

## Regulations Governing Special Considerations (including Deadline Extension Requests) for all Taught Programmes and Taught Assessed Components of Research Degrees

**This document includes the variances to Policy and Procedure which were approved for the period covering the Covid-19 pandemic. Variations to the standard Regulations are in red.**

### Introduction

These Regulations outline the policy and procedure to be followed when students apply for Special Considerations (in circumstances set out below), including requests for deadline extensions. They are divided in to two sections. Section A gives details of the policy, whilst Section B outlines the procedure to be followed.

Additional guidance can be found in the [University's Quality Handbook](#).

Students can obtain free, independent and confidential advice about special considerations and extensions from the SUSU Advice Centre <http://www.unionsouthampton.org/advice-centre>.

### Section A : The Policy

#### 1. Who can ask for special considerations?

- 1.1 Individual students enrolled and registered at the University of Southampton on a credit-bearing taught or pre-sessional programme.
- 1.2 Individual students enrolled and registered at the University of Southampton on a research degree with a major taught component with regard to taught assessed components of the degree only.
- 1.3 A member of the School may ask for special considerations for a situation affecting groups or cohorts of students as set out in A2.2 below.

#### 2. Under what circumstances do these regulations apply?

- 2.1 A student may apply for Special Considerations following the process in Section B if: (s)/he can prove that there were exceptional circumstances outside of his/her control; and these have or will negatively affect his/her performance in a recent or upcoming assessment (including an exam) or ability to meet a deadline for submission of an assessment or to sit an examination.
- 2.2 **Raised by a School member:** A member of a School may use these Regulations where they are aware of exceptional circumstances and is of the view that these were outside of the control of a group/cohort of students and the member of School expects that the performance of that group or cohort of students in a recent or upcoming assessment (including an exam) or their ability to meet a deadline for submission of an assessment or to sit an examination has/or will be negatively affected. See the procedure in section B1.5.

#### 3. What circumstances are not covered by these regulations?

- 3.1 These regulations do not:
  - 3.1.1 apply to students who are already receiving support or reasonable adjustments from the University's Enabling Services for the specific exceptional circumstances raised. It should be noted that despite a student receiving support for a long term condition, they may not be receiving support for a specific flare up of that condition. The University's Enabling Services can provide advice and support relating to long term

conditions, details of the support offered can be found at

[http://www.southampton.ac.uk/edusupport/disability\\_support/index.page/](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/edusupport/disability_support/index.page/);

- 3.1.2 apply to situations which students can or could have taken reasonable steps either to avoid or to mitigate the impact on their performance;
- 3.1.3 allow for the marking process or a student's marks to be adjusted. A request for Special Considerations shall remain distinct from the marking process and actual marks shall be determined solely on the basis of work submitted. However, the Special Considerations Board may recommend that marks are disregarded as set out in section A6 below;
- 3.1.4 cover requests to extend candidature or to address matters affecting the submission of theses. Please refer to the section A7 on other regulations below.

## 4. Evidence

- ~~4.1 Students should submit written evidence which demonstrates the points in Section A2.1. Please refer to guidance available in the Quality Handbook detailing the types of evidence that will be considered.~~
- 4.1 **The written evidence requirements will be suspended for any valid extension and special considerations requests relating to assessment due for submission after Thursday 12th March 2020. This includes for any valid extension and special considerations requests which are not related to the impact of Covid-19.**
- 4.2 The Assessment Team will gather information relating to the student's contact with Enabling Services (including any reports) and information about any previous relevant Special Considerations or extensions.
- ~~4.3 Please note that wherever possible, original documents should be submitted to the Faculty Student Office. Students are advised to keep copies of all documentation which they submit.~~
- 4.3 **Students may submit their claim without the usual requirement to provide written evidence. This applies to extension requests and special considerations requests relating to assessment due for submission after Thursday 12th March 2020 regardless of whether or not the circumstances are related to Covid-19. Students are advised to keep a copy of the completed extension or special considerations form which they submit.**

## 5. Boards considering Special Considerations

Special Considerations requests are initially considered by a Special Considerations Board, which makes specific recommendations to the relevant Board of Examiners based on the evidence before them.

