

Registrar and Student Services

Special Consideration

(Exceptional Circumstances)

Application and Assessment Information for Students

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1. Special Consideration Guideline for Students

UNSW recognises you may experience illness or circumstances beyond your control which adversely affects your assessment performance. As a student, you may be eligible for Special Consideration; a process for assessing the impact of unexpected, short-term events on your ability to complete a specific assessment task. Before you apply through the Special Consideration portal, please refer to the eligibility criteria.

The Special Consideration process is designed to assist students with short-term, exceptional circumstances which impact on their studies. For students with reoccurring health conditions or disability, the UNSW Equitable Learning Services (ELS) may be able to provide more appropriate and ongoing support.

If you are applying for Special Consideration for an assessment with a set due date (e.g. essay, report, long take-home exam), you are not expected to wait for the application to be approved before submitting the assessment. You should continue to work on the assessment and submit it when you believe you have completed your assessment to a satisfactory standard.

If an extension is approved, it will be applied from the original due date (and is normally equivalent to the period of impact outlined in your documentation).

2. Eligibility Criteria & Applicable Circumstances

Your circumstances may be applicable for Special Consideration if they are:

- Short-term,
- Unexpected and beyond your control,
- Substantially disturbed your assessment performance,
- Could not have reasonably been anticipated, avoided or guarded against by the student and either:
 - occurred during a critical study period (see Appendix 9.3) for 3 consecutive days; or
 - occurred during a critical study period (see Appendix 9.3) for a total of 5 days; or
 - prevented you from completing or attending an assessment on a specific date or due date.

2.1 Life Events

While supporting documentation for Special Consideration needs to outline clear periods of impact, we understand that life events may impact you for longer than your documentation may outline. These situations are assessed on a case-by-case basis and factors in further criteria such as recency of the event and impact on your ability to complete assessments.

Events such as weddings, graduations, or moving house are events that are considered to be expected. As such, they are typically not grounds for Special Consideration as students are expected to plan accordingly.

For weddings and graduations, students are only granted consideration if the event directly clashes with a timed assessment. Only dates directly associated with the event would be considered grounds for Special Consideration.

Where a student is moving house, consideration is only provided if your evidence demonstrates how the event was unexpected or resulted in circumstances outside of your control – (e.g. eviction, unaffordable rent increase).

2.2 Hardship or Trauma

UNSW offers our empathy, understanding and support during times of hardship and trauma.

Where there has been a death of a family member, friend or pet, we understand this may impact you for longer than your documentation may outline. These situations are assessed on a case-by-case basis and factor in other criteria such as recency of the event and impact on ability to complete assessments.

While we understand there is no defined time limit for grief, circumstances where the death occurred significantly before an assessment, may require more up-to-date documentation, such as a medical certificate or a completed Professional Authority Form. These need to be completed by an AHPRA-registered medical practitioner and outline how your circumstances are having a continued impact on your wellbeing and/or ability to complete your assessments.

2.3 Technical Issues

Students who experience a technical issue beyond their control that impacts upon their ability to complete/submit an assessment task, may be eligible for Special Consideration. Where applicable, we require evidence showing all the following steps taken to best support a student's application:

For online assessments, take screenshots (all screenshots must include the date and time the issue occurred) of:

- error messages
- screen not loading
- timestamped speed tests
- power outage maps
- messages or information from your internet provider regarding the issues experienced

For offline technical issues, provide clear photos or documentation detailing the impact of your issue.

The exams team will attempt to accommodate technical issues during an exam, with extra time incorporated into exam durations to cover these issues. If your technical issues were not sufficiently addressed within the exam, students should apply for Special Consideration within three working days of the examination date.

For non-exam technical issues, students must contact their course authority, lecturer, tutor or supervisor (as soon as practical or immediately at the conclusion of your assessment) via email, Moodle or chat to advise that you are experiencing a technical issue, as soon as possible.

Submit a Special Consideration application immediately at the conclusion of the assessment and upload all supporting documentation.

Computer updates and technology-related issues

Students must ensure that auto-updates are disabled on their computer prior to the online assessment.

Special Consideration will not be awarded on the grounds that a student's computer updated during an online assessment.

Personal computer issues

Please note that students are expected to save and back up their work to cloud-based storage solutions to ensure accessibility from multiple devices.

In the event of technical difficulties with a personal computer, students should make use of alternate computing facilities available on campus.

UNSW provides access to computers in various locations, including libraries and designated computer labs, which are equipped to support student needs. <https://www.library.unsw.edu.au/using-the-library/computers>

Special Consideration may only be provided if the technology issue occurred on the date/due date of the assessment.

