

UNIVERSITIES OF NEW ENGLAND AND NEWCASTLE
JOINT MEDICAL PROGRAM
Special Circumstances affecting Assessment Items - Procedures

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1. Context

- 1.1 This procedure applies only to students enrolled in the Bachelor of Medicine – Joint Medical Program (BMed – JMP) and pertains only to courses/units with the prefix MEDI as offered by the Schools of Medicine and Public Health (UoN) and Rural Medicine (UNE).
- 1.2 Consideration of special circumstances for elective courses/units will be processed in accordance with the following policies;
- (a) At UoN, Special Circumstances Affecting Assessment Items - Procedure 000641
- (b) At UNE, the following rules pertain:
- Special Consideration(for an examination)
 - Special Examination
 - Special Extension of Time (for an assignment)
 - Special Assessment
- 1.3 This procedure should be read in conjunction with the *BMed - JMP Rules Governing the Administration of Assessment Items*.

2. Definitions

In this document:

assessment item means any form of assignment, examination , quiz, test, laboratory item, tutorial exercise or other work used:

- i. to measure student learning outcomes; and
- ii. to determine the final result of a student in a course/unit.

alternative / replacement assessment item means an assessment item which provides an opportunity for the student to demonstrate learning outcomes similar to those covered by the original assessment item or examination. An oral examination may be an alternative assessment to a written examination. An alternative assessment item carries the same percentage of total weighting for the course/unit as the original assessment item;

BMed Year Assessment Committee means the five committees (one for each year of the BMed) responsible for recommending final grades to the Heads of School and for reviewing the assessment of courses / units in accordance with the Universities' quality assurance principles;

course at UoN means any part of a program for which a result may be recorded;

Course Coordinator at UoN means the academic staff member responsible for the management of a particular course as approved by the JMP Committee;

documentation means original documents or copies of originals certified as true copies by a Justice of the Peace or authorised officer of the University;

examination means an assessment by way of a test, by oral or written questions or performance, undertaken by the student within a stated timeframe, in a designated location, online, or on a computer identified for that purpose;

Head of School means the Head of School Medicine and Public Health (UoN) and/or the Head of School Rural Medicine (UNE) who are responsible for the MEDI course/unit in which the assessment is undertaken;

in writing means using a form or a paper-based document or an email, fax or other electronic document capable of being converted to hardcopy;

Joint Medical Program (JMP) means the delivery of the Bachelor of Medicine by UoN and UNE in partnership;

JMP Committee means the joint UoN / UNE committee responsible for the planning, implementation and management of the JMP including curriculum, assessment and standards. The Committee is chaired by the Dean of Medicine – JMP;

major assessment item means:

- any assessment item, including the final examination, worth 20% or more of the final result; or
- a compulsory assessment item that must be satisfactorily completed in order for a student to receive a pass mark or better in that course/unit;

School means the School of Medicine and Public Health at the University of Newcastle and the School of Rural Medicine at the University of New England;

unit at UNE means any part of a program for which a result may be recorded;

Unit Coordinator at UNE means the academic staff member responsible for the management of a particular unit, as approved by the JMP Committee.

3. Procedure – MEDI Courses/Units

In relation to MEDI courses/units, BMed – JMP students are entitled to apply for consideration of the impact of certain circumstances on their performance in assessment subject to the following provisions:

3.1 Identifying Special Circumstances

3.1.1 Allowable special circumstances may include one or more of the following:

- i. medical grounds - including psychological illness;
- ii. disability or long term medical condition (where performance in a particular assessment is adversely affected);
- iii. compassionate grounds – for example the death or serious injury of a close family member or close friend;
- iv. hardship or trauma – for example sudden loss of employment; family breakdown; severe disruption to domestic arrangements; impact of crime or accident; impact of natural disasters;
- v. unavoidable commitments within the term and/or exam period - eg unavoidable work commitments; cultural or religious commitments; commitments as a student Reservist within the Australian Defence Forces or as an elite athlete; and/or jury duty or other court appearances.