- 5.1 The Special Considerations Board Terms of Reference
  - 5.1.1 The Deputy Head of School (Education) shall establish Special Considerations Board(s) at either School or Academic Discipline level, to consider requests for special considerations made by students enrolled in that School.
  - 5.1.2 In addition to the terms of reference outlined in these regulations, Special Considerations Boards will take due account of any requirements from relevant professional or regulatory bodies which govern the registration of students entering a relevant profession.
  - 5.1.3 Each Special Considerations Board shall be constituted as follows:
    - The Chair: a nominee of the Deputy Head of School (Education) (where a School has multiple Boards, the chair should wherever possible be the same for each Board)
    - Exams Officer(s)
    - Director of Programmes or nominee

- Faculty Academic Registrar or nominee
- Senior Tutor(s)
- Co-opted members as deemed necessary by the Chair

5.1.4 Special Consideration Boards will make provision to deal with a request from a student for an extension of a deadline, or other time critical issues, by **any member of the Board** (individual Boards may determine how best to achieve this) to ensure that timely recommendations are made and communicated to the student.

5.1.5 The role of the Chair is to ensure that the Board carries out its responsibilities in a fair, transparent and impartial manner and in accordance with relevant University and programme regulations and procedures. The Chair ensures that members have the opportunity to contribute to discussions and that business is conducted collegially.

5.1.6 The Board may consult and/or take advice from other relevant Faculties or Professional Services.

5.1.7 Decisions of each Special Considerations Board shall be made by a simple majority vote, with the Chair having a casting vote.

5.1.8 Special Considerations Boards shall be responsible to schedule their own regular meetings to be held at least once prior to each meeting of the School's Board of Examiners. Each Special Considerations Board may decide to schedule more regular meetings or arrange extraordinary meetings when necessary.

5.1.9 Members of Special Considerations Boards who are also the personal academic tutor of a student making a request for a special consideration shall not participate in any discussion related to that request and shall refrain from making a decision in connection with that request. They may however provide the student with a supporting statement to be included as evidence (see section A 4 above).

5.1.10 All Special Considerations Boards are required to keep formal minutes of their proceedings. The purpose of the minutes of Special Considerations Board is to record decisions, to summarise any discussion relevant to those decisions (where this is required to give a context or rationale for the decision, or to establish precedents), and to capture for further consideration any areas of discussion or requirements for future action. Decisions regarding extensions made in accordance with 5.1.4 above should also be recorded.

## 5.2 The Board of Examiners

5.2.1 Boards of Examiners shall consider recommendations from Special Considerations Boards before making a determination of the student's result and any progression decision arising from the result.

5.1.2 In all cases the Board of Examiners must be assured that overall programme learning outcomes have been met before implementing a recommendation by the Special Considerations Board.

## 6. Decisions and Recommendations of the Special Considerations Board

6.1 A single member of the Special Considerations Board may make a **decision** to grant an extension to a deadline for submission of an assessment where (s)he is satisfied that Special Considerations should be applied. **Any extension requests for up to 14 calendar days citing Covid-19 to be automatically accepted and 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.**

6.2 For all other requests, the Special Considerations Board will make one or more of the following **recommendations** to the relevant Board of Examiners.

