

## Special Consideration Procedures and Guidelines

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### Introduction

This document, in conjunction with [Special Consideration Regulations \(University Regulations website\)](#), supersedes all earlier Calendar regulations and policies with regards to aegrotats and backdated discontinuations. It stands regardless of the original year of enrolment of any student seeking special consideration.

**It is recommended that this document be read in full. Reading sections in isolation can lead to overlooking of vital information.**

### Definitions

**Acute** – an event of short duration. Note that this is an evolving definition and the Special Consideration Committee (SCC) will refine how ‘acute’ is interpreted for special consideration over time.

**Chronic** – a condition persisting for a long time or constantly recurring. Note that this is an evolving definition and the SCC will refine how ‘chronic’ is interpreted for special consideration over time.

**Impairment** – the impact of an event that affects the ability to undertake or show learning. Impairment is measured on a four point scale of: no, mild, moderate, or serious impairment. The assessor in allocating the measure of impairment requires professional judgement.

**Major items of assessment** – those items that contribute 10% or more of the entire course assessment weight.

## Procedures and Guidelines

### Prior to Applying for Special Consideration:

An application to the Special Consideration Committee (SCC) may not always be required. In the case of assessment where there is flexibility in the due date, e.g. assignment work, a student may apply to the course coordinator or appropriate delegate for an appropriate extension of time to complete the work (with or without penalty). Such an informal arrangement does not negate the right of a student to also apply for special consideration, but any extension already granted will be taken into account when determining (if appropriate) the academic remedies for the application.

Assessment items contributing less than 10% to the total course grade are considered to be minor and should be handled informally by the course coordinator.

A student may not be permitted to have more than 50% of their course credited by special consideration across all assessment work for the course unless supported by completing alternative and equivalent assessment items.

Course coordinators must inform students in the course outline of all items of assessment to which special consideration will not apply.

Students should take particular note of the following:

- Impairment

Impairment is not of itself considered adequate grounds for not sitting a test or examination or completing an item of work by the due date. Unless students are prevented by their condition (or other circumstance) from carrying out the item of assessment (and have evidence to that effect), they are expected to undertake the item of assessment, using special facilities, if necessary, and to submit an application on the grounds of impaired performance. Please refer to 'Step Two: Academic Remedies' below for more information on special facilities.

- National or International Sporting or Cultural Events

Applications on the basis of national or international sporting or cultural events are primarily for auditing processes and the application will include the intended academic remedy negotiated with the course coordinator as appropriate. Please refer to Appendix 1: 'Alternative arrangements for representative sports and cultural events'.

*Note: representation can be either as a member of a group or as an individual.*

- Religious Observances

It is noted that in a multi-faith environment, religious observances are varied and occur at differing times. The University acknowledges this and expects reasonable alternative arrangements will be made between students and course coordinators to accommodate the submission of assessment items so affected. Students are required to alert their course coordinator in a timely manner so that prior arrangements can be

made. Such arrangements are informal and students do not need to apply for special consideration.

Fasting, as a religious observance which may not lend itself to an informal solution, will be assessed at the lower end of 'moderate impairment' for afternoon tests and examinations. Please refer to [Appendix 2: 'Ramadan Guidelines for students and staff'](#) for more information with regards to Ramadan.

- **Timeframes**

Where it does become necessary to apply for special consideration, students must take note of the timeframes for submitting applications under the [Special Consideration Regulations \(University Regulation website\)](#). Lack of awareness of the regulations is not grounds for lateness of an application.

Students should note that, in most cases, special consideration for late discontinuation/s will not be granted where the student has sat the final examination for the course/s.

## **Application Process**

Students submit their applications for special consideration (for assessment/s or late discontinuation/s) to the Secretary of the SCC. The application will then pass through two distinct stages.

In the first stage, the evidence supporting the application is assessed by the SCC in terms of the specified criteria and the level of severity. Members of the SCC will be provided with a summary of any prior applications for special consideration submitted by the student, along with decisions by the SCC regarding other cases on similar grounds to the application. Applications may be rejected at this stage. Applications may also be recommended for alternative consideration (e.g. late discontinuation instead of special consideration of an assessment item) if the assessed criteria are met.

