

Special Considerations Guidance

This document includes the variances to the Guidance which were approved for the period covering the Covid-19 pandemic. Variations to the standard guidance are in red.

1. Request Form

- 1.1 ~~All Special Consideration and Deadline Extension Requests should be submitted on the appropriate form.~~
- 1.1 **Students requesting an extension to a coursework deadline should complete the [Extension Request for Assessment Form](#). Students requesting Special Considerations as a result of the pandemic should complete the [Special Considerations Request Form \(COVID\)](#). Students requesting Special Considerations not related to the pandemic should complete the [Special Considerations Request Form](#).**

2. Examples of circumstances which may be accepted

- 2.1 The following is a non-exhaustive list of examples that the university would commonly regard as falling with the definition provided in A 2.1 of the regulations – i.e. exceptional circumstances outside of the student’s control, that may have a negative effect upon performance or ability to meet a deadline or to sit an examination:
- Bereavement – death of close relative/friend/significant other (of a nature which, in an employment context, would have led to an absence in accordance with the compassionate leave)
 - Serious short-term illness or accident (of a nature which, in an employment context, would have led to an absence of sick leave)
 - Significant adverse personal/family circumstances
 - Significant disruption of an examination
 - Severe adverse weather conditions
 - A significant failure of due process by the University
 - Other significant exceptional factors for which there is evidence of stress causes.
- 2.2 **In addition to the above, for the period affected by the Covid-19 pandemic the following circumstances should also be accepted:**
- **Students who have to self-isolate due to themselves or a family member suffering from symptoms of Covid-19.**
 - **Students who fall under the 'key worker' category outlined by the government and are required to work additional hours.**
 - **Additional caring responsibilities for children and/or other dependents.**
 - **Computer/IT issues - Students may find themselves reliant upon inadequate internet connections or encounter issues related to broken computing equipment which they are not able to resolve.**
 - **Access to resources - Related to the above computer issues, students may not be able to access materials they need to complete work for modules. In some cases they may not have access to staff members due to staff illness.**
- 2.3 Schools may wish to consider reasonable requests for extensions from students that are volunteering but it is felt that volunteering alone is not reason for any further individual Special Considerations. The University’s position on volunteering is as follows:
- ***"The University is very supportive of all members of the community supporting the vital work of the NHS and other front-line services. If you wish to volunteer you will need to***

carefully consider the number of hours that you commit to this alongside your studies. If you wish to volunteer on a full time basis then you would need to suspend your studies as it would not be possible to study alongside a full time role. You would of course be supported fully on your return to study. It may be possible to volunteer on a part-time basis, in which case there would be no need to suspend, but we would recommend ensuring you provide yourself enough time for studies and therefore volunteer for no more hours than you would undertake paid work. If your volunteer role allows you to complete your studies but creates problems meeting specific deadlines, the University will consider reasonable requests for deadline extensions using the Covid-19 Extension Request for Assessment Form".

3. Long term conditions

- 3.1 The Special Considerations process is not designed to offer support to students with long-term health conditions. Support and reasonable adjustments of this nature should be obtained via the University's Enabling Services. This does not mean however that a student's Special Considerations will automatically be rejected if their circumstances relate to a long-term condition. Students may have had a recent diagnosis or suffered from an acute flare up or worsening of a long-term condition, in which case the School will need to obtain information from Enabling Services to establish whether the student is receiving appropriate support for their condition and/or acute flare ups of that condition.
- 3.2 If the student is not receiving support then a referral should be made to Enabling Services. Should the student choose not to take up an appointment or support offered, this is likely to be taken in to account should future Special Consideration request be made on the same basis.

4. Examples of acceptable evidence

- 4.1 ~~Any evidence submitted should be contemporaneous with the circumstances described.~~
- 4.2 ~~The following is a non-exhaustive list of evidence that can be used to support a request:~~
- ~~• Death certificate – whilst a death certificate is obviously definitive proof of bereavement, the University must ensure sensitivity when dealing with such cases and should not insist on the provision of a certificate.~~
 - ~~• Letter of support/explanation from a support service in the university – support services will only be able to issue a letter if the student has been receiving support for the circumstances described prior to requesting a letter of support.~~
 - ~~• Letter of support/explanation from third party – whilst letters of support from members of staff, (i.e. Personal Academic Tutor/Senior Tutor) are acceptable, staff members are not obliged to provide such letters and should only do so if they are fully aware of the students circumstances and feel able to support their Special Considerations or Extension request.~~
 - ~~• Exam invigilator incident report.~~
 - ~~• A University self-certificate (which can be found on the reverse of the Request Form) – the University will accept self-certification for short illnesses and for circumstances for which it is not possible to obtain any other evidence. However students will be required to have the self-certification form signed off by the Personal Academic Tutor, Senior Tutor, Programme Lead or Director of Programmes who must sign the form to confirm they have discussed the students circumstances with them. This ensures that students are signposted to support services where appropriate.~~
- 4.1 *Because the situation with Covid-19 may make it difficult for anyone claiming special considerations to provide evidence, students may submit their claim without the usual requirement to provide supporting evidence. This applies to extension requests and special considerations requests relating to work due for submission after Thursday 12th March 2020 regardless of whether or not the circumstances are related to Covid-19. Students must explain clearly their specific circumstances and how they have been impacted.*

5. Examples of circumstances likely to be rejected

- 5.1 ~~The following is a non-exhaustive list of circumstances unlikely to be regarded as falling within the definition in A 2.1:~~

- If there is a clear case that circumstances relied on were foreseeable or preventable
- Pressures of paid work
- Holidays
- Personal computer/printer problems
- Poor practice e.g. no back-up of electronic documents
- Claims that students were unaware of the dates or times of submission or examination
- Poor time management

5.1 The following is a non-exhaustive list of circumstances unlikely to be regarded as falling within the definition in A 2.1:

- If there is a clear case that circumstances relied on were foreseeable or preventable
- Holidays
- Poor practice e.g. no back-up of electronic documents
- Claims that students were unaware of the dates or times of submission or examination
- Poor time management

5.2 The 'assessment period' replaces the normal 'examination period' and the University expects students to plan ahead and to allow space to undertake the required work during the assessment period. The assessments in the final assessment period for each semester have mostly been designed as a replacement for a traditional exam. As for an exam, there are no deadline extensions for this kind of assessment. If a student feels their performance in a piece of assessment during the assessment period was impacted by extenuating circumstances they should submit an application for Special Considerations.