Time zones

If your online assessment is a timed assessment (i.e. scheduled at a specific time in Sydney, Australian Eastern Standard or Daylight Time (AEST/AEDT)), you must make yourself available at the time advised.

Students studying remotely who have exams scheduled between 10pm and 7am local time will be able to apply for Special Consideration and a supplementary exam will be held at a time outside of these hours.

Special Consideration will not be awarded for failure to realise an exam is being conducted at AEST/AEDT.

3. When Applying for Special Consideration

Applications for Special Consideration must be submitted within three working days of the assessment due date (refer to dates in Moodle or the course outline). Where the documentation demonstrates the student was unable to submit on-time, late applications may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Special Consideration applications must include all assessment details: the assessment name, its correct value (% weighting) and exact due date. If applying for multiple assessments or an assessment with multiple deliverables, students are to make separate applications for each and clearly indicate which assessment/deliverable they are applying for in each individual application.

If your assessment date differs from what is listed in the course outline or Moodle (e.g. previously granted Special Consideration, ELP adjustment, local arrangement), confirm your revised due date within your Special Consideration application.

4. Fit To Sit

By sitting or accessing a timed assessment (e.g. final exam/quiz) on the scheduled assessment date, the student is declaring that they are fit to do so and cannot later apply for Special Consideration.

Sitting or accessing an assessment task on the scheduled assessment date, after applying for Special Consideration, renders the Special Consideration application void.

Students are responsible for deciding in advance of an assessment start time whether they are unwell or facing significant circumstances which will impact their performance in the assessment.

A student who becomes unwell during an examination can request Special Consideration if they:

- Stop working on the examination; and
- notify the Examination Supervisor (for invigilated exams), or notify the Course Authority before the end of the scheduled exam for online exams; and
- provide a medical certificate dated within 24 hours of the examination.

Where the assessment is a final exam, online medical certificates will only be accepted if evidence is provided that confirms the medical certificate was provided via a telehealth consultation involving real-time communication (e.g. An appointment confirmation including the date and time, a statement from the healthcare professional or a call log from the health care professional).

Exceptions will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis where it is clear a student was unfit to make reasonable judgement on their fitness to undertake the assessment, due to mental illness or other extenuating circumstances.

5. Supporting Evidence for Applications

Applications must be supported by documentation that indicates clearly that the student was unable to comply. Please refer to Appendix 9.1 and 9.2 for additional information on medical certificate requirements.

The evidence must:

- Identify the circumstances
- Include clear exact dates and/or length of circumstances
- Explain severity and impact of the circumstances
- Clearly describe how circumstances have adversely affected the student's capacity for effective study to which an assessment relates
- Include the date(s) on which the student was seen by the professional providing the evidence

Where non-English supporting documentation is submitted, the Case Review Team will attempt to have it translated. Where documentation is unable to be translated, you may be asked to have such translated by a NAATI accredited translator. In such and instances, copies of the original document and its NAATI-certified English translation must be provided.

Photos of injuries or illness are not included in the following list of supporting documentation and are not considered in your Special Consideration application. Please only attach relevant documentation as failure to do so may result in your application being delayed.

The table below lists common applicable circumstances and supporting evidence that may be supplied; however, this list is not exhaustive.

Exceptional Circumstance	Supporting Evidence Required
a) Short-term illness	<p>Medical Certificate (provided by health practitioner, see Appendix 9.1)</p> <p>or</p> <p>Hospital Discharge Certificate</p>
b) Hardship or trauma, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sudden change in domestic arrangements: e.g. eviction, homelessness, victim of gendered violence• Unexpected serious financial difficulties• Victims of crime• Accidents• Hospitalisation of a family member	<p>• Official letter from relevant source/authority</p> <p>or</p> <p>• Police report</p> <p>or</p> <p>• Medical Certificate (provided by health practitioner, see Appendix 9.1)</p> <p>or</p> <p>• Hospital Discharge Certificate</p>
c) Death of a relative or friend	<p>• Death Notice/Certificate</p> <p>or</p> <p>• Obituary</p> <p>or</p> <p>• A letter from the medical institution of the deceased</p> <p>or</p> <p>• Statutory declaration (this will only be accepted in absence of the above documentation if students are able to provide satisfactory context as to why they are unable to obtain such)</p>