The second stage involves the selection of the appropriate academic remedy by the relevant department/school or College.

## **Special Consideration Committee (SCC)**

The SCC will consist of the following members:

1. A Chairperson, nominated by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).
2. Nominees from each of the Deans, to be approved by the Academic Administration Committee.
3. The Examinations Arrangements Senior Coordinator (Records, Examinations and Graduation).

*Note: SCC members cannot also be members of the Academic Appeals Committee.*

The Secretary of the SCC will be from Records, Examinations and Graduation.

The SCC will appoint observers/advisors to assist it as it sees necessary for the purposes of equity and diversity and the understanding of medical issues. In the first instance a member each from the Health Centre, the Maori Development Team (MDT) and the Pasifika Development Team (PDT) shall be appointed.

The SCC will report annually to the Academic Administration Committee. This report will be consolidated with its annual report to Academic Board.

### **Stage One: Evidence Considered by the SCC**

'Satisfactory evidence' is described in the [Special Considerations Regulations](#) and replicated here:

#### **6. Applications must be supported with evidence**

- (a) Evidence must be supplied for all forms of special consideration, including discontinuation, and must relate to the condition or circumstances of the student at the time of the affected assessments or the course as a whole.*
- (b) In the case of illness or injury to the student, satisfactory evidence must include a confidential report on the prescribed form from an approved health professional listed in the Special Consideration Procedures and Guidelines in the Policy Library. The report must state the nature of the illness or injury and the practitioner's professional opinion about its effect on the student's ability to complete or undertake the assessment item. It must relate to a consultation that took place within a period that is relevant to the assessment item, which may include an extension to permit the practitioner to make a sound evaluation of the applicant's condition at the time of the assessment item.*
- (c) In the case of bereavement, appropriate evidence may include a death notice from a newspaper or a letter from a medical practitioner, funeral director, minister of religion, religious leader, kaumatua or the police. Where the notice or letter does not indicate the relationship of the deceased to the applicant, the applicant should attach a letter stating that relationship.*
- (d) In cases not covered under parts (a)-(b), the nature of the supporting evidence will depend on circumstances, but might include police reports, medical certificates or letters from others involved in the situation that has led to the application. Where independent evidence cannot be provided, then a statutory declaration must be provided.*

The list of approved health professionals is given in [Appendix 3](#).

Evidence need not be exclusive to the named sources and it is acceptable for student support groups, advisors and departments/schools to assist a student in compiling their application. It is important to note that any support offered by a member of the University in compiling an application does not in any way prejudice or predetermine the SCC in

assessing the merits of the application.

The classification of the affected assessment items as minor or major will be considered.

The severity and duration of the impairment, along with the acuteness and foreseeability of the events responsible for the impairment, will be considered. To justify a claim of impaired performance, the severity of the effects of the causative event or condition must be assessed as **moderate** or higher. For missed assessment items, the effects of the causative event or condition must be assessed as **serious** or higher.

By way of example:

- short duration would normally be considered a period not exceeding seven days;
- the common cold would normally be assessed as no more than **mild** in severity and therefore not appropriate for impaired performance.

Special consideration for assessment items will not be approved for chronic illnesses, disabilities, or injuries or events that may impair a student's ability to learn the material for the course/s concerned. In this situation alternative arrangements may be appropriate and agreed to by the student, these include:

- a study plan arranged by the Dean;
- arrangements as assessed by the [Disability Resource Services \(University Disability Resource Services website\)](#)

Where applications for special consideration by a student are repeatedly made for substantially the same underlying reason then the application may be rejected on the grounds that the reason is chronic rather than acute. Note, however, that unforeseeable relapses of chronic illnesses, disabilities or injuries may qualify for special consideration.

In cases dealing with particularly sensitive information, such as sexual assault, the Chairperson of the SCC will have executive authority to make decisions without recourse to the SCC as a whole.

In cases of late arrivals or missed tests or examinations, the Examinations Arrangements Senior Coordinator will have executive authority to make decisions without recourse to the SCC as a whole.