3.1.2 Some situations that do not constitute allowable circumstances include: misreading the course/unit outline or examination timetable; having travel bookings for holidays; returning home; regular work commitments, or early commencement of holiday employment.

3.1.3 This procedure does not cover the ongoing accommodation / assistance provided by the Disability Support Service to assist students with a disability to undertake study or exams. This Special Circumstances Procedure should be used by students with a disability only when performance in a particular assessment item has been adversely affected.

3.2 Mechanisms for Addressing Circumstances Affecting Assessment

3.2.1 BMed- JMP students may be entitled to apply for one of the following:

- i. **rescheduling of examination** – where:
 - a) circumstances (as defined in 3.1 above) prevent the student from attempting an examination on a scheduled date; and
 - b) the rescheduled examination date falls within the same formal examination period;

- ii. **granting of an extension of time** beyond the published due date for the submission, presentation or performance of an assessment item where circumstances have affected the student's ability to meet the deadline;
 - iii. **granting of special consideration** where circumstances:
 - a) prevented the student from attending or attempting an assessment item, particularly an examination; and/or
 - b) affected or disadvantaged their preparation or performance in an assessment item they had attempted; or
 - c) affected or disadvantaged their performance in a number of the assessment items they had attempted in a course/unit
- 3.3 Except in exceptional circumstances, as approved by the relevant Head of School, a BMed – JMP student will be able to apply for consideration of special circumstances on only one occasion for a particular assessment item.
- 3.4 A BMed – JMP student whose application for a rescheduled examination, extension of time or special consideration is granted, will be eligible for the full range of marks available for the assessment item and/or the full range of grades available for the course/unit.

3.5 Procedure for Addressing Circumstances Affecting a MINOR Assessment Item

- 3.5.1 Where circumstances affect a BMed – JMP student's performance in an assessment item that is not a major assessment item (refer definition above) no form or formal application is required.
- 3.5.2 The student must apply in writing – preferably by email - to the Course/Unit Coordinator and seek appropriate consideration eg an extension of time on an assessment item, rescheduling of a class test or 'special consideration' of the impact of circumstances on their performance. The Course/Unit Coordinator may request further information to substantiate the request.
- 3.5.3 The Course/Unit Coordinator is responsible for:
 - i. evaluating the request;
 - ii. providing a response in writing (preferably by email) to the student;
 - iii. recording the application and outcome; and
 - iv. maintaining a record of all applications and outcomes.
- 3.6 Outcomes of Applications for Extension of Time, Rescheduling of Class Test; or 'Special Consideration' in a Minor Assessment Item
- 3.6.1 Where a BMed – JMP student seeks an extension of time on an assessment item or the rescheduling of a class test, the Course/Unit Coordinator will respond in writing – preferably by email - advising the students of:
 - i. the additional time allowed for submitting the item; or
 - ii. the arrangements for undertaking the exam/test.
- 3.6.2 Where a BMed – JMP student seeks 'special consideration' of their performance in an assessment item, the Course/Unit Coordinator may offer one of the following responses:
 - i. the result for the assessment item remain unchanged;
 - ii. the student be offered an alternative or replacement assessment item – the result of which will be the recorded mark for the item; or
 - iii. the circumstances be noted with a view to reviewing the result in the light of further evidence at which time one of the two responses listed as (i) or (ii) will be provided.
- 3.6.3 Where a BMed - JMP student wishes to appeal the decision of the Course/Unit Coordinator, an appeal should be lodged in writing – preferably by email - to the relevant Head of School.

The remainder of this Procedure applies to MAJOR Assessment Items

3.7 Procedure for Addressing Circumstances Affecting a MAJOR Assessment Item

- 3.7.1 Where circumstances affect a BMed - JMP student's performance in a major assessment item, the following procedures must be followed.
- 3.7.2 Students:

- a) at UoN must:
 - i. apply using the form available online;
 - ii. note the receipt number provided for their application;
 - iii. gather the required supporting documentation;
 - iv. write the receipt number clearly on all documents; and
 - v. submit the documentation either in hard copy or electronically to a Student Hub.
- b) at UNE must:
 - i. apply using the form available from the BMed Year Manager;
 - ii. gather the required supporting documentation;
 - iii. submit the documentation to the relevant BMed Year Manager.

