Special Circumstances

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New Policy

- Applies to all assessments relating to courses which run from 16 September 2013 onwards;
- Sufficient documentary evidence to show that they had a significant adverse impact on the student’s performance;
Key Changes

- 2.6 The decisions made by a Special Circumstances Committee are binding on a Board of Examiners;

- 2.7 Marks/grades cannot be adjusted by either a Special Circumstances Committee or a Board of Examiners as a consequence of special circumstances.

Course Board Options

a) No further action;
b) No further action, fully compensated through previous adjustments;
c) Disregard penalties for late submission of coursework;
d) Disregard missing component and derive overall mark/grade from completed work;
e) Disregard unreliable component and derive overall mark from completed work if to the student’s benefit;
f) Submit missing assessment if course is failed;
g) Re-submit assessment if course is failed;
h) Sit alternative assessment if course is failed;
i) Null sit if course is failed;
j) Borderline, award pass.
Programme Board Options

- a) No further action;
- b) Student is given the opportunity of re-assessment without academic penalty;
- c) Special Circumstances are taken into account for degree classification and/or award for Borderline candidates;
- d) Where a mark for a course is missing or deemed unreliable, the Board of Examiners will follow Taught Assessment Regulation 59 (“Failure to complete assessment of a degree programme adequately”)

...and finally

- You can contact me...

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Special Circumstances in Practice

**Guiding Principle: Fairness for all students**

Details of Special Circumstances Committee structure and operation may differ from School to School (e.g. because of differences numbers of exam boards) but the general principles should be the same and SCC outcomes for an individual student taking courses in different Schools, with the same special circumstances, should be the same.

This should obviously also be true for different courses within a single School.

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Getting the right information

Special Circumstance Committees involve a lot of work. Schools need clear guidance and procedures to make the system work within tight deadlines.

Make sure that SC forms are adequately completed:

- Clear indication of which courses were affected
- Clear indication of relevant dates and affected items of assessment
- Appropriate evidence, e.g. medical certificate, letter from counsellor is attached.
Minutes: outcomes for every student must be clearly recorded

Most easily done with standard wording for the majority of outcomes which fall into one of these categories:

- No special circumstances
- No action to be taken
- No late penalties to be imposed on specified assessment
- August Sit as First Attempt*
- Ignore affected item of assessment in determining course result*

*These will generally be made conditional on the assessment outcome

For degree classification or progression decisions:
- Take account of the effect of special circumstances on the specified courses when deciding outcomes.

This last outcome may require transfer of information from one year to another, from one subject area to another or from one School to another. Efficient and timely communication is critical in dealing robustly with SCs.

Dealing with Special Circumstances at the Exam Board

The Exam Board Convener should be clear about possible outcomes for students before the board meets.

The exam board must consider the effects of special circumstances on assessments for each affected student, keeping in mind that SC committee decisions are binding on the board.

The outcome for each student must be clearly minuted, noting how SCC decisions were implemented.