

**RYERSON UNIVERSITY
POLICY OF SENATE**

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

Policy Number:	167
Policy Revision Date:	Winter 2020
Senate Approval Date:	May 5, 2020
Effective Date:	Fall 2020
Next Policy Review Date:	May 2025 (or earlier if required)
Responsible Office:	Provost and Vice President Academic

1. PURPOSE OF POLICY

Students at Ryerson University (the “University”) are permitted to request Academic Consideration with documentation and in limited circumstances once per term without documentation (see Section 5.3), when they experience extenuating circumstances that have a significant impact on their ability to fulfill an academic requirement (e.g., their ability to attend classes, write a scheduled term test or exam, and/or meet an assignment deadline).

Academic Consideration requests will be evaluated in a fair, timely, and consistent manner throughout the University.

The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance to Students and Instructors regarding students’ requests for Academic Consideration.

2. APPLICATION AND SCOPE

Unless otherwise indicated, all of the provisions in this policy apply to Academic Consideration Requests with or without documentation. This Policy applies to:

- (a) All full-time and part-time undergraduate, graduate, law, and G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education students enrolled in courses at Ryerson University (“**Students**”).
- (b) Extenuating Circumstances that are of a short-term duration (normally no more than 3 days; see Section 5.2), that have a significant and adverse effect on a Student’s ability to fulfill an academic requirement.
- (c) Students with academic accommodations who have extenuating circumstances not related to their academic accommodation.

This Policy does not apply to:

- (a) Students who are seeking academic accommodation for temporary or permanent disabilities that have a longer-term impact on their academic functioning (e.g., longer term medical conditions, learning disabilities, sensory impairments, acquired brain injuries, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, mental health or mobility issues.¹
- (b) Students who are seeking academic accommodation for religious, Aboriginal and spiritual observance.²

* Documentation required in cases of temporary absence that last more than three days

¹ Please refer to: [Policy 159: Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) and consult with Ryerson’s [Academic Accommodation Support](#).

² Please refer to: [Policy 150: Accommodation of Student Religious, Aboriginal and Spiritual Observance](#), and/or consult with Ryerson’s Human Rights Services.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 **Alternate Arrangement**

A modification in a course requirement approved by a faculty member in response to a student with demonstrated extenuating circumstances who is unable to meet an academic requirement.

3.2 **Academic Consideration**

The general name given to a number of different Alternate Arrangements that may be made in response to Students with Extenuating Circumstances.

3.3 **Academic Requirements**

Mandatory components of a course or program of study, including but not limited to lecture and lab attendance and participation, tests, assignments, and final examinations.

3.4 **Extenuating Circumstances**

Extenuating circumstances are occurrences that:

- (a) are outside of a student's immediate control;
- (b) could not have been reasonably foreseen or avoided; and
- (c) significantly impact a student's ability to fulfill their academic requirements.

3.5 **Graduate Program Director**

The individual responsible for ensuring a particular graduate program functions as per policies, procedures, and requirements of Yeates School of Graduate Studies and the University. Includes Associate Chairs, Graduate Studies.

3.6 **Instructor**

For this policy, "Instructor" includes all those who are teaching a Ryerson course or supervising a graduate student at Ryerson.

3.7 **Program Department**

The academic unit (department/school) responsible for the development, delivery, and administration of one or more programs.

3.8 **Teaching Department**

The academic unit (department/school) responsible for the development, delivery and administration of a course.

3.9 Universal Design for Learning or UDL

A framework for creating a pro-actively accessible and inclusive learning environment, which recognizes that all students learn in unique ways and within unique circumstances. UDL provides students with multiple ways of accessing course content, flexible ways of engaging with their peers and instructor, and multiple ways of demonstrating that they have achieved the course learning outcomes.

