

Adverse Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Policy

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) The University of Newcastle (University) acknowledges the right of students to seek consideration for the impact of allowable adverse circumstances that may affect their preparation, attendance or performance in assessment item(s), including formal examinations, in-class assessment and placement.

(2) This policy must be read in conjunction with the [Course Assessment and Grading Manual](#), the [Adverse Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure](#), the [Supporting Students with Disability Policy](#), the [Work Integrated Learning Policy](#), and the [Academic Appeals Policy](#).

(3) In the event of any inconsistency between this policy and its supporting procedure and any University Rule or delegation, the Rule made by the Council or delegation will prevail to the extent of the inconsistency.

Section 2 - Policy Scope

(4) This policy applies to:

- a. all coursework students of the University; and
- b. all modes of study, locations and types of assessment items.

(5) This policy does not apply to students enrolled in the Bachelor of Medicine – Joint Medical Program or the Bachelor of Medical Science and Doctor of Medicine, who should refer to the [Joint Medical Program Manual](#).

(6) Students whose ongoing circumstances which may adversely affect their performance should seek advice from their Course Co-ordinator, Program Convenor, and support services such as [AccessAbility](#), the University Health Service or the Pathways and Academic Learning Support Centre. Students who experience ongoing chronic issues should seek a Reasonable Adjustment Plan (RAP).

Section 3 - Policy Intent

(7) This Policy outlines the support to be provided to students who have experienced adverse circumstances, which were unforeseen and may affect their preparation, attendance or performance in assessment item(s).

Section 4 - Policy Provisions/Principles

Lodgement of Applications

(8) Students may submit an Application for Adverse Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items (application) via the online Adverse Circumstances system. The University will determine if an application should be considered and any subsequent actions to be taken.

Determinations

(9) Each application will be assessed on its merits and any previous applications will not prejudice a subsequent application.

(10) The University may audit the number of applications made by a student and the courses affected. Students who submit a concerning number of applications may be referred to [AccessAbility](#) or the Counselling Service for assistance.

(11) The University will determine the deadline for submission of an application.

Storage of Information

(12) All personal information or health information provided in relation to an application will be kept in confidence in accordance with the University's [Privacy Management Plan](#) and [Privacy Policy](#).

Outcomes

(13) The possible outcomes of an application are:

- a. an extension of time to submit an assessment item is granted;
- b. permission to undertake a formal examination during the Rescheduled Examination Period;
- c. permission to undertake a in-class assessment at an alternative time;
- d. provision of an alternative assessment item;
- e. exemption from a compulsory attendance requirement;
- f. reschedule of a placement (including Work Integrated Learning (WIL)); or
- g. rejection of an application.

Demonstration of Adverse Circumstances

(14) Students who submit an application must be able to demonstrate that one or more of the adverse circumstances listed below may adversely impact their preparation, attendance or performance within the current term or the examination period:

- a. health grounds – either physical or psychological;
- b. non-health grounds, such as:
 - i. compassionate grounds – for example, the death or serious injury of a close family member or friend;
 - ii. hardship – for example, sudden loss of employment, family breakdown, or severe disruption to domestic arrangements;
 - iii. trauma -for example, impact of crime, accident or natural disasters;
 - iv. cultural days or Sorry Business; or
 - v. unavoidable commitments – for example, but not limited to, volunteer firefighters or student reservists.

(15) Adverse circumstances do not include:

- a. misreading the Course Outline or the examination timetable;
- b. usual work commitments;
- c. travel plans;
- d. ignorance of assumed knowledge requirements for a course; or
- e. inability to meet the inherent requirements of the program or course.

Approval of Adverse Circumstances Applications

(16) Course Co-ordinators or designated University staff are responsible for approval of applications in accordance with the [Adverse Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure](#).

Supporting Documentation

(17) All documentation provided must be in English, or accompanied by an English translation provided by an agency accepted by the Universities Admissions Centre (NSW and ACT) Pty Ltd (UAC).

