

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Policy Code	ACA06
Policy Lead	Academic Dean
Approving Authority	Academic Board
Approval date	28 June 2024
Commencement date	01 July 2024
Next Review Date	February 2027
Version	2024.2
Relevant legislation or external requirements	<p>National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018 (National Code) (NC: 6, 9, 10)</p> <p>Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021 (HESFs: 1.4, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4)</p> <p>Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986 (Cth)</p> <p>Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)</p> <p>Disability Standards for Education (2005)</p> <p>Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth)</p> <p>Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)</p> <p>Age Discrimination Act 2004 (Cth)</p>
Related ASA Documents	<p>Student Support Framework</p> <p>Student Code of Conduct</p> <p>Student Support, Wellbeing, and Health Policy and Procedure</p> <p>Diversity and Equity Policy and Procedure</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Participation Policy and Procedure</p> <p>Student Enrolment and Attendance Policy and Procedure</p> <p>Student Assessment Policy</p> <p>Student Assessment Procedure</p> <p>Student Assessment Review Policy</p> <p>Student Assessment Review Procedure</p> <p>Student Grievance Policy</p> <p>Student Grievance Procedure</p>

1. Purpose

This Policy and Procedure confirms ASA Institute of Higher Education's (**ASA's**) commitment to assisting students to complete their studies and achieve academic goals. This document provides details regarding how students can apply for Special Consideration for assessments, units, and courses where their participation and success are adversely affected.

2. Scope

This document applies to all ASA applicants, students, and staff who support these processes.

3. Principles

Special Consideration should:

- comply with the Student Support Framework;
- support students' holistic wellbeing; and
- enable an equitable environment.

4. Definitions

Term	Definition
protected attributes	<p>There is a range of federal and state legislation that prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of the following attributes or conduct:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age • Breastfeeding • Disability • Family or carer's responsibilities • Marital or relationship status • Political conviction • Pregnancy or potential pregnancy • Race, colour, descent, nationality, ethnic, ethno-religious or national origin • Religion • Gender • Sexual orientation or preference • Transgender status • Actual or imputed characteristics of any of the attributes listed above • Association with a person identified by reference to any of the attributes listed above.
Reasonable Adjustment	<p>These are administrative, environmental, or procedural alterations in the learning situation which remove barriers for people so that they can perform the inherent requirements of the course of study. This could mean adjustments to the mode of delivery or written material or the assessment process and timeframe. An adjustment is reasonable if it takes into account the requirements of the person and balances the interests of all parties affected.</p>
Special Consideration	<p>Special consideration is when ASA provides an alternative or different method of assessing a students' achievement of learning outcomes. Students may apply for Special Consideration if they have or are experiencing an illness, injury or misadventure during a study period or their course enrolment. A request for Special Consideration is not automatically granted and must be applied for within specific time periods.</p>

5. Policy Statement

ASA recognises the importance of flexibility and support for students to enable equitable opportunities for participation and success in higher education. ASA is committed to supporting students holistically and equitably.

Special consideration may be granted if a student has unexpected or unavoidable circumstances that impact their ability to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes within a particular assessment task or associated assessment tasks.

Students have a responsibility to act honestly and truthfully when applying for Special Consideration. Any student suspected of submitting an application for Special Consideration that is false, misleading or untrue will be investigated as per ASA's *Student Code of Conduct*. Appropriate actions will be taken depending on the outcome of the investigation.

6. Procedure

6.1 Grounds for Application

Circumstances that adversely impact a student's ability to undertake, prepare for, and/or complete an assessment task, a unit, or course maybe appropriate grounds for a request for

Special Consideration. ASA considers requests to ensure that students are provided equitable opportunities to demonstrate their learning. Staff will consider the following grounds as relevant when determining outcomes of requests:

- a. protected attributes;
- b. compassionate and compelling circumstances;
- c. technical issues; and
- d. significant life events or hardship.

Individuals with protected attributes may require a diverse range of adjustments, and recognising and respecting these differences is a fundamental aspect of fostering an inclusive educational environment. Different disabilities, for example, might present challenges that require tailored and reasonable accommodation and flexible arrangements. Pregnancy can bring about physical discomfort, fatigue, or potential complications. Similarly, national origin may require specific duties such as voting in national elections.