3.7.3 The application is not completed until all documentation is submitted, at UoN (inclusive of receipt number) to a Student Hub, and at UNE, to the BMed Year Manager.

3.8 Documentation required to support an Application to Address Circumstances Affecting a Major Assessment Item

All applications must include documentation.

Note: Documents provided must be in the form of original documents, certified copies of the original or a Statutory Declaration.

3.8.1 Students applying on medical grounds (including psychological grounds) must submit a medical certificate, completed by a registered medical or dental practitioner or other appropriate professional. The certificate should state:

- i. the date on which the practitioner examined the student; and
- ii. the severity of the condition; and
- iii. the likely period of impact on the student.

3.8.2 Provided the original documentation supplied to the Disability Support Services includes the details listed in 3.8.1 above the Universities' Disability Support Service may provide confirmation of a student's registration with the Service.

- a) At UoN confirmation is generated automatically via the online system;
- b) At UNE confirmation may be provided by supporting letter from the disability liaison Officer.

3.8.3 Students applying on other grounds must submit suitable documentary evidence. For appeals based on:

- i. compassionate grounds - supporting evidence may include a medical certificate or letter from a counsellor, or doctor, a funeral notice, or a statutory declaration;
- ii. hardship/trauma – supporting evidence may include a medical certificate or a letter from a counsellor or doctor, a police officer or fire officer, or a statutory declaration, depending on the nature of the issue;
- iii. unavoidable commitments during the semester supporting evidence should include a statutory declaration or documents relating to the commitment; and
- iv. an unavoidable work commitment - supporting evidence may include a letter from the student's immediate work supervisor explaining the exceptional circumstances;
- v. commitments as a Student reservist - refer to the Student Reservist Support Procedure for details of appropriate documentation.

3.9 Application for RESCHEDULED EXAMINATIONS - Major Assessment Items Only

3.9.1 Applications for a rescheduled examination in the same formal exam period on the basis of religious, medical, compassionate or other grounds, must be made no later than ten working days prior to the first date of the examination period:

- a) at UoN, using the form available online and documentation submitted to the Student Hub;
- b) at UNE, using the form available from the BMed Year Manager.

3.9.2 Applications must be accompanied by appropriate documentary evidence and a Statutory Declaration declaring that the student will neither seek nor provide information on the content of the examination.

