

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

School Special Circumstances Committee¹

Terms of Reference

To be responsible to the Progression and Awards Board for matters relating to students' requests for consideration of mitigating circumstances. The School Special Circumstances Committee will:

1. in advance of the Assessment Board and/or Progression and Awards Board consider the details of applications for mitigating circumstances and make recommendations [using the report template or equivalent] on the outcome of each application;²
2. formally record all discussions and recommendations taking care to ensure that records of the recommendations made maintain individuals' confidentiality;³
3. provide a report summarising the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee to the Progression and Awards Board. Details of individual cases will remain confidential to the School Special Circumstances Committee;
4. consider and determine for and on behalf of the Progression and Awards Board cases that occur 'out of season', falling outside normal University/School deadlines, where it is important that decisions are made at an early stage in the interests of the student. In such cases, the Committee will report its decisions at the earliest opportunity;
5. endorse and maintain an overview of extensions to coursework submission deadlines for monitoring purposes.

Relationship to the Progression and Awards Board

The Progression and Awards Board has oversight of the membership and operation of the School Special Circumstances Committee and should satisfy itself that the Committee has undertaken and reported its responsibilities diligently and in line with the agreed procedures. Only in very exceptional circumstances should the Progression and Awards Board intervene in the case of written recommendations for individual students; all students must be treated consistently.

Courses of action open to the School Special Circumstances Committee

Module Level

There are a number of possible decisions that the School Special Circumstances Committee may make:

1. Further attempt – first attempt. If the assessment failed or missed was the original attempt or had previously been granted as a first attempt, then the Committee may grant a further 'first attempt' for an uncapped mark. In this circumstance the original mark would be permanently removed from the student record and overwritten by the mark received for the fresh attempt whether it was higher or lower than the original attempt;
2. Further attempt – resit attempt. If the assessment failed or missed was a resit, the Committee may grant an exceptional 'extra' resit attempt for a capped mark;
3. Coursework submission deadline extension for a period of time which is longer than can be granted through the normal extension request process in the School/Faculty;

¹ The University Special Circumstances Committee is available to consider out of season recommendations including those based on special circumstances where the progression and awards rules may have to be set aside.

² The SSCC should act without reference to module grades

³ Ensuring confidentiality of individual circumstances. Suggested templates for production of minutes are available from QAT

4. Remove penalties for late submission or exceeding the word count;
5. To set an alternative or replacement assessment component or combination of components (any alternative will be approved by the Pro Dean for Student Education in advance);
6. In exceptional circumstances, to depart from the normal rules of classification of degrees or progression to the next level;
7. In exceptional circumstances, to give the student the opportunity to re-take all or part of the year, with first attempts or resit attempts at assessments, including attending teaching;
8. Not to grant any concessions or take any action in relation to the student's claim.

These provisions can indirectly affect the module marks that students receive (for example alternative assessment arrangements, additional attempts, setting aside penalties for late submission). However module marks must reflect academic performance under agreed assessment arrangements and therefore must not be changed directly. Committees/Boards are not permitted to intervene directly to change module marks because of mitigation.

Programme Level

In addition, and in exceptional circumstances, medical and mitigating circumstances may be taken into account in arriving at a degree classification which is more favourable than the normal classification rules may otherwise yield, or to allow progression.⁴ Where compensation has already been applied at the module level the Committee must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant additional consideration beyond that already applied.

Constitution and Membership

- Representatives of the Progression and Awards Board - normally a senior academic member of staff, where possible not involved in assessment for the cases in question, one of whom should be chair. (SID number and decision, should be reported by the chair to the Assessment Board and progressed to the Progression and Awards Board as appropriate. More detailed information recorded should be retained for internal School records).
- Staff member(s) responsible for monitoring extensions to coursework submission deadlines if applicable
- A member of the Student Education Service to provide advice and record the decisions of the meeting.

Quorum

To maintain quorum requirements it is expected that at least one third of the expected membership, including the chair, are in attendance.

⁴ For example, it may exceptionally be possible to vary the normal rules for progression subject to consultation with and approval from the University Student Cases Team.