Compassionate or compelling circumstances are generally those beyond the control of the student and which have an impact upon the student's course progress or wellbeing. These could include, but are not limited to, serious medical conditions or injury, bereavement of close family members and significant others, and traumatic experiences. Work commitments or vacations will not generally be considered.

Technical issues such as system malfunctions or disruptions may affect students' ability to participate in tasks.

Significant life events or hardship may include sudden change in domestic arrangements, serious financial difficulties, or unexpected events/accidents. Life events, such as weddings, that are foreseeable and can be anticipated may be taken into consideration for some requests at the discretion of the Course Coordinator. However, requests relating to foreseeable events are less likely to be granted where students appear to have the capacity to rebalance competing demands.

Students with ongoing disabilities or medical conditions that impact their life and education are encouraged to lodge a Reasonable Adjustment Request. Students may still apply for Special Consideration if the alternative arrangements are insufficient for a particular assessment. ASA will seek to expedite these requests when reasonable adjustments have already been approved.

ASA reserves the right to consider any Special Consideration requests on any grounds it deems appropriate that are in addition to the grounds specified in this document. ASA will seek to make adjustments where those arrangements are reasonable and balance the interests of all parties.

6.2 Applying

6.2.1 Documentation

Students may email their lecturer directly to request alternative arrangements for any assessment task with allocated weight at or lower than 5% of the total unit grade. Assessment task weighting is specified on the relevant Assessment Briefing within the Unit Outline. Students should submit any supporting documents attached to the email request.

Students must apply for alternative arrangements via the Special Consideration Request Form (Request Form) which is available on ASA website <https://asahe.edu.au/policies-and-forms/>

for any assessment task worth more than 5% of the total unit grade. Supporting documents should be submitted with the Request Form.

Supporting documentation may include medical certificates, letters from professionals, death

notices, police reports, statutory declarations, or notifications from relevant authorities. The level of evidence provided in submitted supporting documentation may increase the likelihood of a request being granted. Appendix 1 lists suggested documentation types to assist students in submitting complete requests.

Where the circumstances are complex or unusual, students are requested to include documentation that provides guidance about how the circumstances impact the student and indicate any specific arrangements that will best support the student. Students may request an interview, with a support person of their choice, if the circumstances are complex or sensitive in nature.

If the supporting documentation is in a language other than English, students must supply certified copies of the original language document/s, and a complete English translation of the original language document/s.

Students who experience a technical or connection problem during an online assessment should include supporting documentation, including an ample number of screenshots or images displaying the date and time that the issue occurred. Students must promptly notify their lecturer in person or via email. Students should keep records of their notifications and submit these with their requests. The nature of the technical issue will be considered when reviewing student notifications and associated records.

While supporting documentation for Special Consideration should outline the period of impact, ASA understands that some events will impact students in varying ways. 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.

6.2.2 Timeframes

Students should apply for Special Consideration as soon as they become aware of the circumstances, and no later than three working days after the assessment due date. Requests received later than three days after the assessment due date will be considered if supporting documentation includes appropriate justification of the delay in submitting the Request Form.

Please note that delayed applications may not be successful and that alternative arrangements can become more complex without appropriate notification. Additionally, applications submitted after the release of results in the unit will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, such as prolonged hospitalisation.

ASA will provide students with the outcome of their application within 10 working days from the date of application.

6.3 Consideration Criteria

Requests for Special Consideration will be determined by the Lecturer/Course Coordinator and consider the following:

- a. the correlation between the circumstance and student's engagement and success;
- b. maintenance of academic integrity and equity;
- c. the severity of the circumstance contingent upon the reliability and credibility of the supporting evidence;
- d. any history of previous applications for special consideration or reasonable adjustment, except where they indicate a specified chronic problem, and
- e. any other relevant information available.

6.3.1 Repeat Requests

Students with ongoing conditions that impact their life and education are encouraged to lodge a Reasonable Adjustment Request.