- 6.2.1 Waive late submission penalties.
- 6.2.2 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.
- 6.2.3 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.
- 6.2.4 Remove the capping of marks in a referral or repeat.
- 6.2.5 Allow a student to retain the right of referral during a repeat.
- 6.2.6 Disregard marks for specific module(s), in computing the aggregate mark or classification.
- 6.2.7 Disregard an element of a module assessment and re-compute module mark based on completed components.
- 6.2.8 That a special consideration 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 special considerations that may or may not have had an impact on the degree classification.
- 6.2.9 No further action.
- 6.3 When deciding which recommendations to make, Special Considerations Boards should always:
  - 6.3.1 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; and
  - 6.3.2 carefully consider the effects of the recommendation so that a student is not given an unfair advantage; the objective is to as far as possible put a student in the position(s)he would have been in had the exceptional circumstances not occurred; and
  - 6.3.3 be assured that overall programme learning outcomes have been met.
- 6.4 The Special Considerations Board may consider whether or not a student's performance has been negatively affected with reference to that student's overall marks profile when making a recommendation.
- 6.5 Where 6.2.2 above is recommended, marks for the disregarded **attempt** will not appear on transcripts; however a note will appear confirming that the attempt has been disregarded due to Special Considerations. **Marks** disregarded in accordance with 6.2.6 however will appear on transcripts.
- 6.6 Where additional attempts are granted, the marks obtained in the additional attempt will be inserted in to the student's marks profile, in accordance with the relevant progression regulations, regardless of whether these are higher or lower than the original mark obtained.
- 6.7 In addition, the Special Considerations Boards may additionally or alternatively recommend that:
  - 6.7.1 a student must attend a meeting with a senior member of academic staff to discuss their circumstances;
  - 6.7.2 a student must seek support from Enabling Services (the Board should report such recommendations to Enabling Services who will attempt to make contact with the student);
  - 6.7.3 the Fitness to Study procedure is considered;
  - 6.7.4 the Fitness to Practise Procedure is considered.
- 6.8 Should a student fail to seek appropriate support (e.g. from Enabling Services) following a recommendation from the Special Considerations Board in accordance with 6.7.2 above, further requests for Special Considerations made due to similar circumstances may be rejected.

## 7. Other Relevant Regulations and Policies

- 7.1 The University's [Fitness to Study Procedure](#) outlines how the University will respond to situations where visible signs of illness, mental health difficulties, psychological, personality or emotional disorders may have a profoundly disturbing impact on the functioning of individual students and on the wellbeing of others around them. The procedure outlines support available to both students and staff and may be referred to should a student's Special Consideration request(s) raise cause for concern.
- 7.2 Any programme of study which has a practice component which will lead to a professional registration will be governed by a requirement that students demonstrate their Fitness to Practise. A student's Fitness to Practise may be challenged when their behaviour, health and/or professional conduct gives cause for concern. In these circumstances, a student should be considered under the [Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedure](#).
- 7.3 The [Code of Practice for Research Candidature and Supervision](#) and [Regulations for Research Degrees](#) provide information to students enrolled on research degrees wishing to suspend their studies or extend their candidature due to exceptional circumstances.
- 7.4 A student wishing to appeal against an academic decision made by the University should refer to the [Regulations Governing Academic Appeals by Students](#).
- 7.5 Definitions of terms can be found in the [Regulations and Definitions Applying to Progression for all Credit Bearing Programmes](#).
- 7.6 The Regulations governing [Progression, Determination and Classification of Results: Undergraduate and Integrated Masters Programmes](#) and [Progression, Determination and Classification of Results: Postgraduate Master's Programmes](#) provide information related to student progression.
- 7.7 Information related to the award of an aegrotat degree, diploma or certificate can be found in [The Ordinances of the University Part 7: Admission, Examinations and Awards](#).
- 7.8 If information about a safeguarding incident is disclosed the [Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults](#) Policy should be referred to.

## Section B : The Procedure

### 1. Submitting a Special Considerations Request

- ~~1.1 A student must submit a [Special Considerations form](#) and evidence to the Assessment team in their home Faculty (the Faculty in which their substantive programme is based) as soon as possible, but normally not more than five working days after any assessment or deadline may have been affected by exceptional circumstances.~~
- 1.1 A student who has been affected by Covid-19 should complete the [Covid-19 Special Considerations Request form](#). A student who has exceptional circumstances not related to Covid-19 should complete the standard [Special Considerations Request form](#). In either case, students are not required to submit written evidence in support of requests relating to assessment due for submission after Thursday 12th March 2020. On the form the student must explain clearly their specific circumstances and how they have been impacted and submit the completed form to the School Administration and Assessment Team/Student Office by email as soon as possible, but normally not more than five working days after any assessment or deadline may have been affected by exceptional circumstances.
- ~~1.2 Special Considerations requests which are incomplete in any material aspect and do not enclose evidence in support of that request will not be considered by the Special Considerations Board until rectified.~~
- 1.2 A student is not required to submit evidence in support of requests relating to assessment due for submission after Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020. Schools may ask the student to provide further clarification on the information in the form before the request is considered by the Special Considerations Board.