<p>d) Unavoidable commitments directly clashing with a timed assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University competitions • Compulsory religious observances (does not include voluntary commitments) • Unavoidable medical procedures • Court dates/jury duty • Unexpected caring requirements • Exams held at another university • Internship or graduate interviews • UNSW-approved internships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from UNSW competition owner confirming support of attendance at competition <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from religious leader/Elder confirming the date(s) of the religious commitment and requirement to observe <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Certificate (provided by health practitioner, see Appendix 9.1) <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter confirming attendance to Jury/Court date <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers requirements list with exact dates that care is required <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from other University confirming exam schedule <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of interview <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from internship host confirming internships dates and their inability to be flexible in start dates or allowing time off to attend examinations
<p>e) Exacerbation of ongoing illness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Certificate (provided by health practitioner, see Appendix 9.1)
<p>f) Students registered with UNSW Elite Athletes Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending or increased training commitments for a competition • Students representing UNSW/State/Country at a competition • UNSW/Faculty supported competitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from club or team manager outlining competition dates or training commitments <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from club or competition owner confirming competition dates <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter from Faculty ADE confirming support of attendance at Faculty competition
<p>g) Australian Defence Force (ADF) Reservists or full-time personnel/SES commitments and Volunteer Firefighters</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An official training notice or similar document from your reserve unit, recruiter or the training unit, with the proposed training and dates.
<p>h) Life Events directly clashing with timed assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Births • Weddings • Graduations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invitation to wedding <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth certificate <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospital admission/discharge papers <p>or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Official communication confirming graduation date
<p>i) Technical issues</p>	<p>and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screenshots/photos of the issue experienced (see in detail in 'Technical Issues' above) • Screenshots of communication with Invigilator, Course Authority, Lecturer, Tutor or Exam Supervisor

6. Non-Applicable Circumstances

The University does not provide Special Consideration for conditions or circumstances that are the consequence of a student's own actions or inactions.

Some common examples of circumstances that are not usually considered exceptional include:

- Misreading the course
- Misreading the examination timetable
- Attending events such as:
 - concerts
 - talk shows
 - sporting events (excluding university games/elite competitions)
 - protests
- Travel/holidays (including holidays associated with weddings)
- Professional experience organised independently by student
- Heavy academic workload
- Overloading with additional courses in the given term
- Two (2) or more assessments due on the same date
- Work commitments (unless unexpected and unavoidable)
- Computer updating during an online assessment
- Volunteering commitments
- Club/society events and commitments
- Late enrolment in the course

Students who are enrolled in a course on an auditing basis are not eligible for Special Consideration for their final exam. The main exam round is the final opportunity to sit the exam for a student enrolled on an auditing basis.

7. Review

Students may request a review of a decision to refuse a Special Consideration application. To request a review of their outcome, students must reply directly to their outcome email within 3 working days of receiving it. Within their request, students must complete and attach the Special Consideration Review Form and:

- Specify the reason/s for why their outcome should be changed and
- Provide any additional supporting documentation regarding their circumstances.

Any supporting documentation not previously submitted with the Special Consideration application must be submitted with the review request.

Only one review request per application will be considered by the Student Case Review team. Students dissatisfied with a review outcome may lodge a student complaint in accordance with the [UNSW Complaint Management and Investigations Policy and Procedure](#).

Review requests lodged more than three working days after receiving the outcome of the application you are requesting a review of must additionally be supported by documentation that demonstrates extenuating circumstances which prevented on time submission of the review request.

8. Short Extension

Short Extension is process that allows you to apply for an extended deadline on your assessment without the need to provide supporting documentation, offering immediate approval during brief, life-disrupting events.

If you require a longer extension on your assessment or a different outcome due to your circumstances, students should apply for Special Consideration instead. Special Consideration is assessed independently of Short Extension, and any successful extension outcome will be applied from your assessment's original due date.

Please note: Short Extension is currently only available for certain assessments and courses. Check your course outline or Moodle to see if a Short Extension is offered for your assessments.

9. Appendix

9.1 Registered Health Professionals

Registered health professionals are those registered with a National Board of Australia that is accredited by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice
- Chinese medicine
- Chiropractic
- Dental
- Medical
- Medical radiation practice
- Nursing and midwifery
- Occupational therapy
- Optometry
- Osteopathy
- Pharmacy
- Physiotherapy
- Podiatry
- Psychology

Backdated medical documentation

Documentation that is dated after the period of impact will be accepted if the student meets all other eligibility criteria outlined in Section 2 and the document has been provided by an AHPRA-registered health professional as outlined above. All applications will be assessed on the period of impact specified in the medical certificate and not when the student consulted their medical practitioner.