4 PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 The values described in the Senate Policy Framework are applicable and fundamental to this Policy.
(https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/Senate_policy_framework_approved.pdf)
- 4.2 The University recognizes the need to grant Academic Consideration, where appropriate, to support Students with significant Extenuating Circumstances and to minimize the negative impact of such circumstances on Students' academic obligations.
- 4.3 Students must act ethically and honestly and in accordance with academic responsibility and integrity when requesting Academic Consideration.
- 4.4 Instructors and other staff will operate on the assumption that a Student's request for Academic Consideration has been requested by a Student acting ethically and honestly unless there is compelling evidence to suggest otherwise.
- 4.5 Consistent with prevailing AODA legislation and the University's commitment to accessible and inclusive learning, instructors will do their best to minimize the need for Alternate Arrangements and Academic Considerations to the extent possible through the application of principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), such as providing flexibility in assessment deadlines, weighting, or format.
- 4.6 An Instructor's discretionary decisions affecting Academic Consideration will be based on a fair review the Student's individual circumstances and the relevant course requirements.

5 POLICY

Please refer to the Procedures section of this Policy for the Process to request Academic Consideration.

5.1 Requests for Academic Consideration

Students who are experiencing Extenuating Circumstances as outlined in Section 3.4 must submit a Request for Academic Consideration through the online system before the applicable academic obligation due date and contact the relevant course Instructor(s). Any additional documentation, if required (See Section 5.2), must be submitted to the online system within three business days of a missed academic requirement.

5.2 Documentation

Documentation is required (e.g. Ryerson Health Certificate <https://www.ryerson.ca/senate/forms/medical.pdf>) for brief absences in any one of the following three circumstances:

- (a) a request for academic consideration without documentation has already occurred in that academic term;
- (b) the Academic Consideration involves a final examination or final assessment; or
- (c) in cases of temporary absence that last more than three days.

5.3 Content of Supporting Documentation

While Students are not required to disclose specific details of the Extenuating Circumstances in support of their request for Academic Consideration:

- (a) documentation which is vague or overly general may be deemed insufficient to support a finding of Extenuating Circumstances; and
- (b) documentation submitted by the Student will be shared with the Instructor, Chair, or Director for decision making purposes.

6 ASSESSMENT OF REQUESTS FOR ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

Criteria (i) through (v) will be considered by the Instructor when deciding:

- (a) whether to grant a request for Academic Consideration;
 - (b) the type of alternate arrangement (if any); and/or
 - (c) the need to provide a referral for other relevant support services.
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- (i) The severity of the Student's circumstances, their impact on the Student's academic performance, and the amount of work that will be affected if the Academic Consideration is granted
 - (ii) The extent to which the circumstances and their impact were beyond the Student's control

- (iii) The relevance of supporting documentation (where documentation is required)
- (iv) Previous requests by the student for academic consideration
- (v) Other relevant considerations (e.g., nature of the course requirements)

7 OUTCOMES

7.1 Request for Academic Consideration Granted

- 7.1.1. If the Student's request for Academic Consideration is granted by the Instructor, the Student will be provided with an Alternate Arrangement. Alternate Arrangements must be consistent with [Policy 166: Course Management](#).
- 7.1.2. The Alternate Arrangement provided by the Instructor will be dependent on the Student's specific circumstances and what is appropriate for both the Student and the University.
- 7.1.3. The specific Alternate Arrangement is within the discretion of the Instructor and may include but is not limited to:
 - (a) extension of a deadline;
 - (b) re-scheduling or reweighting of a test, exam or assignment; or
 - (c) assignment of an Incomplete grade (INC). See Procedures Sect. 3.12.
- 7.1.4. Once an Alternate Arrangement is accepted by the Student, it is final. If a subsequent Extenuating Circumstance interferes with the fulfillment of that Alternate Arrangement, Students must immediately contact the Instructor to discuss next steps.
- 7.1.5. The final grade in the course may not be appealed by the Student based on an allegation that the Alternate Arrangement was inadequate or unfair.

7.2 Request Not Granted

- 7.2.1. Students who:
 - (a) are not offered an Alternate Arrangement (because they have not satisfied the requirements of this Policy); or
 - (b) do not accept the Alternate Arrangement offered by the Instructor, may consult with:

- (i) the Chair/Director of the Teaching Department; or
- (ii) in the case of Graduate Students, with their Graduate Program Director.