The SCC may use decisions made for other applications based on similar evidence to guide its decision-making.

Summary information, regardless of the outcome, will be forwarded to the relevant departments/schools for the student's application for the purposes of keeping them informed. Students will also be offered an opt-in service to have their name shared with the appropriate student support service, which can offer follow-up support.

## Stage Two: Academic Remedies

If the SCC approves an application on evidential grounds, then it will be sent to the student's academic department or school for assessment of the available academic remedies. Separate processes are followed for special consideration for assessment and special consideration for late discontinuation.

### Special Consideration for Assessment:

This may be granted where a student is prevented from completing any major item/s of work for assessment in a course, or where his or her performance in completing any major item/s of work for assessment in a course has been impaired due to illness, injury or reasonably unforeseeable circumstances (such as non-injurious accidents or bereavement). A student may apply on the basis that disrupted revision due to one of these causes has resulted in impaired performance.

Special consideration for assessment is intended to assist students who have covered the work of a course but have been prevented by circumstance from demonstrating their mastery of the material or skills at the time of the assessment. It is not available where the impairment has prevented the student from learning the material.

Academic remedies may be approved with conditions. Note that for national sporting or cultural representatives, extensions, special facilities, or undertaking assessment/s at alternative times (at the discretion of the Examinations Arrangements Senior Coordinator) are the only available remedies.

- Extensions:

In the case of assessment work other than tests or examinations, an extension may be approved by the course coordinator. This will be communicated to the student by the course coordinator.

- Special facilities:

If an application is submitted in enough time, special facilities may be available for examinations and tests. Applicants with a disability should refer to the [Disability Policy – Student \(PDF, 278KB\)](#), for further information. Applicants with national or international sporting or cultural commitments must seek advice from their course coordinator; who will in turn will seek approval from the Examinations Arrangement Senior Coordinator for alternative sitting arrangements, see [Appendix 1](#).

- Late/missed tests or examinations:

The Examinations Arrangements Senior Coordinator may make such provisions within the ambit of [Special Consideration Regulations H 8. \(c\) \(University Regulation website\)](#) as they deem appropriate where a student arrives late or misses a test or examination.

- Alternative special assessment:

Where appropriate the relevant Head of Department/School (HOD/S) may approve special or alternative assessment items if other academic remedies are not appropriate.



- **Computer based grades:**

As noted at [Special Consideration Regulation 8. \(e\)](#), computer based grades may be awarded where none of the alternative academic remedies can be effected. The relevant HOD/S will make this decision and the outcome will be communicated to the student via the posting of grades. Departments/Schools must have a policy on methods that maybe used to compute the grades and these should be publicised to students.

### Special Consideration for Late Discontinuation:

A student may apply for special consideration for a late withdrawal where the student has been prevented from completing the course(s), due to circumstances beyond the student's control or that were not reasonably foreseeable, and was unable to withdraw from the course(s) by the published withdrawal deadline. As per [Special Consideration Regulation 9.](#), the Dean of the relevant College will determine, in consultation with the relevant course coordinators, whether or not to approve an application for late discontinuation. Approval will be determined by evidence that the student has not completed or engaged in the course of study.

Special consideration for late discontinuation will in most cases not be granted where the student has sat the final examination for the course/s that are the subject of the application.

## **Appeals**

- **Decisions of the SCC**

Appeals of decisions of the SCC should be made to the Academic Appeals Committee, via the process outlined in the [Academic Appeals and Grievances Principles and Procedures \(PDF, 343KB\)](#)

- **Decisions of the Academic Department/School**

Appeals of decisions of the HOD/S or Dean should be made in accordance with the appeal structure laid out in the [Academic Appeals and Grievances Principles and Procedures \(PDF, 343KB\)](#)

## **Fees**

In line with the [Fees and Fines Regulations \(University Regulations website\)](#), students who have their application/s for special consideration for late discontinuation approved may apply for the refund amounts stated in the regulations.

Applications must be lodged within the calendar year of the relevant study to be eligible for a fees rebate.