Note: For timed assessments where a student has accessed or sat the timed assessment, documentation (medical certificate) must be dated within 24 hours after the timed assessment (please refer to Fit to Sit ruling and procedure under Section 4).

Medical Certificates where symptoms are self-reported

All applications will be assessed on the period of impact specified in the medical certificate, even when the medical practitioner writes that the symptoms were self-reported by the patient and not observed. The only exception is where the medical certificate provided does not align with the student's circumstances as stated in their original application. Applications of this nature will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

9.2 Online Medical Certificates

In accordance with the Australian Medical Association's (AMA) guidance, online medical certificates provided via technology-based patient consultations are an appropriate alternative to consulting with a patient in the same physical room, when they are used:

- As an adjunct to normal medical practice
- For regular patients of the practice
- For patients who have been referred by another medical practitioner; and
- When it is clinically appropriate for the patient's circumstances.

UNSW will accept online medical certificates if they are provided by an AHPRA registered provider.

Evidence confirming that your certificate was issued via a telehealth consultation must be provided in conjunction with your medical certificate in the following scenarios:

- If the length of your online medical certificates has an impact period greater than 3 days;
- If the resulting extension is longer than 3 days from the original due date;
- If your application is related to a final examination

All online medical certificates submitted as part of an application may be verified to confirm their appropriateness and authenticity.

Online medical certificates are only accepted where they are issued following a real-time telehealth consultation with a healthcare professional.

For the purposes of Special Consideration, a telehealth consultation means a real-time phone or video consultation between the student and the healthcare professional.

Medical certificates issued without evidence that a real-time consultation occurred are not accepted.

Telehealth will not be accepted where the evidence indicates that only an online questionnaire or form was completed. A telehealth consultation must be supported by evidence that a real-time phone or video appointment took place, including the date, time, and duration of the consultation.

Online medical certificates issued through services where a doctor may only contact the patient if deemed necessary may require additional evidence, as a real-time consultation does not necessarily occur in all cases.

Required evidence

Students must provide at least one of the following:

- A letter or statement from the healthcare professional confirming that a real-time phone or video consultation took place.
 - If the letter only states "telehealth", additional evidence may be required (e.g. a call log).
 - Call logs showing a very short consultation may not be considered sufficient evidence that a real-time consultation took place.
- A Medicare statement (for domestic students) or an OSCH provider statement (for international students), clearly showing the date and time of the consultation and the doctor's details.
- Other official documentation confirming that a real-time phone or video consultation occurred.

Appointment confirmations alone are not accepted as evidence.

UNSW reserves the right not to accept evidence where the consultation appears too brief or insufficient to reasonably support the medical certificate provided.

Additional documentation

If further documentation is provided or requested, it must directly relate to the medical certificate submitted with the application.

UNSW may not accept additional supporting documentation that is not clearly connected to the medical certificate relied upon in the application.

9.3 Critical Study Period

Special Consideration is assessed based on impact during a student's critical study period. The critical study period typically refers to the 14-day period prior to and including the assessment due date. For timed assessments (e.g. exams, quizzes), the critical study period refers to the 7-day period prior to and including the assessment date.

9.4 Additional Support Services

The following additional support services are available for students at UNSW:

- **Counselling services** - UNSW Psychology and Wellness are available 24/7 to both domestic and international students - <https://student.unsw.edu.au/counselling>
- **Medical and Health Services** - <https://student.unsw.edu.au/health>
- **Student Support Advisors** - work with all students to promote the development of skills needed to succeed at university, whilst also providing personal support throughout the process - <https://student.unsw.edu.au/advisors>
- **Equitable Learning Services** - if you anticipate your circumstances may be ongoing, you may wish to consider if having educational adjustments put in place will assist you in managing your circumstances and studies simultaneously - <https://student.unsw.edu.au/els>
- **Gendered Violence Portal** - to access support on or off campus for circumstances related to gendered violence - <https://www.unsw.edu.au/planning-assurance/safety/safer-communities/gendered-violence/gendered-violence-portal>
- **The Nucleus: Student Hub** - if you're not sure where to go for your enquiry, Nucleus Student Hub will direct you to the right place - <https://www.unsw.edu.au/student/contact-us>
- **International Student Support** – as an UNSW international student, you'll have access to a range of support services to assist with your study here - <https://www.unsw.edu.au/study/your-future/international-student-support>
- **Nura Gili** - A place of cultural inclusion and safety, a deep sense of belonging and connection to Indigenous communities that is built upon respect for all Indigenous students at UNSW - <https://www.unsw.edu.au/nura-gili>