- 1.3 The Assessment Team will attach the information obtained in Section A4.2 to the request; which will be taken into account by the Special Considerations Board.
- 1.4 Students should not lobby individual Board members about the decisions of the Special Considerations Board.
- 1.5 ***Raised by a School member:*** Where a member of a School is aware of exceptional circumstances, as set out in Section A2.2, that member shall advise the Deputy Head of School (Education) for that School of the matter and provide such additional evidence as the Deputy Head of School (Education) may decide is required. The Deputy Head of School (Education) for that School shall decide whether to make a decision and refer directly to the Board of Examiners. In these circumstances the relevant students should be notified that individual requests need not be made by students or where made already, will instead be considered as a group matter.

## 2. Considering the Request

- ~~2.1 ***Requests for extensions of a deadline and other time critical decision:*** A single member of the Special Consideration Board will decide on special considerations requests for the extension of a deadline or other time critical decision provided the request is appropriately completed and has supporting evidence as and when the need arises. That member of the Special Considerations Board may choose to consult with another member of the Board and the relevant tutor before making that decision.~~
- 2.1 ***Requests for extensions of a deadline and other time critical decision:*** Any extension requests for up to 14 calendar days citing Covid-19 to be automatically accepted and dealt with by the School Administration and Assessment Teams/Student Offices. Any extension requests for longer than 14 calendar days or other time critical decisions to be decided on a case by case basis as per the School's normal process.
- 2.2 ***For all other requests:***
  - ~~2.2.1 The Special Considerations Board will decide on all other special considerations requests which are appropriately completed, have supporting evidence and which are received normally at least five days in advance of their next available general meeting. Where there is less than 5 days' notice the application may need to be held over until the next meeting.~~
  - 2.2.1 ***The Special Considerations Board will decide on all other special considerations requests which are appropriately completed and which are received normally at least five days in advance of their next available general meeting. Where there is less than 5 days' notice the application may need to be held over until the next meeting.***
  - 2.2.2 The Special Considerations Board shall discuss the merits of the special considerations request in private.
  - ~~2.2.3 Before the Special Considerations Board makes a decision, it may deem it appropriate to require the student to attend a meeting with a senior member of academic staff to discuss their request and the evidence they have submitted.~~
  - 2.2.3 ***Before the Special Considerations Board makes a decision, it may deem it appropriate to require the student to attend a virtual meeting with a senior member of academic staff to discuss their request.***

## 3. Special Considerations Board Decisions and Recommendations

- 3.1 The Special Considerations Board will take a decision or make a recommendation as set out in Section A6.

## 4. Notification

- 4.1 Students will be notified of the decision and/recommendation(s) of the Special Considerations Board and the reasons normally within 10 working days of the meeting, however decisions are not finalised until they have been ratified by the relevant Board of Examiners (except for deadline

extension requests).

## 5. Board of Examiners Decision

- 5.1 All recommendations of the Special Considerations Board are subject to ratification by the Board of Examiners.

## 6. Appeals

- 6.1 Students wishing to appeal a decision of the Board of Examiners based on recommendations of the Special Considerations Board should refer to the [Regulations Governing Academic Appeals](#). Students may only appeal if they are able to show that they satisfy one or more the grounds specified in the Regulations Governing Academic Appeals.

*Reviewed in April 2020 to detail the variations approved for the period during the Covid-19 pandemic.*

*This document was updated in April 2020. Click [here](#) to see all key calendar changes.*