7.3 Grade Appeals

Students may appeal the final course grade at the end of the term, on the original grounds (i.e., Extenuating Circumstances), for academic consideration³ if:

- (a) after the consultation in section 7.2, the Student's Alternate Arrangement remains unresolved, the Student may submit a final grade appeal;⁴ or
- (b) the alternate test or assignment becomes a point of contention in the final course grade or violates the Course Management Policy 166.

8 PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

- 8.1 To the extent permitted by this Policy, the Student's privacy will be respected, protected, and maintained throughout the academic consideration process.
- 8.2 All documentation received regarding requests for Academic Consideration will be collected, securely maintained and disposed of in accordance with Ryerson's records management, records retention schedule, privacy and information classification policies, procedures and standards.

9 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The use of this Policy to gain academic advantage or benefit, by, for example:

- (a) submitting false, altered, forged or falsified health certificates or other documents for academic consideration, or
- (b) making false claims for such consideration to delay or avoid academic requirements,

constitutes academic misconduct and will be subject to the processes, penalties and consequences, as outlined in Ryerson's [Policy 60: Academic Integrity](#).

³ Refer to Policy 168.

⁴ Refer to Policy 168 Procedures.

PROCEDURES for POLICY 167: ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

1. PURPOSE OF PROCEDURES

The procedures section outlines instructions for how students must submit an Academic Consideration Request (ACR) with documentation or without documentation (as permitted one time per semester).

2. SUBMITTING AN ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION REQUEST

Academic Consideration Requests for extenuating circumstances must be submitted through the ACR online portal, which can be found at:

<https://prod.apps.ccs.ryerson.ca/senateapps/>

Examples of Extenuating Circumstance:

Health: physical and mental health issues that are either sudden or acute,⁵ including but not limited to unexpected illness or injury, hospitalization, or treatment, or significant aggravation of a pre-existing condition.

Compassionate: events, circumstances or emergencies that cause undue hardship, personal distress and/or trauma, including but not limited to:

- (i) death or life-threatening injury or illness of a close relative or friend;
- (ii) traumatic experiences including being a victim of, or witness to a serious crime or involvement in, or witnessing a serious accident;
- (iii) significant disruption to a student's domestic arrangements;
- (iv) sudden loss of income or employment;
- (v) caregiver responsibilities, where a student has substantial unplanned responsibilities to members of their immediate family or members of their household who need their care and support.

Other Extenuating Circumstances: include, but are not limited to the following:

- (i) participation in a University-sanctioned event (e.g., varsity sports), or other events in which the Student is representing the University, where the event conflicts with the requirements of a course;

⁵ Physical or mental health issues of a chronic nature should be addressed through: [Policy 159: Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) and consult with Ryerson's [Academic Accommodation Support](#)

- (ii) participation in events such as conferences, case competitions, or field trips related to the Student's field of study;
- (iii) legal commitments, where a Student is required to attend court.
- (iv) assigned duties within the Canadian Armed Forces (documentation required, e.g., signed letter from the Officer Commanding or higher with the dates of required service)

Instructions

- 2.1 Students must log in to the system using their Ryerson username and password, and read the instructions before completing and submitting their request.
- 2.2 Students should submit an Academic Consideration Request (ACR) in advance of the missed work (e.g., test, assignment deadline, lab, etc.). If this is not possible, students must submit the request within three business days of the missed obligation in order for it to be considered. In rare situations, exceptions to the three-business day submission requirement can be granted if the extenuating circumstance, including documented mental health issues, prevents a student from consulting a health professional or documenting their extenuating circumstance in a timely fashion.
- 2.3 Students requesting Academic Consideration for missed academic obligations in more than one course must select the number of obligations and courses covered under the ACR submission. Failure to identify a specific course or obligation might result in no consideration received in that course.
- 2.4 Students submitting an ACR **with documentation**:

2.4.1. Health documentation:

Students must submit a fully completed Ryerson Health Certificate, or a signed letter by an appropriate regulated health professional on their letterhead containing full information required by the health certificate for the applicable period of time. The portion of the Ryerson Health Certificate containing the student signature must be attached. The documentation should explain the duration of the health condition and the impact of the health condition on the student's ability to perform during that period.

