those situations where a student wishes to formally advise WSUIC that they have suffered unforeseen serious misadventure or accident, or have extenuating circumstances and, as a result, have:

- a) been prevented from meeting an assessment deadline;
- b) performed below their usual standard during an assessment, including formal examinations; or



c) been unable to undertake a compulsory component of their unit

3.2 *“Teaching Session”*

This is the time from the first week of classes up to the commencement of the end of session examinations.

3.3 *“Designated Course Convenor”*

Refers to an Academic Director or Course / Program Convenor who has been delegated the responsibility for assessing applications for Special Consideration for that teaching session and for determining outcomes.

3.4 *“Teaching staff”*

Refers to the teacher who has been allocated to take their respective class and has been further delegated the responsibility for assessing Special Consideration applications and determining outcome during that teaching session for the students in their allocated class.

3.5 *“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.

3.6 *“Formal Examination Period”*

This refers to WSUIC end-of-session examinations. In this policy, examinations conducted during the teaching session are considered to be assessment tasks.

3.7 *“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.

3.8 *“Supplementary Assessment”*

An assessment offered to a potential graduate in their final study term as a result of Special Consideration (refer to Clause 8.7 – POL04 Assessment and Moderation Policy).

3.9 *“Academic Integration Plan (AIP)”*

A document established between a student and WSU’s Disability Advisor outlining the 'reasonable adjustments' or academic strategies that support the student to complete their academic work while managing their symptoms.

3.10 *“Serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances”*

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.

3.11 *“WSU”*



Refers to Western Sydney University

3.12 “WSUIC”

Refers to Western Sydney University International College

For further detail see the [TEQSA glossary of terms](#)

4. Policy Statement

- 4.1 WSUIC is committed to ensuring that all students have the right to equity and fairness when undertaking the assessment components of their studies.
- 4.2 WSUIC also recognises that a student’s performance in assessment tasks or examinations may be affected by compassionate or compelling circumstances, and as such, may be prevented from reaching their usual demonstrated level of performance.
- 4.3 The Special Consideration Policy allows for the recognition of extenuating circumstances and provides opportunity for reasonable adjustment to be made to the standard assessment requirements so that students are not disadvantaged by these events.
- 4.4 Generally, for an application to be considered, a student must have maintained satisfactory academic performance and satisfactory attendance, prior to being affected by compassionate or compelling circumstances.
- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 Similarly, Special Consideration should not be used 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 (WSU’s) Disability Policy and should seek advice from staff in Counselling and Disability Services at the University who provide services to WSUIC through Third Party Agreement.
- 4.7 All WSUIC staff who process or assess Special Consideration applications are required to maintain confidentiality of information provided by students in accordance with the WSUIC Privacy Policy and the NSW Privacy Act 1988.

5. Reasons for Granting Special Consideration

- 5.1 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:
 - a) shorter-term medical conditions or events;
 - b) psychological trauma, impairment or incapacity arising from an event;



- c) physical trauma leading to impairment or incapacity resulting from an accident;
 - d) financial hardship arising from substantial change to economic circumstances beyond the student's control;
 - e) substantial change to status beyond the student's control; and/or
 - f) substantial unanticipated change to routine accommodation or residential arrangements or status beyond the student's control.
- 5.2 The following factors would not normally be considered as contributing to or constituting extenuating circumstances:
- a) routine demands of employment and employment-related travel;
 - b) difficulties adjusting to university life, to the self-discipline needed to study effectively, and to the demands of academic work;
 - c) stress or anxiety normally associated with examinations, required assessment tasks or any aspect of course work;
 - d) routine financial support needs;
 - e) lack of knowledge of requirements of academic work;
 - f) difficulties with English language;
 - g) difficulties with visa arrangements that could have been reasonably anticipated; and/or
 - h) scheduled anticipated changes of address, moving home, house moves, etc.
- 5.3 Circumstances which can be grounds for a Special Consideration application other than serious misadventure or accident may also include:
- a) 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;
 - b) emergency service commitments only where a student is required to attend an emergency situation and the requirement to attend is specified in supporting documentation;
 - c) 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
 - d) 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.



