1 **Introduction**
This policy and procedure document has been developed to ensure that the academic standards of the College of Science and Engineering (College) are maintained and that clear procedures are in place for the approval and monitoring of Special Circumstances.

2 **Definition**
“Special Circumstances” denotes a formal process whereby a student requests, via the Personal Tutor/Student Support Team, an exceptional concession related to specific pieces of course assessment on the basis of a verifiable medical problem, bereavement, accident or equivalent.

Special Circumstances are any personal circumstances which are clearly beyond the student’s control and for which there is sufficient contemporaneous documentary evidence to show that these circumstances may have adversely affected a student’s performance in an assessment.

3 **Scope**
This policy and procedure covers all undergraduate and postgraduate taught students in the College.

For the purposes of this document, the terms, Personal Tutor and School Student Support Team may be interchangeable as appropriate to the individual School’s authorised procedure.

4 **Policy regarding Special Circumstances**
In the line with University’s Special Circumstances policy, the College is committed to the principle of equity in the treatment of all students. All special circumstance submissions are considered individually and with great care by the College Concessions Subcommittee.

**Legitimate** grounds for Special Circumstances are:
- Serious physical illness or injury\(^1\) for which there is contemporaneous medical evidence\(^2\).
- Mental ill health or similar illness.
- Bereavement or serious illness of a person with whom the student has a close relationship.

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\(^1\) Disabilities are dealt with via procedures that are distinct from Special Circumstances. The University’s Student Disability Service can provide guidance [http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-disability-service/home](http://www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/student-disability-service/home) Special Circumstances excludes conditions for which formal adjustment has already been made.

\(^2\) It is the student’s responsibility to notify the Personal Tutor/Student Support Team (or Teaching Organisation) in writing of any Special Circumstances and submit any required contemporaneous medical certificates or supporting documentation as early as possible. Submission date is no later than two working days after your last assessment.
• A long-term relationship breakdown, such as a marriage.

Generally, inappropriate grounds for Special Circumstances include:
• Pressure of academic work.
• Employment commitments.
• A short-term, self-certificated illness such as a common cold.

In addition, it is likely that the Sub-committee would regard the following as inappropriate:
• Late arrival for start of programme due to difficulties with visas or travel arrangements.
• Minor illness, such as a common cold or headache.
• Occasional low mood, stress or anxiety not diagnosed as illness.
• Inefficient time management.
• Failure, loss or theft of data, a computer or other equipment
• Commitment to paid employment, voluntary work or vacation work.
• Death of a pet.

Note: the above list is indicative. University guidelines may be found at:
http://www.docs.sasg.ed.ac.uk/AcademicServices/Guidance/Special_Circumstances_Students.pdf

5 Procedure for Special Circumstances
Concessions are usually granted only if there is clear evidence of underperformance on a specific piece of assessment.

5.1 The Personal Tutor/Student Support Team should be informed as soon as possible with further discussion taking place.

5.2 Complete the Special Circumstances form, describing the nature of the Special Circumstance, the course assessments affected and attaching supporting evidence. Such evidence may include, for example, medical certification, a police, hospital or dentist report. If the student is overseas or is only resident in Edinburgh for the purposes of education, then they are responsible for ensuring that they procure contemporaneous medical or notary evidence (translated to English by an official translator) for any circumstance that may occur in their home country, e.g. death or illness of a close family member. The Personal Tutor/Student Support Team can assist with its completion. The Personal Tutor/Student Support Team will treat this information sensitively and will only share it with your permission and only to those people who are required to know (e.g. Special Circumstances Committee or designated College Officers).
https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/CSETSA/Assessment

5.3 The Personal Tutor/Student Support Team submits a copy of the form to the Special Circumstances Committee (Committee) for each of the courses affected.

5.4 The Committee considers the severity of the Special Circumstance(s) and to what extent it may have had an impact upon assessment.

5.5 The Committee then makes a recommendation to the Board of Examiners.

5.6 The Board of Examiners decides the final course mark or degree classification taking into consideration the Committee recommendation.

5.6.1 The outcome may be different for different courses even for the same set of Special
Circumstances as the outcome may depend on the pattern of assessment for each course.

5.6.2 If, as a result of the decision of the Board of Examiners on Special Circumstances, a College Concession is required, then the procedure for seeking a College Concession should be followed. [https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/CSETSA/Concessions](https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/CSETSA/Concessions)

6 Further information
Students should seek advice from their Personal Tutor/School Student Support Team. Personal Tutors/Student Support Team should seek advice from the College’s Academic Affairs section.

Lynda Henderson, Academic Affairs Officer
College of Science and Engineering, Weir Building,
The King’s Buildings, West Mains Road
Edinburgh EH9 3JY

Tel: +44 (0)131 650 5765; Email: lynda.m.henderson@ed.ac.uk

7 Glossary
Special circumstances: Any personal circumstances which are clearly beyond the student’s control and for which there is sufficient documentary evidence to show that these circumstances may have adversely affected a student’s performance in an assessment.

Special Circumstances Committee: A Sub-Committee of the Board of Examiners, usually a small number of experienced members of the Board, including the Convenor, who review the Special Circumstances forms submitted by Personal Tutor/Student Support Teams.

Board of Examiners: A Board of Examiners is a board of academic staff teaching on courses, together with an External Examiner, who make the final course mark or degree classification decision.
| Policies superseded by this Policy | University’s Special Circumstances policy updated September 2013. |