- 3.10 Application for Alternate/Supplementary Examination
- 3.10.1 If circumstances arise after the cut-off date for seeking a rescheduled examination that:
- i. prevent a student from attending, or completing an examination, or
 - ii. adversely affect their performance at the examination, an application for an alternate or supplementary examination must be submitted under the Special Consideration clauses of this procedure (refer 3.13) that is, no later than three working days after the date of the examination unless the Course/Unit Coordinators in consultation, permit an extended timeframe based on exceptional circumstances.
- 3.11 Outcomes of Application for RESCHEDULED EXAMINATION
- 3.11.1 A student applying for a rescheduled exam will be notified of the outcome by the BMed Year Manager.
- 3.11.2 Where the outcome is to provide a rescheduled examination, the date of the rescheduled exam will be notified to the student before the date of the original examination.
- 3.12 Outcomes of Application for Alternate / Supplementary Examination
- 3.12.1 An application for an alternate/supplementary examination will be assessed jointly by the Course/Unit Coordinators. Unless circumstances are exceptional, an alternate/supplementary examination will be held in the Special Examination Period immediately following the Formal Examination period.
- 3.12.2 Where the Course/Unit Coordinators jointly recommend an alternate/supplementary examination, within the Special Examination period, the BMed Year Manager will advise the Examinations Office and provide an alternate/supplementary paper. The Examinations Office will advise the students of the outcome of the application and the date and venue of the alternate examination within the Special Examination period.
- 3.13.3 Where the Course/Unit Coordinators jointly decide that an alternative examination should be offered outside the Special Examination period, the BMed Year Manager will be responsible for advising the student and conducting the examination.
- 3.13 Application for an EXTENSION OF TIME ON AN ASSESSMENT ITEM - Major Assessment Items Only
- 3.13.1 Applications for an extension of time on assessment items must be made using the form available online at UoN and from the BMed Year Manager at UNE.
- 3.13.2 Applications are not finalised until appropriate documentation, as outlined in 3.8 above, is submitted to a Student Hub (UoN) or the BMed Year Manager (UNE) prior to the due date of the item or - in exceptional circumstances - at a time the Course/Unit Coordinator approves.
- 3.13.3 Students must nominate an expected outcome on their application:
- i. how long an extension of time they require; and
 - ii. the new due date that the assessment will be submitted.
- 3.14 Applications for SPECIAL CONSIDERATION - Major Assessment Items Only
- 3.14.1 Students may apply for consideration of the impact of special circumstances on their performance:
- i. on an assessment item; or
 - ii. across a number of assessment items in a course/unit.
- 3.14.2 Requests for Special Consideration must be made using the form available: online at UoN and from the BMed Year Manager at UNE. Appropriate documentation, must be lodged with the Student Hub (UoN) or the BMed Year Manager (UNE) in hard copy or by fax/email no later than three (3) working days after the date of submission for the assessment item, or for the final assessment item or examination. In exceptional circumstances the BMed Year Assessment Committee may permit an extended timeframe.
- 3.14.3 Students must retain a copy of their application.

- 3.14.4 The BMed Year Assessment Committee will:
- i. consider the application;
 - ii. if necessary request more documentation; and
 - iii. make a determination on the application for special consideration.
- 3.15 Outcomes of Applications for SPECIAL CONSIDERATION
- 3.15.1 For applications for special consideration of an assessment item the BMed Year Assessment Committee will recommend one of the following options:
- i. the application not be accepted because of timing or inadequate documentation;
 - ii. the result for the assessment item remain unchanged;
 - iii. the student be granted withdrawal without failure from the course/unit on compassionate grounds;
 - iv. an alternative or replacement assessment item be provided;
 - v. the application be noted with a view to reviewing the result in the light of subsequent evidence and at that time recommending (ii), (iii) or (iv) above.
- 3.16 Notification of Outcomes
- Students will be informed by email of the outcome of Applications for Special Consideration:
- a) at UoN by the Student Hub; and
 - b) at UNE by the BMed Year Manager
- 3.17 Retention of Records and Confidentiality
- 3.17.1 The application for consideration of circumstances affecting performance in assessment and attached documents will be treated as personal information.
- 3.17.2 Officers of the Universities will comply with the Universities' Privacy requirements, along with relevant anti-discrimination and privacy legislation in the handling of applications.
- 3.17.3 Any documentation relating to an application will be retained for a minimum of three (3) years.
- 3.18 Appeal Process
- 3.18.1 An appeal against a decision regarding an application to address the impact of circumstances on a particular assessment item will not be allowed until the final result for the course/unit is available.
- 3.18.2 An appeal against a final result based on a decision regarding an application to address the impact of special circumstances on an assessment item, must be lodged in writing under the *BMed – JMP Appeals Against a Final Result Procedure*. The appeal will follow the procedure set out in that document.
- 3.19 Reporting on Outcomes of Applications for Addressing Adverse Circumstances
- 3.19.1 At the beginning of each year the BMed Year Managers will provide an annual report to the JMP Committee on applications regarding major assessment items. That report will identify the number of applications, under which categories they fall and the outcomes.
- 3.19.2 At UoN, at the beginning of each year the School of Medicine and Public Health will provide a similar annual report to the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Health on applications from students in the Bachelor of Medicine, regarding major assessment items. The report will identify the number of applications, under which categories they fall and the outcomes.
- 3.19.3 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Health will report to the first meeting of Academic Senate every year on the number of applications, under which categories they fall and the outcomes for the previous year. The report will include an assessment of the procedures used.