- 5.4 The following circumstances would not normally be regarded as grounds for a Special Consideration application:
- a) demands of sport, clubs, social or extra-curricular activity (other than to represent or participate in state, national or international sporting or cultural events);
 - b) recreational travel (domestic or international); and/or
 - c) planned events, such as weddings;
 - d) IT related issues e.g. laptop crashes, USB's not working etc.
- 5.5 Students who are currently under an Academic Integration Plan (AIP) are not eligible for Special Consideration as it relates to the circumstances identified in the AIP. However, a student who is currently under an AIP may apply for Special Consideration for any other circumstances that are not related to the condition for which an AIP has been developed.
- 5.6 A request for Special Consideration for an examination relates to situations where a student:
- i. 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
 - ii. was unable to complete a formal examination due to ill health or other cause.
- 5.7 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. WSUIC will not consider cases where a student is unable to attend an examination due to circumstances such as a vacation, ceremony or family event with the exception of an immediate family member's wedding or funeral where supported by appropriate documentation.
- 5.8 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.
- 5.9 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.
- 6. Delegations to Approve Special Consideration Applications**
- 6.1 The delegation to approve, reject any Special Consideration, including the awarding of Re-assessable Fail, resides with the Academic Director or a nominee appointed by the Academic Director.
- 6.2 Assessment that "serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances" exists and documentary evidence provided: Academic Director or nominee.



- 6.3 Determination of outcomes, other than a Re-assessable Fail, of all requests for Special Consideration: Academic Director or nominee.
- 6.4 Award of a Re-assessable fail as the outcome of a Special Consideration application: Academic Director or nominee.
- 6.5 Approve or dismiss applications for a deferred examination: Academic Director or nominee.

7. Applying for Special Consideration

- 7.1 Applications are available on the WSUIC website or from WSUIC Student Services.
 - a) once the application form is completed supporting documentation should be attached to demonstrate the nature and severity of the serious misadventure, accident or extenuating circumstances.
 - b) 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. Applications for extension due to illness must be accompanied by a draft copy of the assessment task due to be submitted for assessment in order to demonstrate the student's preparedness to submit the assessment had not illness intervened.
 - c) 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.
 - d) students who can provide evidence to support extenuating circumstances affecting submission of the application may be granted permission to submit applications after this time.
 - e) all documentation must be lodged with the application for it to be considered.
 - f) 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.
 - g) the Academic Director or nominee 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.

7.2 Acceptable Documentation for Applications

- a) appropriate documentation is required to verify claims made in any Special Consideration application. Information should relate to relevant provisions of this policy.
- b) 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 WSUIC website or from WSUIC Student Services.
- c) 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.



- d) if medical information is provided, the documentation must clearly indicate:
 - i. the date on which the student first sought attention and information about further visits if appropriate;
 - ii. the dates the student is unable to attend classes and/or complete assessment tasks;
 - iii. 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
 - iv. within the limits of confidentiality, a description of the nature and seriousness of the student's condition.
- e) 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.
- f) 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. WSUIC will not approach doctors, hospitals, police etc. to obtain documentation on behalf of the student. WSUIC may seek verification from these agencies that the documentation has been issued to the student.

7.3 Assessment Outcomes

- a) Once the Special Consideration has been reviewed, the outcome may include:
 - i. no action, average marks for similar tasks used to calculate an average (does not apply to Final Exam)
 - ii. Grant extension, applies to hand-in assessment task only;
 - iii. Complete a different assessment task
 - iv. Take circumstances into consideration, the marks achieved in this assessment task will be compared to the student's performance in other assessment tasks and moderated if necessary
 - v. Complete a Deferred Examination, applies to Final Exam only;
 - vi. Grant "I" grade (incomplete) and to resolve it no later than the following census



date, applies to Final Exam of diploma courses only;

- b) the Academic Director or nominee is required to document their determinations for Special Consideration for the whole or part of the teaching session
- c) the Academic Director or nominee may interview the student where this would assist them in making their decision. Other relevant staff may be consulted.
- d) students will be notified with the outcome.
- e) Where a Deferred Examination or Supplementary Assessment is the outcome, it should be set as soon as possible but no later than 1 week before census date of the following term, only if circumstance prevents it, the exception approval needs to be obtained from Academic Director.

