

Faculty of Medicine, Nursing & Health Sciences

Exam Provisions for NESB Students

This policy is derived from the document to be found at <http://www.adm.monash.edu/unisec/academicpolicies/policy/extratime.html>

At its Meeting 4/02, the Academic Board approved the 'Report of the Working Party on Extra Exam Time for NESB Students', including the recommended policy and implementation matters.

It states that : “Faculties may, at their discretion, allow special examination conditions to be available to undergraduate students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) and non-standard English speaking backgrounds who are experiencing language difficulties in their first two semesters of tertiary study in the English language.”

This document identifies Faculty policy for NESB students. It is effectively in two sections; policy applying to MBBS students and policy applying to non MBBS students.

MBBS students

Students will receive no special examination conditions. The reasons for this are that as a matter of policy all written examinations include additional time. For example, an examination may be defined as being of 1.5 hours duration but students are allowed two hours plus reading time to complete the paper. No special conditions will be allowed for OSCE's (Objective Structured Clinical Examinations). The summative OSCE occurs at the very end of the year, it is extremely difficult to allow extra time and students would have little time available to consult a dictionary. However, international students receive additional training and support in OSCE's from the student support staff of the Faculty

Non MBBS students

These students will be allowed special conditions as defined below.

For the purposes of this policy NESB students are defined as those who:

- were born where English is not the first language; and
- have not been resident in Australia for longer than ten years; and
- speak a language other than English at home; and
- were educated in full English medium for no more than five years.

Special examination conditions may also be permitted for Australian Indigenous students whose English proficiency share similar characteristics.

Special examination conditions can apply to all formal examinations¹ in an undergraduate unit when the student:

- is undertaking their first semester of tertiary study² taught in the English language, or is undertaking their second semester *and* did not achieve a credit grade for a unit in the same (or an equivalent) discipline of study in their first semester; and
- has recognised a language difficulty and sought assistance with that difficulty by the end of week seven of the semester, for example by consulting staff of Language and Learning Services (LLS); and
- has submitted a formal application for special examination conditions in that unit by the end of week eleven of the semester; and
- has been assessed by a qualified professional, for example a staff member of LLS, who has verified that they are experiencing language difficulties and have taken measures to address those difficulties;
- has been approved for special examination conditions in each unit requested, by the Course Convenor, in line with the relevant overall faculty policy (but see below).

Consistent with the recommendations of Education Committee students who have applied for and been approved for special examination conditions will be provided with a dictionary³ and 30 minutes⁴ of additional time for the examination.

The policy does not apply to students who have been approved for Alternative Arrangements for Assessment (AAA) as their needs are evaluated individually and separately.

Procedure

- Students will be informed of this policy on special examination conditions in the Student Resources Guide, in Orientation materials and by appropriate and timely announcements;
- Students in double-degree or cross-faculty courses be made aware that the type of special examination conditions available will depend on which faculty offers each unit they are undertaking;
- Students who are encountering language difficulties be encouraged by staff to seek assistance from Language and Learning Services (LLS) early in their first semester of study. For international students in the Faculty this will be the specialised student support staff. LLS staff can perform an initial assessment of a student's overall language abilities and, at a later stage, can advise on their suitability for special examination conditions under the conditions of the policy;
- A Course Convenor who disagrees with the recommendation of LLS staff may appeal the decision to the Associate Dean (Teaching). For example, it may be considered inappropriate to allow any form of special conditions where an

examination seeks to test learning outcomes related to communication skills in the English language, at speed and under pressure;

- Students should be advised that consulting of a dictionary, where necessary, should occupy only a very small proportion of their time in the examination;
- Students must apply for special examination conditions for any unit by completing an application form provided by the faculty and submitting it to the faculty (or department or school, if delegated) before the end of week eleven of semester. The completed application form will be forwarded to both an appropriate LLS staff member, for assessment of the student's eligibility, and the Course Convenor, for assessment of the suitability of the faculty special conditions to the style and content of the examination/s. The student will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application prior to the examination/s;
- Students who are approved for special examination conditions will receive a letter for each examination approved. They must show the appropriate approval letter to the supervisor at the examination venue and that notification will be forwarded with the examination script to the Chief Examiner of the unit.

The implementation process is framed in the context of studies in on-campus mode at an Australian campus. For off-campus students a similar policy will apply but adjustments may have to be made on a case-by-case basis.

Definitions

Students who may be eligible for additional consideration during formal examinations⁶ are defined in the following four ways:

Non English Speaking Background (NESB) Students

These include students who fulfil DETYA criteria:

- born overseas; and
- resident in Australia for no longer than ten years; and
- speak a language other than English at home.

In addition, this policy requires that the student be:

- born in a country where English is not the first language; and
- educated in full English medium for no more than five years.

The NESB category takes in the following groups: *international students*, *local NESB students* and *local NESB student (mature age)*. For the last group, the length of residency requirement (no longer than 10 years) may need to be applied with some flexibility if the student was not educated in an Australian school/institution.

Australian Indigenous (Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander) Students

Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students, although born in Australian territories, may come from non-English speaking backgrounds or non-standard English speaking backgrounds and experience difficulty in adjusting to academic expectations, particularly culturally and linguistically. They may also have had part of their education in bilingual medium. They may "have difficulties with the modes of expression related to academic literacy and/or have difficulties with the 'culture' of assessment and exams" (Bartlett, 2000, p 11).

Notwithstanding the definitions above, it is recognised that any faculty policy should apply to formal coursework examinations for all eligible undergraduate NESB students, both international and domestic, who demonstrate that they are experiencing difficulties with the English language.

Approval

Original policy was approved at:
Academic Board Meeting 4/02, item 7.2

Governing Documents

- [Statute 6.1.5](#) - Examinations
- [Examinations Regulations](#)

Related Materials

- Examinations [Policy](#) & [Procedures](#)
- Assessment of Coursework [Policy](#) & [Procedures](#)
- Special Consideration [Policy](#) & [Procedures](#)
- Alternative Arrangements for Assessment [Policy](#) & [Procedures](#)

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1. Here 'formal examinations' refers to examinations for that unit which are timetabled by Examinations Branch.
 2. Here 'tertiary study' is not necessarily restricted to tertiary study in Australia, or to study at Monash.
 3. The Working Party recognised the difficulties of checking materials if students were permitted to bring their own dictionaries into the examination room. For this reason it was considered that dictionaries should be provided at all venues by the Examinations Branch. It was also considered to be more feasible and appropriate for English-language dictionaries to be provided, rather than bilingual dictionaries.
 4. The Working Party initially considered the implementation of '10 minutes per hour' of additional time, similar to that used at other institutions. However, it was recognised that an additional 30 minutes for all papers was more consistent with the recently-approved Recommendation 4 of the Education Committee 'Working Party Report Regarding Examination Matters', which states that '*examination duration be a minimum of two hours, with finishing times in half-hour blocks, and not more than four hours*'.
 5. After appropriate consultation, faculties should advise the student whether they are permitted to bring their own English-language dictionary to the examination or must use those supplied by the Examinations Branch.
 6. Apart from students with a disability who are provided for under the *Monash University Disability Action Plan* (1998).