## Related Documents and Information

### Regulations

- [Academic Appeals and Grievance Regulations \(University Regulations website\)](#)
- [Fees and Fines Regulations \(University Regulations website\)](#)
- [Special Consideration Regulations \(University Regulations website\)](#)

### UC Policy Library

- [Academic Appeals and Grievances Principles and Procedures \(PDF, 343KB\)](#)
- [Disability Policy – Student \(PDF, 278KB\)](#)

### University Website and Intranet

- [Disability Resource Services \(University Disability Resource Services website\)](#)

## Appendices

[Appendix 1: Alternative arrangements for representative sports and cultural events.](#)

[Appendix 2: Ramadan – Guidelines for students and staff.](#)

[Appendix 3: List of Approved Health Professionals](#)

Document History and Version Control Table			
Version	Action	Approval Authority	Action Date
<i>For document history and versioning prior to 2013 contact <a href="mailto:ucpolicy@canterbury.ac.nz">ucpolicy@canterbury.ac.nz</a></i>			
1.00	Document developed and approved for publishing at commencement of 2016 academic year.	DVC(A)	Feb 2016
1.01	'Faculty' references changed to 'College' to reflect College-Faculty merger.	Policy Unit	Jun 2016
2.00	Scheduled review by CO, minor changes, updating of hyperlinks, content changed to reflect updated Regulations	Policy Unit	Dec 2017



## Appendix 1

### Alternative arrangements for representative sports and cultural events

The Academic Administration Committee adopted the following recommendations for students who seek alternative assessment arrangements to facilitate participation as a national or international representative in national or international sporting or cultural events:

1. Participation includes: selection to perform, tour, compete, adjudicate or officiate.
2. That whenever possible, departments/schools should give favorable consideration to making alternative arrangements for such students provided that when making special arrangements, departments/schools give careful consideration to issues of equity with respect to the remainder of the class. In the case of tests, possible alternatives might be:
  - (a) making arrangements for students on tour to sit a test, at the same time as that scheduled for the test, under the supervision of the team manager or coach, or other suitable person and approved by the Examinations Arrangements Senior Coordinator; or
  - (b) permitting the sitting of the test or similar test prior to the departure of students provided that by so doing there is no problem over security.
3. That where students are to be absent from tests or at times scheduled for submission of assessment and wish for special arrangements to be made, and where departments/schools are able to make special arrangements, students must give at least one month's notice of absence (unless the situation arises at short notice) and provide suitable documentation to the Heads of Departments/Schools so that departments/schools have time to organise and/or approve any such special arrangements.
4. That departments/schools publicise their policies by appropriate means - through inclusion in departmental handbooks, course outlines, and on noticeboards.

The special consideration process for students who apply on these grounds must supply a letter of support from the department/school outlining the agreed to arrangements. The SCC must accept this support and approve the application; the process in these cases is being used for auditing purposes.

## Appendix 2

### Ramadan - Guidelines for students and staff

A Muslim observing Ramadan does not eat or drink between sunrise and sunset. Ramadan lasts 30 days and the date on which it starts changes year by year.

Impairment to performance in examinations and tests as a result of the physiological effects of fasting during Ramadan is allowable as a circumstance in which a student may apply for special consideration. Students will still be expected to sit the examination or test unless prevented from doing so for other reasons.

Special consideration will only be allowed for afternoon examinations or tests and the impairment will normally be judged to be at the lower end of the 'moderate impairment' range.

Students wishing to apply for a special consideration as a result of the impairment caused by fasting during Ramadan must accompany their application with a letter from their religious leader attesting to their observance of the fast. Students may also attach a medical certificate, but this is not required.

*Note:* The Islamic calendar is based on lunar months and therefore the month of Ramadan begins 10 or 11 days earlier each year on the Gregorian calendar, hence it takes Ramadan about 30 years to move through the seasons from January to December.

## Appendix 3

### List of Approved Health Professionals

The following bodies are approved for the purposes of giving supporting medical evidence under General Course and Examination Regulations, Regulation H: Special Consideration 4(a).

- Registered medical practitioner
- Registered dental surgeon
- Registered midwife
- Registered psychologist
- Member of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors
- ACC Registered Counsellor
- Member of the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists
- Student counsellors from the University Health Centre