Multiple Special Consideration Requests may be regarded as multiple isolated incidents and will be carefully considered to ensure fairness. ASA may request further details or documents from students to support the application. Fraudulent application and/or forged documents will trigger the consequences outlined in *Student Code of Conduct* and relevant policies and procedures.

6.4 Request Consideration Process

Requests for alternative arrangements for any assessment task with allocated weight at or lower than 5% of the total unit grade will be considered and determined by the relevant lecturer. Other requests will undergo consideration by the Course Coordinator.

The process outlined below will be followed in considering any request for Special Consideration:

1. Student Services staff will inform the Academic Support Officer and/or the Course Coordinator upon receiving the request from students.
2. The Academic Support Officer will upload both the Request Form and supporting documents onto the SMS under the student's profile and note the details on the Special Consideration Register.
3. Within three working days from the submission date, the Academic Support Officer will book an appointment with the Course Coordinator to consider the application, including the Request Form and supporting documents received from the student.
4. The Course Coordinator will consider all the documents presented to them and determine the outcome within seven working days and inform the Academic Support Officer.
5. The Academic Support Officer will inform the student of the outcome and via an email sent through the SMS, with the relevant lecturer copied in. The Special Consideration Register and SMS will be updated by the Academic Support Officer.

6.5 Outcome

Lecturer/Course Coordinators will exercise their judgement and discretion to determine one or more outcomes for Special Consideration Requests as outlined below based on the consideration criteria:

- extension for assessment submission date (up to 10 business days);
- provision of a supplementary assessment and a grade of (SX) until marks are finalised;
- aggregate /average mark awarded based on other completed assessment tasks preferably from the other assessments within the unit;
- awarding of a grade of Academic Withdrawal (AW);
- declining the Special Consideration Request; and / or
- other arrangements as deemed appropriate.

If the outcome determines that a supplementary assessment is to be provided, the Course Coordinator, or delegate, will make arrangements for alternative assessment and inform the student of the date, time, and relevant assessment details via email within 2 working days of the outcome email. The supplementary assessment may take a different form from the original assessment. If a student is granted the supplementary assessment, the original assessment result

may be withdrawn at the discretion of the Course Coordinator.

Special Consideration applications may be declined if the application was not submitted in the required manner, not supported by appropriate evidence, the circumstances appear to be unrelated to the student's performance in a component of the assessment task, or the circumstances are not considered to be compelling or compassionate.

The student will be advised in writing of the final decision regarding their request for Special Consideration within 10 working days from the submission date of the request.

7. Grievances and Appeals

A student who is dissatisfied with a decision made under this policy should lodge a formal complaint. Further information is detailed in *Student Grievance Policy*.

8. Relevant HESFs

This document complies with the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021. The following are relevant excerpts and specify that:

Standard 1.4 Learning Outcomes and Assessment

1. The expected learning outcomes for each course of study are specified, consistent with the level and field of education of the qualification awarded and informed by national and international comparators.
2. The specified learning outcomes for each course of study encompass discipline-related and generic outcomes, including:
 - a. specific knowledge and skills and their application that characterise the field(s) of education or disciplines involved
 - b. generic skills and their application in the context of the field(s) of education or disciplines involved
 - c. knowledge and skills required for employment and further study related to the course of study, including those required to be eligible to seek registration to practise where applicable, and
 - d. skills in independent and critical thinking suitable for life-long learning.
3. Methods of assessment are consistent with the learning outcomes being assessed, are capable of confirming that all specified learning outcomes are achieved and that grades awarded reflect the level of student attainment.
4. On completion of a course of study, students have demonstrated the learning outcomes specified for the course of study, whether assessed at unit level, course level, or in combination. [...]

Standard 2.2 Diversity and Equity

1. Institutional policies, practices and approaches to teaching and learning are designed to accommodate student diversity, including the under-representation and/or disadvantage experienced by identified groups, and create equivalent opportunities for academic success regardless of students' backgrounds.
2. Specific consideration is given to the recruitment, admission, participation and completion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
3. Participation, progress, and completion by identified student subgroups are monitored and the findings are used to inform admission policies and improvement of teaching, learning and support strategies for those subgroups.