(18) Allowable documents are detailed in the [Adverse Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure](#).

(19) Students who submit an application are responsible for:

- a. ensuring the authenticity of any supporting documentation that they provide to the University; and
- b. the retention of any supporting documentation for a period of six months after completion of the relevant term. This documentation must be produced by a student when requested by the University to do so.

(20) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students may be exempt from providing supporting documentation on cultural or compassionate grounds. In such circumstances, a nominee of the Head of Wollotuka Institute is authorised to verify the authenticity of the application.

(21) The University may take steps to verify the authenticity of any documentation provided with an application. This may include seeking further information from persons named in an application or in supporting documentation.

(22) Supply of false information, false or falsified documentation by a student to the University will result in the rejection of the adverse circumstances application and/or the cancellation of the adverse circumstances approval authorisation. This may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the [Student Conduct Rule](#).

Appeals

(23) Students may appeal the outcome of the application within three working days of the outcome being determined.

(24) The appeal should be made in accordance with the [Academic Appeals Policy](#) and the [Adverse Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure](#).

Section 5 - Relaxing Provision

(25) To provide for exceptional circumstances arising in any particular case, the President of Academic Senate may relax any provision(s) of this policy.

(26) Where students have been impacted by a government (state or Federal) declared natural disaster or other national or international crisis, the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) may waive the requirement for the submission of adverse circumstances applications and associated documentation and may direct Student Central, Schools, Colleges or other areas of the University to put in place arrangements to support impacted students.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	22nd February 2024
Review Date	22nd February 2027
Approval Authority	Academic Senate
Approval Date	13th February 2024
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Belinda Yourn Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Enquiries Contact	John Radvan Senior Manager, Academic Governance & Compliance <hr/> Student Central

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Academic Senate" - The Academic Senate of the University as described in the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Council" - The governing authority of the University established under section 8A of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Working day" - Any day other than Saturday, Sunday, or a public holiday in Newcastle, on which business may be conducted.

"Reasonable Adjustment Plan" - A document developed by a student with disability and the University's AccessAbility Team which records reasonable adjustments.

"Adverse circumstances approval authorisation" - The email issued to the student's University of Newcastle student email account, approving an adverse circumstances request.

"Assessment item" - Any form of work used to measure student learning outcomes and to determine the final result for a student in a course.

"Course" - When referring to a course offered by the University, a course is a set of learning activities or learning opportunities with defined, assessed and recorded learning outcomes. A course will be identified by an alphanumeric course code and course title. Course types include core courses, compulsory courses, directed courses, capstone courses and electives. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Personal information" - Has the same meaning as in the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 (NSW).

"Student" - A person formally enrolled in a course or active in a program offered by the University or affiliated entity.

"Disciplinary action" - When used in relation to staff of the University, this is as defined in the applicable and current Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, or the staff member's employment contract. When used in relation to students of the University, this refers to the range of penalties that may be applied under the Student Conduct Rule.

"Health information" - As defined in the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002, or any replacing legislation.

"Program" - When referring to learning, a program is a sequence of approved learning, usually leading to an Award. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Program Convenor" - The academic staff member with overall responsibility for the management and quality of a program.

"School" - An organisational unit forming part of a College or Division, responsible for offering a particular course.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"Term" - When referring to an academic period, term means a period of time aligned to an academic year for the delivery of a course in which students enrol and for which they are usually charged fees for example semesters, trimesters, summer, winter or full-year term. The academic year for a term is determined by the academic year in which the course commences, not concludes. For all other uses of this term, the generic definition applies.

"Unavoidable commitments" - Includes caring responsibilities, cultural or religious commitments, commitments within the Australian Defence Forces or similar international bodies, commitments as an elite athlete to attend an event, obligations to jury duty, or another commitment that cannot by its nature be rescheduled.

"College" - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.

"Inherent requirements" - When referring to program requirements, inherent requirements are the essential abilities, knowledge and skills required to complete a specific program and that must be met by all students enrolled in that program.