

Special Consideration Policy

1. Purpose

This policy sets out the rules for students whose performance in assessment tasks during the term or in the final examination has been affected by compassionate or compelling circumstances.

2. Application

This policy applies to all students enrolled at UniSmarter and staff involved in teaching, assessing and student support services.

3. Policy Statement

UniSmarter is firmly committed to all aspects of its learning and teaching. UniSmarter recognises that a student's performance in assessment tasks or examinations may be affected by compassionate or compelling circumstances, and as such, do not reach their usual performance level. *Special Consideration Policy* allows for reasonable adjustment to the standard assessment requirements and ensures staff and students can act consistently, equitably and transparently.

Generally, for an application to be considered, a student must have maintained satisfactory academic performance and satisfactory engagement with the UniSmarter teaching team and module contents, prior to being affected by compassionate or compelling circumstances.

4. Reasons for granting special consideration

Special consideration may only be granted if:

- a student's performance at any time during the semester was affected by compassionate or compelling circumstances which prevented the student from preparing or presenting for all, or part of, an assessment task/final examination; or
- during the performance of an assessment task or final examination a student was affected by compassionate or compelling circumstances.

The conditions for granting special consideration are listed below.

4.1 Medical Reasons for special consideration grant

To be considered as medical reasons for assessment purposes, the student will be required to submit a medical certificate in accordance to the below guidelines. The medical certificate must:

- be issued from a registered medical or dental practitioner or other appropriate professional such as a psychologist, covering the date of the missed assessment task/examination; and
- be issued on the Medical Provider's or practitioner's letterhead and stamped with the official seal/stamp along with signature; and
- state the exact duration of the illness (i.e. from one date to another date); and
- for assessment tasks (other than in class tests or examinations), be relevant for the time leading up to the due date of submission (not just the due date);

- indicate that in the practitioner's opinion the student was not fit for undertaking the assessment task/ examination on the specified date;
- be submitted as a supporting document with the *Special Consideration Application form* within 1 working day after the missed assessment task/examination.

4.2 Reasons other than medical grounds, suitable documentary evidence may include:

- Compassionate/compelling circumstances such as the death or serious illness of a close family member. Supporting evidence may include a medical certificate or letter (e.g. funeral notice or death certificate) from a registered medical practitioner, psychologist, counsellor or other appropriate professional;
- Hardship/Trauma circumstances such as the sudden loss of employment, family breakdown, severe disruption to domestic arrangements, and victim of crime/accident. Supporting evidence may include a medical certificate or letter from a registered medical practitioner or other appropriate professional such as psychologist, police officer or fire officer, etc. In the absence of a medical certificate or other supporting evidence, consideration may be given to permitting students to provide a Statutory Declaration with full details of the exceptional circumstances.

In the interests of fairness and consistency, UniSmarter may take steps to determine if submitted supporting evidence can be considered as valid.

4.3 Infrastructure Failure

The students are responsible for self-testing the functionality of the system along with hardware infrastructure prior to the online remote proctored examinations so that any required troubleshooting can be accomplished. The student can also give a mock test to get familiarised with the interface.

Infrastructure failure (hardware, internet connectivity or browser issues) as grounds for grant of special consideration is valid:

- only for application during the final examination paper;
- if the student has taken all necessary steps to restore the functionality of the hardware;
- if the infrastructure failure is informed on the day of the examination, and not the day prior or after the exam.

As evidence, the student needs to immediately inform the Student Success Advisor before or during the exam.

If the request is approved under Special Considerations Policy, the supplementary exam will be rescheduled to a time which will be no more than 72 hours from the original schedule. The new schedule will be communicated to the student 1 day prior to the exam.

The student can appear for only one supplementary exam scheduled due to infrastructure failure. No special consideration will be given for infrastructure before or during the supplementary exam.