7.3.4. Deferred Examinations

- a) the Academic Director or nominee will consider all applications for deferred examinations (except for any practical examination requests) and, for each application, will make one of the following determinations:
 - i. that the student be allowed to sit a deferred examination; or
 - ii. that the application for a final examination deferred examination has been rejected; such a decision will be final and not subject to review
- b) 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.
- c) where possible, the student will be notified at least two (2) working days prior to the deferred examination.
- d) 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, WSUIC 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.

7.3.5 Students Unable to Attend the Deferred Examination

- a) 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.
- b) the Academic Director or nominee 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 Academic Director who will consider the application. The outcome may be one of the following:
 - i. omitting the assessment task from the final grade calculation;



- ii. arranging a supplementary assessment to be run by WSUIC;
 - iii. setting a different (but academically equivalent) assessment task; or
 - iv. giving the student a final grade of “I” to be resolved by no later than the next census date
- c) students will be notified within five (5) working days following the final decision.

8. Quality and Compliance

- 8.1 This policy is reviewed periodically (at a minimum every two years) to ensure regulatory compliance, operational currency, the identification of continuous improvement opportunities and risk identification and mitigation. This review is reflected in WSUIC’s Quality Management Framework and Risk Management Framework.
- 8.2 This policy will be available on the WSUIC website for students and the WSUIC SharePoint site for staff access.
- 8.3 Emails will be issued to all staff to inform and update them on any changes to the policy and/or procedures and guidelines.
- 8.4 New staff will receive policy information during the induction process where it relates to their position.

9. Policy Source

- 9.1 This policy has been benchmarked with the following source:
- Western Sydney University [Disruption to Studies Policy](#)
- 9.2 This policy has also been benchmarked as part of the policy development procedure against the relevant policies of 3 other Higher Education Providers for relevance, currency and best practice comparison.

10. Related Forms and Documents

- Academic Integration Plan (AIP)
- Application for Special Consideration

11. Related Policies, Procedures and Guidelines

- POL 37 WSUIC Privacy Policy
- POL 20 Student Complaint Handling Policy
- POL 10 Review of Grade Policy
- Procedure for Identifying and Managing “At Risk’ Students
- [Western Sydney University Disruption to Studies Policy](#)
- [NSW Privacy Act 1988](#)



Approval and Amendment History

Approval Authority:	Western Sydney University International College Academic Board
Policy Owner:	Academic Director/Academic Leadership Team
Approval Date:	2 November 2016
Date for Next Review:	22 nd August 2024

Amendments		
Revision Date	Version	Summary of changes
2/11/2016	1.0	New Policy Developed and Implemented
27/04/2018	2.0	<p>Significant Re-write of entire Policy.</p> <p>Addition of Clause 1.1 to address Legislation and regulatory requirements; Revised Policy Statement; re-sequencing of previous clauses to better suit flow and policy formation requirements; removal of reference to Category 1 and Category 2 students, addition of reference to Privacy conditions for staff reviewing SC applications; Removal of procedures section and re-allocation of sub-clauses under this Clause into separate clauses; addition of sub- clauses 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4; Addition of Clause 9 –Policy Source and Benchmarking</p> <p>References to Western Sydney University International College replaced with WSUIC throughout document.</p> <p>Changing Delegate/designated Course Coordinator with “Academic Director or nominee” throughout document.</p> <p>Grammatical amendments throughout document to provide clarity and improvement in the flow of the document for reading and comprehension ease.</p> <p>Replacement of “program/s” with “course/s” throughout document.</p> <p>Clause 3.2 – definition of “teaching session” change to “classes” rather than “lectures”</p> <p>Removal of Appendix A</p>
27/07/2020	3.0	<p>Amendments to grammatical errors</p> <p>Updates to clause</p> <p>2.2 removing the word “does not” as it contradicts the policy’s scope.</p> <p>5.1 (e) to remove employment arrangements as an acceptable reason</p> <p>Re-formatting for Clauses 5.7, 5.8 and 5.9</p> <p>Removal of Clause 7.3.3 (a)</p>
28/07/2022	3.1	<p>Addition of definition of Supplementary Assessment</p> <p>Assessment outcomes clarified, removal of grading terminology that is irrelevant.</p>