Standard 2.3 Wellbeing and Safety

1. All students are advised of the actions they can take, the staff they may contact and the support services that are accessible if their personal circumstances are having an adverse

- effect on their education.
2. Timely, accurate advice on access to personal support services is available, including for access to emergency services, health services, counselling, legal advice, advocacy, and accommodation and welfare services.
 3. The nature and extent of support services that are available for students are informed by the needs of student cohorts, including mental health, disability and wellbeing needs.
 4. A safe environment is promoted and fostered, including by advising students and staff on actions they can take to enhance safety and security on campus and online.
 5. There is a critical-incident policy together with readily accessible procedures that cover the immediate actions to be taken in the event of a critical incident and any follow-up required.

Standard 2.4 Student Grievances and Complaints

1. Current and prospective students have access to mechanisms that are capable of resolving grievances about any aspect of their experience with the higher education provider, its agents or related parties.
2. There are policies and processes that deliver timely resolution of formal complaints and appeals against academic and administrative decisions without charge or at reasonable cost to students, and these are applied consistently, fairly and without reprisal.
3. Institutional complaints-handling and appeals processes for formal complaints include provision for confidentiality, independent professional advice, advocacy and other support for the complainant or appellant, and provision for review by an appropriate independent third party if internal processes fail to resolve a grievance.
4. Decisions about formal complaints and appeals are recorded and the student concerned is informed in writing of the outcome and the reasons, and of further avenues of appeal where they exist and where the student could benefit.
5. If a formal complaint or appeal is upheld, any action required is initiated promptly.

9. Version Control

This Policy has been reviewed and approved by the ASA Academic Board as at February 2024 and is reviewed every three years.

This Policy and Procedure is published and available on the ASA website

<https://www.asahe.edu.au/policies-and-forms/>.

Change and Version Control				
Version	Authored by	Brief Description of the changes	Date Approved:	Effective Date:
2024.2	Project Officer	Document formatting updated to reflect change of Trading Name to ASA Institute of Higher Education	28/06/2024 by CEO	01/07/2024
2024.1	Quality and Policy Officer	Updated policy to include HESF references, changes in regulatory compliances.	14/02/2024	08/03/2024
Previous version archived. New Policy code and numbering system implemented.				
1.0		Academic Board Approval	14/07/2021	14/07/2021

Appendix 1 Supporting Evidence Guide

Exceptional circumstances	Description	Supporting evidence Suggested
Unavoidable commitments	Compulsory religious observance (for invigilated assessments with a set date); or Compulsory cultural duties and ceremonial obligations, or Court dates/Jury Duty	A personal letter of support from a recognised cultural or faith leader outlining their relationship with the student and explaining how the obligation will prevent the student from attempting or completing the assessment task or Statutory declaration. Letter confirming attendance to Jury Duty/court date.
Medical condition	Includes illness, injury, hospital admission, and disability	Medical Certificate provided by health practitioner, or Hospital Discharge Certificate, or If you have COVID-19, a PCR test result and/or RAT registration confirmation that includes your name and the date you tested positive is required.
Technical Issues	Technical issues	Images or screenshots of the issue experienced.
Loss or bereavement	Hospitalisation of a family member; Death of a close family member or person with whom the student had a significant relationship.	Death Notice/Certificate, or Obituary, or Order of Service, or Statutory Declaration Significant relationship should be indicated on Request Form.
Hardship or trauma	Sudden change in domestic arrangements e.g. eviction, homelessness; Unexpected serious financial difficulties; Unexpected events/accidents; Involvement in, or witnessing of a serious accident; and Victims of crime or witnessing a crime.	Police or court report, or Professional practitioner certificate, or Psychologists' reports, or Official letter from relevant source/authority, or Medical Certificate provided by health practitioner, or Hospital Discharge Certificate.
Other related circumstances	Any other circumstances that impact students' ability in participation and success.	Sufficient evidence appropriate to the exceptional circumstances the student has experienced or is experiencing.