4.4 Compassionate or Compelling Circumstances

The following factors would not normally be considered as reasonable grounds for compassionate or compelling circumstances:

- Non serious medical condition;

- Transport delays;
- Routine demands of employment;
- Difficulties in adjusting to college life, to the self-discipline needed to study effectively, and to the demands of academic work;
- Routine financial support needs;
- Lack of knowledge of requirements of academic work;
- Misreading the final examination timetable;
- Recreational travel (domestic or international).

Compassionate or Compelling Circumstances could include, but are not limited to:

- a student is a party in legal proceedings where the timing is beyond the student's control (these cases should be supported by police or court reports);
- a student has been caught up in a natural disaster, political uprising or other tragic event.

UniSmarter will use its professional judgment to assess each case on its individual merits. When determining whether compassionate or compelling circumstances exist, UniSmarter will consider documentary evidence provided to support the claim.

Please note: UniSmarter is of the opinion that a short term illness, which can easily be treated, may not be regarded as a serious illness and therefore may not be considered as 'compassionate or compelling circumstances'.

Students who experience technical difficulties (such as internet connectivity or browser issues), when submitting online activities and assessments other than the final examination, should contact their Online Unit Coordinator directly rather than submitting an application for Special Consideration.

Compassionate or compelling circumstances are generally those beyond the control of the student and which have had a substantial impact upon the student's course progress or wellbeing.

5. Student application guidelines

The Special Consideration Application Form including all supporting documents must be lodged online before or no later than 1 working day after the due date of the assessment task or the final examination.

Late applications will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Students applying for special consideration for an assessment task/final examination:

- must complete the online application form available on the UniSmarter portal;
- where the particular circumstances are medical in nature, must submit the required documentation (clause 4.1);
- where the particular circumstances are non-medical in nature, must attach relevant supporting documentation to the online Special Consideration Application Form.

Documents written in a language other than English must be accompanied by an English translation with a declaration by the student that the translation is true and correct.

6. Possible outcomes of the application

Possible outcomes of the application for Special Consideration:

- application rejected on the grounds of late submission;
- application rejected on the grounds of unsatisfactory engagement and /or previous academic performance;
- application rejected on the grounds of inadequate documentation provided;
- application rejected as the circumstances are not significant enough to warrant special consideration;
- application considered and no additional assessable work required;
- application considered with the student being required to undertake additional assessable work (e.g. a supplementary final examination).

7. Application processing time

In general, assessment task and final examination applications will be considered within 1 working day of submission.

8. Notification of the application outcome

Students will receive an automated reply advising them of the receipt of their application along with an application reference number.

The UniSmarter teaching team will inform the applicant of the outcome of the application within 1 working day and provide any additional arrangements for the student's supplementary or deferred assessment task /final examination via the email address provided by the student.

UniSmarter Student Success Advisers will notify the respective teaching teams and Program Convenors of special consideration decisions via email.

9. Appeal options

If a student is not satisfied with the outcome of their application, they may appeal the decision by following the *Student Complaints and Appeal Policy*.

10. Definitions

- *Assessment Task*
Any assessment prescribed in the respective Unit Guide excluding the final examination.
- *Supplementary Assessment Task/Final Examination*
The supplementary assessment/final examination is a second opportunity to take the assessment task/final examination for a unit. Student may be permitted to attempt a supplementary assessment task/final examination where student's performance in an assessment task/final examination has been significantly affected by compassionate or compelling circumstances.
- *Deferred Assessment Task/Examination*
Deferred assessment task/final examination is a concession intended to allow students, who are unable to attend an assessment task/final examination at the scheduled time to take the

assessment task/final examination at a later date. Deferred assessment task/final examination will only be granted where a student is unable to attend the assessment task/final examination due to compassionate or compelling circumstances.

- Immediate Family Member*
An immediate family member includes a spouse, de facto spouse, parent, parent-in-law, sibling and a child.
- Online activities and assessments*
Learning and assessment tasks including but not limited to discussion posts, essays, peer feedback, assignments and online polls and quizzes.

11. Related Documents

- Special Consideration Application Form
- Assessment Policy
- Final Examination Policy
- Student Complaints and Appeals Policy

Amendment History

Department:	Academic Affairs	
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