

# Special Considerations Guidance

## 1. Request Form

1.1 All Special Consideration and Deadline Extension Requests should be submitted on the appropriate form which can be found in the [Quality Handbook](#).

## 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.

## 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 Student Disability and Inclusion Team. 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 Student Disability and Inclusion 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 Student Disability and Inclusion. 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 supporting information**

4.1 Any supporting information provided should be contemporaneous with the circumstances described.

4.2 The following is a non-exhaustive list of information 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 supporting information. 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.

## 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

## 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. 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 Special Considerations Board 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 relevant Professional Services staff to

make decisions about extension requests, this can be achieved by allocating the Faculty Academic Registrar/Head of Taught Programme Administration or nominee as the person to make such decisions.

## **8. Anonymity at Special Considerations Boards**

8.1 Due to the personal and sometimes serious nature of some special considerations requests, the Special Considerations Board should be run with due regard for privacy of the students, maintaining anonymity where possible. Methods of doing this include:

- Operating a 'triage' or 'gatekeeping' process as outlined in section 8.2 of this document, to reduce the number of people who have access to the full documentation for the majority of special considerations requests.
- Using student ID numbers rather than student names on student mark profiles/assessment grids and special considerations requests and supporting documentation presented to the full Special Considerations Board.

### **8.2 Triage/Gatekeeping**

8.2.1 It is recommended that Schools operate a 'triage' or 'gatekeeping' process prior to the Special Considerations Board to:

- assist in managing special considerations requests and to streamline the Special Considerations Board.
- restrict the number of people that have access to the full details of special considerations requests and the supporting information.
- identify where further information is required from the student or elsewhere prior to the Special Considerations Board in order to make a decision.

8.2.2 The triage team should be kept small and it is recommended that the team involves no more than three members of academic staff plus an appropriate member of staff from the relevant Professional Services Team to support the process. The membership will vary between Schools but the academic members of staff may involve the Director of Programme, the Examination Officer and/or the Senior Tutor. The Chair of the Special Considerations

Board should not be involved in the triage team so that the Chair remains independent of the triage team's recommendations to the Special Considerations Board.

8.2.3 For each student requesting special considerations, the triage team should have access to the following information:

- The Special Considerations Request Form and the supporting information provided by the student.
- The student's marks profile in order to assist in determining whether a student's performance appears to have been affected. It is good practice to use the Assessment Grid if available.
- A summary of previous special considerations requests by the student and the agreed outcomes.
- Details of any enabling codes in order to identify where reasonable adjustments have already been made and to establish whether the student is receiving appropriate support for long term conditions and/or acute flare ups of that condition.

8.2.4 The triage team will undertake a review of the special considerations requests and supporting information and make recommendations to the Special Considerations Board on whether the circumstances should be accepted and the appropriate action to be taken. The triage team will:

- identify straight forward cases where it is clear that special considerations should be applied and what action should be taken, and recommend an outcome code (see Section 11) to the Special Considerations Board.
- identify any complex cases that need full consideration by the Special Considerations Board.
- identify where further information is required from the student or elsewhere prior to the Special Considerations Board in order to make a decision.

8.2.5 The triage team should produce a summary of the cases and its recommendations for the Special Considerations Board.

## 9. **Special Considerations Board Documentation**

9.1 For each student requesting special considerations, the Special Considerations Board should have access to the following documentation:

- The summary of the case and the recommendation from the triage team if a triage process has been used (see 8.2 above).
- The student's marks profile in order to assist in determining whether a student's performance appears to have been affected. It is good practice to use the Assessment Grid if available and this should be produced using student ID numbers if possible.
- The Special Considerations Request Form and the supporting information provided by the student.
- A summary of previous special considerations requests by the student and the agreed outcomes.
- Details of any enabling codes in order to identify where reasonable adjustments have already been made and to establish whether the student is receiving appropriate support for long term conditions and/or acute flare ups of that condition.

9.2 If a triage process was used, all members of the Special Considerations Board should have access to the summary of cases and recommendations from the triage team and the student mark profiles. All members of the Special Considerations Board will only be provided with the Special Considerations Form and supporting information for those cases that have been flagged by the triage team as needing full consideration at the Board. The documentation for any cases considered to be straight forward by the triage team should be available at the Board in case it is needed for further reference.

9.3 All student mark profiles and supporting documentation presented to the Special Considerations Board should be anonymised by using student ID numbers instead of names where possible.

## 10. Special Considerations Recommendations

10.1 The Special Considerations Board 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.

10.2 Special Considerations Boards 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.

## 11. Special Considerations Boards should list one of the outcomes below:

- A The grounds advanced are not accepted as justification for special consideration, or no supporting information 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

## **12. Considering a Special Considerations Request**

12.1 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.

## **13. Minutes of Special Considerations Boards**

13.1 In addition to listing the codes (as listed above), 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 supporting information is presented in support of a particular case’ so ‘no further action’) the minutes will also need to include something along the lines of ‘supporting information 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 Office of the Independent Adjudicator) the University is clearly able to justify its decision.

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