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 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 Student Reservist and Emergency Services Support Procedure, 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, except for students in the Joint Medical Program; and
b. all modes of study, locations of study, and types of assessment items.

(5) Students in the Joint Medical Program should refer to the Joint Medical Program Manual.

(6) Students whose ongoing circumstances may continue to 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 with a disability may seek a Reasonable Adjustment Plan (RAP).

Section 3 - Purpose

(7) This policy outlines the support to be provided to students whose circumstances adversely affect their preparation, attendance or performance in assessment item(s).

Section 4 - Principles

Lodgement of Applications

(8) Students must submit an Application for Adverse Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items (application) in accordance with the Adverse Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure.

Determinations

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

(10) The University may review 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, which will be specified in the Adverse Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure.

Storage of Information

(12) All personal information or health information provided in relation to an application must be kept 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. approval to undertake a formal examination during the Rescheduled Examination Period;
c. approval to undertake a in-class assessment at an alternative time;
d. an alternative assessment item is provided;
e. an exemption from a compulsory attendance requirement is granted;
f. a placement (including Work Integrated Learning (WIL)) is rescheduled or reallocated; or
g. the application is rejected.

Demonstration of Adverse Circumstances

(14) Students who submit an application must demonstrate that one or more of the circumstances listed below has adversely impacted 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. not meeting the 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 are responsible for the approval of applications in accordance with the Adverse Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure.

(17) Course Co-ordinators may, at their discretion, enable automatic approval of applications for an extension of up to three calendar days for specific assessment items.

Supporting Documentation

(18) Where a Course Co-ordinator has enabled automatic approval of applications in accordance with clause 17, students are not required to provide supporting documentation. In all other cases, students must provide appropriate supporting documentation to demonstrate the circumstances they have claimed.

(19) 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).

(20) Examples of allowable supporting documentation are detailed in the Adverse Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure.

(21) 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; and
c. producing retained documentation when requested by the University to do so.

(22) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students may be granted an exemption 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.

(23) 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.

(24) Supply of false information, or false or falsified documentation, by a student to the University will result in the rejection of the application and/or the cancellation of any approval given. Such circumstances may also be reported as non-academic misconduct in accordance with the Student Conduct Rule.

Appeals

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

(26) An appeal must be made in accordance with the Academic Appeals Policy and the Adverse Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items Procedure.

Section 5 - Relaxing Provision

(27) To provide for exceptional circumstances arising in any case, the President of Academic Senate may relax a provision(s) of this policy, provided that the relaxation:

a. does not compromise compliance with external obligations (including but not limited to contractual, legislative or accreditation requirements);

b. does not override a decision made under a formal delegation of authority;
c. does not replace a decision that is subject to a formal delegation of authority; and
d. gives due consideration to the principles of procedural fairness.

(28) Where a cohort of 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 & Global) may waive the requirement for the submission of adverse circumstances applications and associated documentation and may direct Schools, Colleges and other areas of the University to establish arrangements to support impacted students.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	9th December 2025
Review Date	9th December 2028
Approval Authority	Academic Senate
Approval Date	25th November 2025
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Belinda Yourn Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global)
Enquiries Contact	John Radvan Senior Manager, Academic Governance & Compliance 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.

"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.

"Non-academic misconduct" - Means conduct by a student that is defined as non-academic misconduct in the Student Conduct Rule.

"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.

"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.

"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.

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