

Special Consideration in Internal Assessment

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This document is based on, reproduces parts of, and should be read in conjunction with the [Special Consideration in Student Assessment Procedures](#). It is intended to provide additional advice to academic departments on the application of special consideration to internal assessment. Further advice on recommended process for receiving and processing applications for Special Consideration is also provided (see page 4).

Purpose

Special Consideration is the means by which the University seeks to ensure just and equitable treatment of students who suffer unexpected and significant impairment (e.g. serious illness) in relation to assessment tasks, including final examinations and internal assessment.

1. General Principles

Summary: Special Consideration is for unexpected circumstances that have a significant impact on a student – this may include health-related impairment relating to illness or injury, or non-health-related circumstances, such as bereavement. There are other provisions for known conditions such as disability. Special Consideration is not for adjustment of marks after these are known.

- (a) Special Consideration is intended to ensure students who have **significant and unexpected impairment** are not unduly disadvantaged in assessment activities.
- (b) The aim of Special Consideration is to reduce the impact of impairment on assessment as practicable; a complete reduction of the impact of impairment is not guaranteed.
- (c) Special Consideration shall not be used to unfairly advantage students who are impaired in assessment, i.e. through the provision of academic outcomes which the student would have been unlikely to achieve if they had not been impaired.
- (d) Special Consideration is appropriate for some kinds of unexpected impairment in relation to assessment, but in certain circumstances other University provisions may be more appropriate:
 - i. General study support for students with impairments through [Disability Information and Support](#)
 - ii. [Alternative arrangements for assessment](#) in cases of ongoing and known impairment affecting assessment (note that this normally prevents approval of Special Consideration on the basis of the same impairment)
 - iii. [Withdrawal under exceptional circumstances](#), where significant and unexpected impairment prevents completion of a paper or papers.

For further advice on the best option for their circumstances, students are advised to contact [AskOtago](#) (university@otago.ac.nz, 0800 80 80 98) or [Disability Information and Support](#).

- (e) Applications for Special Consideration shall not be considered if received after the results for the relevant assessment have been made available to students.
- (g) Personal information provided by students in support of Special Consideration applications will be treated in confidence and with care, in accordance with the University's [Policy on Access to, and use of, Personal Information](#).

2. Applications for Special Consideration

Summary: Applications for Special Consideration in internal assessment should be made to the Head of Department or their nominee (e.g. the Course Coordinator) and should provide appropriate details. Evidential requirements vary based on circumstance (see additional advice below).

- (c) Students seeking Special Consideration in internal assessment should apply in writing to the Head of Department concerned (or nominee). Applications should make clear the paper(s) and assessment activities to which the application applies and, if appropriate, a requested outcome (e.g. an extension for an assignment). Application should be made in a timely fashion (the meaning of which may vary based on the assessment activity in question and the nature of the student's impairment).
- (d) For Special Consideration in internal assessment students should provide a medical certificate **or** such other supporting evidence as is appropriate to verify their circumstances. Note that departments may waive the requirement for a medical certificate or other supporting evidence in relation to less significant internal assessment (normally assessments worth less than 10% of the overall mark) and/or requests for small extensions on due dates for assessments (normally less than 5 days).
- (e) In exceptional circumstances, a health practitioner may make a recommendation that a student not sit an examination or test, where sitting such an examination or test may be **seriously** detrimental to the health of the student or to others. In such circumstances it is the student's responsibility to provide evidence of this recommendation as part of his or her application for Special Consideration.

Additional advice on evidential requirements

Departments should seek to strike a pragmatic balance between trust in students and avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy on the one hand, and maintenance of academic standards on the other (**see also the advice on page 4**). The following is recommended:

- For small assessments (those worth less than 10% of the overall mark for the paper) or short extensions (less than 5 days), the department should consider whether additional supporting evidence, beyond a declaration from the student, is required.
- For medium assessments (those worth 10-20% of the overall mark for the paper) or extensions (5-8 days), or for small assessments where supporting evidence is deemed to be required, the department may verify the student's circumstances through additional contact or seek additional supporting evidence.
- For larger assignments or extensions, additional independent supporting evidence is required.
- Departments should record and track Special Consideration applications in a paper. If a student is repeatedly requesting Special Consideration, appropriate independent evidence should be sought.
- Where the granting of Terms requires attendance, the overall attendance requirements might normally be treated as for assessments above (i.e. missing up to 10% of attendance requirements may not require any supporting evidence for an application; missing 10-20% may require evidence but not necessarily a medical certificate; etc.).

Departmental advice to students on Special Consideration

It is best practice for departments to provide advice to students on how to apply for Special Consideration in internal assessment, particularly if applications are to be made to a nominee of the Head of Department such as a course coordinator, and on departmental processes. Such advice can usefully be included in paper Coursebooks or on the paper's Blackboard site.

7. Special Consideration in Internal Assessment

Summary: Departments have discretion in applying appropriate outcomes where Special Consideration in internal assessment is granted. However, outcomes should take account of: fairness to the student concerned and to other students not granted Special Consideration; maintaining academic standards and ensuring that an overall passing mark in a paper demonstrates competency; and the guidance provided in the Procedures.