2.4.2. Compassionate documentation:

While it is recognized that compassionate grounds may sometimes be hard to document, items such as relevant travel documents, death certificates or

notices from a funeral home, letters from counsellors, therapists, or religious or community leaders would be appropriate.

2.4.3. Documentation containing personal information of others:

Documentation which contains the personal information (e.g. health documents) of someone other than the student must be accompanied by a letter from that individual allowing the information to be used.

2.5 Students submitting an ACR without supporting documentation:

- 2.5.1 Students may submit an ACR without supporting documentation once per term at their discretion, excluding final exams and final assessments.
- 2.5.2 The system will automatically monitor submissions. If a student has already submitted their ACR without documentation for the term, further attempts to submit an ACR without documentation will be restricted.
- 2.5.3 Students who have exceeded their one time per term ACR without documentation, must submit documentation for any future requests (see Policy Section 5.3 (a)).

3. AFTER SUBMITTING AN ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION REQUEST

NEXT STEPS:

- 3.1 After submitting an ACR online, an automatic email notification will be sent to the student's program office as well as relevant instructor(s). Students will also receive a confirmation receipt of their request via their Ryerson email account. Students should retain the reference number provided in the receipt and refer to it when communicating with their program office and/or instructors about their request.
- 3.2 If supporting documentation was submitted, the program office will review the documentation and notify both the student and the relevant instructor(s) as to whether the documentation has been verified (verification means the dates of the documentation and missed work align, it does not guarantee that the request has been approved).
- 3.3 Health certificates and medical documentation may be verified with the office of the Health Professional. A health professional cannot be asked about the nature of the student's health condition. See Policy Section 5.3.

- 3.4 Privacy and confidentiality will be respected, protected and maintained throughout the academic consideration request process. All personal information that is collected will be used, stored, and destroyed in accordance with Ryerson's Information Protection and Access Policy. In case of highly sensitive information, students are encouraged to contact the Senate Office for next steps.
- 3.5 After the documentation has been verified, it is the student's responsibility to contact each instructor via email. The instructor(s) will then decide whether or not to grant academic consideration and make acceptable alternate arrangements.
- 3.6 If a student is using their one-time submission without documentation, it is the student's responsibility to contact each instructor, via email, to declare that they have or will miss an academic obligation. The instructor will then decide whether or not to grant academic consideration.
- 3.7 Instructors will assess the merit of the request and respond to the student within five (5) working days of receiving the request. If a response is not received from the instructor within 5 working days the student should contact the instructor again or consult with the Chair/Director via email.
- 3.8 Approval of academic consideration requests is at the discretion of the course instructor. Submission of supporting documentation does not guarantee that academic consideration will be granted.
- 3.9 Acceptable alternate arrangements may include extending a deadline, setting a make-up test, or transferring the weight of the missed work to the final examination (as per Policy 166: Course Management at <https://www.ryerson.ca/content/dam/senate/policies/pol166.pdf>).
- 3.10 All consideration decisions and arrangements must be documented via Ryerson email.
- 3.11 If the ACR has been granted and the missed component cannot be completed before final grades are due that term, the student can request an incomplete (INC) grade to allow extended time to complete and submit the work. An INC form must be filed by the instructor indicating the date by which the work must be completed. See Policy 46 for details on an INC grade.

- 3.11.1 It is the students' responsibility to follow up with the instructor to ensure completion of an INC within the approved time frame. If the INC is not completed during the designated time frame, it will convert to a grade of "F".
- 3.11.2 If students encounter problems making arrangements for completing an INC with their instructor, they must contact the Chair/Director as soon as they are aware of the issue.
- 3.12 Students who submit more than two requests for academic consideration per academic term may be required to meet with an advisor in their program department to ensure they have appropriate supports in place to meet their academic needs. In such cases, students may be asked to provide additional relevant documentation before processing their request(s) for academic consideration.