6. Timescales

6.1 It is essential that students submit requests as soon as possible ~~but normally not more than five working days~~ after any assessment or deadline may have been affected by exceptional circumstances. **Final deadlines for submitting Special Considerations forms after each assessment period will be published by the University.** Requests that are received outside of this timescales will only be considered if students are able to demonstrate exceptional reasons for the delay.

6.2 Students wishing to make a request after the publication of results should refer instead to the [Regulations Governing Academic Appeals](#).

7. Extension request decisions

7.1 ~~These decisions should be made by a single member of the SCB in a timely manner. Boards may choose to allocate one or two specific members of the board to make these decisions, or allow any member to do so. Where Schools prefer SAA staff to make decisions about extension requests, this can be achieved by allocating the Faculty Academic Registrar (FAR) or nominee as the person to make such decisions.~~

7.1 Any extension requests for up to 14 calendar days citing Covid-19 to be automatically accepted. Anticipating an increase in requests for extensions, extension requests up to 14 calendar days can be dealt with by the School Administration and Assessment Teams/Student Offices. Any extension requests for longer than 14 calendar days to be decided on a case by case basis as per the School's normal process.

7.2 Should the student subsequently consider that a further extension is required for the same circumstances, they should submit an email to their School Administration and Assessment Team/Student Office making reference to the earlier special considerations request/ authorization and should state that the same circumstances are ongoing. The student should also provide any additional information that is relevant. The student should request the additional period of time that is required, noting that this may not be granted.

7.3 Extension requests should be submitted prior to the assessment deadline. In exceptional cases, requests submitted after the assessment deadline may be backdated rather than asking the student to submit a special considerations request. The School should make a judgement on how long they wish to accept late requests for. If a student is required to submit a special

considerations request they should be advised to submit the assessment as soon as possible rather than wait for the decision of the Special Considerations Board.

8. Special Considerations Recommendations

- 8.1 The Special Considerations Board (SCB) cannot invent marks; marks or classifications can only be altered by reassessment or the setting aside of a module or element of a module when computing a mark or classification. The full range of recommendations open to the SCB are detailed below and in Section A6 within the Regulations.
- 8.2 SCBs should always consider allowing a student an additional attempt as opposed to disregarding of marks, elements or modules, making this latter recommendation only when additional attempts are not possible or practical.

9. SCBs should list one of the outcomes below:

- A The grounds advanced are not accepted as justification for special consideration. ~~or no evidence is presented in support of a particular case.~~
- B The special considerations advanced are of such a minor nature as to have been unlikely to influence the student's performance in the assessments held to have been potentially affected.
- C In the light of the candidate's overall mark profile there are insufficient grounds to conclude that the candidate's performance in the relevant assessment(s) would have been significantly different in the absence of the special circumstances advanced.
- D In the light of the candidate's mark profile, there are sufficient grounds for believing that the candidate's performance in the relevant assessment(s) had been adversely affected, but not to such an extent as to materially affect the degree class/programme awarded.
- E Circumstances will be taken in to consideration when considering final degree classification.
- F There are sufficient grounds for believing that the candidate's performance in the relevant assessment(s) had been adversely affected.

AND one of the following recommendations:

1. Waive late submission penalties
2. Disregard a first attempt, referral or repeat and allow an additional attempt (at the same or equivalent assessment), in accordance with the relevant Progression regulations following this disregard
3. Recommend a different form of re-assessment, as determined by the module lead, if the same or equivalent is no longer possible, to assess whether the learning outcomes are achieved
4. Remove the capping of marks in a repeat
5. Remove the capping of marks in a referral
6. Allow a student to retain the right of referral during a repeat
7. Disregard marks for specific module(s), in computing the aggregate mark or classification
8. Disregard an element of a module assessment and re-compute module mark based on completed components
9. That a special considerations request be considered by a future Board of Examiners for the purpose of a degree classification. i.e. in the final year it may be possible to revisit performance in earlier years where there was a special considerations that may or may not have had an impact on the degree classification
10. Carry forward to semester 2 Special Considerations Board to allow for full year's marks profile to be reviewed in order to judge impact.
11. No further action

10. Considering a Special Considerations Request

- 10.1 The SCBs should have access to the student's marks profile in order to assist in determining whether a student's performance appears to have been affected.

11. Minutes of SCB

- 11.1 In addition to listing the codes (as listed above and on page 3 of the SC form), a reason for the decision should be clearly recorded, particularly if the request is refused, or the student is given an alternative outcome to the one requested. For example, an outcome might be A 11('The grounds advanced are not accepted as justification for special consideration, or no evidence is presented in support of a particular case' so 'no further action') the minutes will also need to include something along the lines of 'evidence is not contemporaneous' or 'circumstances do not apply to relevant assessment period'. This is to ensure that if a decision is later subject to scrutiny (e.g. as part of the appeals process or by the OIA) the University is clearly able to justify its decision.

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