- (a) The provision of any Special Consideration in relation to internal assessment is at the discretion of the Head of Department (or nominee) and should take account of:
 - i. any relevant paper or programme regulations
 - ii. fairness to the student concerned
 - iii. fairness to other students in the class
 - iv. the significance of the assessment in question, in terms of its contribution to the final mark and result
 - v. practicalities of providing Special Consideration, and
 - vi. the requirement that students demonstrate competency to pass the paper.
- (b) Special Consideration in internal assessment should normally only be granted where impairment is significant (i.e. is likely to have a demonstrable and significant effect on performance).
- (c) Special Consideration should not be granted in internal assessment where a student has been granted Alternative Arrangements in relation to the same assessment on the basis of the same impairment.
- (d) For assessments due in on a given date (e.g. essays, assignments, lab reports), the recommended action where Special Consideration is granted is an extension to the due date for submission. Extensions of five days or more should normally be accompanied by appropriate independent evidence (see clause 2(d)).
- (e) For tests and other in-class assessments, the recommended options where Special Consideration is granted are:
 - i. the rescheduling of an in-class assessment (e.g. a student presentation)
 - ii. the setting of an alternative and equivalent test or assessment activity for the student in question
 - iii. a calculated score based on the student's marks from other assessments in the paper, which may include future assessments and the final examination, and which may be weighted based on class performance (i.e. the score may be increased if the class tended to grade higher on the assessment in question or vice versa)
 - iv. additional marks to a maximum of 10% of the total possible marks available for the test or in-class assessment based on the student's impairment
 - v. no change, where a test is worth less than 5% of the final mark in the paper.
- (f) The recommendations in clauses 7(d) or (e) do not prevent a Head of Department (or nominee) from taking alternative actions where they believe that such actions are consistent with the principles in clause 7(a).
- (g) Terms and/or attendance requirements may be varied where Special Consideration is granted, so long as the academic integrity of the paper can be maintained.
- (h) Care should be taken where a student requests Special Consideration for multiple assessments in a paper, that this will not prevent the student from demonstrating competence in the paper. If sufficient assessment cannot be completed, the student should be advised to consider applying for withdrawal under exceptional circumstances (see clause 1(d) above).

Process advice to Departments on Special Consideration for Internal Assessment

Advice is available to students on the University website on the general process for seeking [Special Consideration in Internal Assessment](#). Departments are encouraged to link to this advice in course material, and/or to add any advice about specific departmental processes. The following advice is provided on process, including seeking evidence (see also the advice on page 2 above). **A consistent approach across departments is encouraged, as differing approaches can be confusing for students.** While the University reserves the right to seek evidence of impairment where Special Consideration is sought, a pragmatic and workable approach is supported.

1. The student contacts the Department to advise they are seeking Special Consideration. Departments should be clear on whether such requests are assessed by the Head of Department, or Course Coordinators or other staff under delegation.
2. If an application is not made in a timely manner, it may be declined. For example, barring exceptional circumstances, an application should normally be received before an assessment is due.
3. Applications which are accepted as being timely should be assessed for evidential requirements. **Students should not automatically be sent to Student Health for a medical certificate.** The following provides guidance on evidential requirements.

Type of request	Type of evidence required
One-off requests for Special Consideration for small assessments (those worth less than 10% of the overall mark for the paper) or short extensions (less than 5 days), or for absences from classes where these are a terms requirement.	Additional evidence not usually required, but the department may look to arrange to contact the student directly, by telephone, Zoom or similar, to confirm their circumstances. If deemed necessary the department may seek additional supporting evidence as below.
One-off requests for Special Consideration for medium assessments (those worth 10-20% of the overall mark for the paper) or extensions (5-8 days), or multiple requests for small assessments/short extensions/absences.	Unless sufficient supporting evidence is initially provided by the student (this is not a requirement), the department is encouraged to arrange to contact the student directly, by telephone, Zoom or similar, to confirm their circumstances, and/or to seek additional supporting evidence. (Where a decision on the granting of Special Consideration is made on the basis of departmental contact, this should be recorded in a file note or communication to the student as having verified the student's circumstances.)
Requests for Special Consideration for large assessments (those worth over 20% of the overall mark for the paper) or extensions over 8 days, or frequent requests for Special Consideration, including ongoing requests for absences from classes that are terms requirements.	Additional supporting evidence is required.

Preferred sources of additional supporting evidence are as follows:

For medical impairment (injury or physical or mental illness)

- Verification from a College head or deputy (recommended for less serious illness where a student is residing in a University of affiliated College)
- Verification via Student Health
- Verification from a health practitioner

For bereavement

- A public death notice linked to the student
- Verification from a College head or deputy (for students in a College)
- Verification from a University Chaplain
- Verification from another appropriate third party (e.g. a funeral director)

For impairment arising from crime against the student

- Verification from the Police
- Verification from the Proctor's Office

For other types of impairment, Departments should accept such documentation as they deem provides reasonable confirmation of the student's circumstances.

4. If an application is accepted, an academic outcome should be determined (see Clause 7 on page 3 for additional advice).
5. Within papers Departments should track the granting of Special Consideration, to identify where students may be using this provision multiple times, as this may impact on evidence requirements and/or academic outcomes (see Clause 7(h) on page 3 above).

Where additional advice on Special Consideration is required in a particular case, Departments are advised to contact their relevant Associate Dean (Academic).