

A Guide to the Special Consideration process

What is special consideration?

When a candidate has sat an assessment under adverse circumstances through no fault of their own, or has been absent from an assessment for acceptable reasons; the candidate has been fully prepared for the examination, has already completed 50% or more of the total assessment in a given subject, and there is no further re-sit opportunity for the qualification, a centre may apply to an Awarding Body for special consideration for the affected assessed component. The Awarding Body will consider the circumstances and may, at their discretion, award a small additional tariff to the overall mark for the component. Depending upon the circumstances, this may be set between 0 and 5%.

Special consideration is a post-examination adjustment to a candidate's mark or grade to reflect temporary illness, temporary injury or other indisposition at the time of the assessment, which has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a candidate's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate his or her normal level of attainment in an assessment.

Special consideration can only seek to go some way to assist a candidate affected by a potentially wide range of difficulties, emotional or physical, which may influence performance in examinations. It cannot remove the difficulty faced by the candidate. There will be situations where candidates should not be entered for an examination. Only minor adjustments can be made to the mark awarded because to do more than this would jeopardize the standard of the examination.

There are minimum requirements for enhanced grading in cases of acceptable absence

All examinations are measuring what a candidate knows and can do. **The overall grades awarded must reflect the level of attainment demonstrated in the examination.** The grades awarded do not necessarily reflect the candidate's true level of ability if attainment has been considerably affected over a long period of time.

It is not necessarily the case that the grade issued will match the estimated/forecast grade. Where long term circumstances have prevented the candidate from reaching the competence standards it may not be possible to make an adjustment.

Which candidates will be eligible for special consideration?

Special consideration must be applied for following a specific examination series.

2.1 Candidates will be eligible for special consideration if they have been fully prepared and have covered the whole course but performance in the examination or in the production of controlled assessment/coursework is materially affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control.

These include:

2.1.1 temporary illness or accident/injury **at the time of the assessment**;

2.1.2 bereavement **at the time of the assessment** (where whole groups are affected, normally only those most closely involved will be eligible);

2.1.3 domestic crisis arising **at the time of the assessment**;

2.1.4 serious disturbance **during an examination**, particularly where recorded material is being used;

2.1.5 other accidental events **at the time of the assessment** such as being given the wrong examination paper, being given a defective examination paper or CD, failure of practical equipment, failure of materials to arrive on time;

2.1.6 participation in **sporting events or other competitions at an international level at the time of certification, e.g. representing their country at an international level in football or hockey**;

2.1.7 failure by the centre to implement **previously approved access arrangements**.

2.2 When candidates have been fully prepared for the specification but the wrong texts have been chosen, special consideration may be given at the discretion of the awarding body.

Centres are advised that it is their responsibility to ensure that the correct texts are taught. Where this has not happened there can be no guarantee that a candidate will receive special consideration. Such instances will be investigated by the awarding body on a case-by-case basis.

Where the wrong texts have been taught, it is essential that the texts studied must have been examined in the current specification in a previous examination series.

Candidates will NOT be eligible for special consideration if preparation for or performance in the examination is affected by:

2.3.1 long term illness or other difficulties during the course affecting revision time, **unless the illness or circumstances manifest themselves at the time of the assessment**;

2.3.2 bereavement occurring more than six months before the assessment, **unless an anniversary has been reached at the time of the assessment or there are on-going implications** such as an inquest or court case;

2.3.3 domestic inconvenience, such as moving house, lack of facilities, taking holidays (**including school/exchange visits and field trips**) at the time of the assessment;

2.3.4 minor disturbance in the examination caused by another candidate, such as momentary bad behaviour or a mobile phone ringing;

- 2.3.5 the consequences of committing a crime or being charged with an offence;
- 2.3.6 the consequences of taking alcohol or any other non-prescribed drugs;
- 2.3.7 the consequences of disobeying the centre's internal regulations;
- 2.3.8 the failure of the centre to prepare candidates properly for the examination for whatever reason;
- 2.3.9 staff shortages, building work or lack of facilities;
- 2.3.10 misreading the timetable and/or failing to attend at the right time and in the right place;
- 2.3.11 misreading the instructions of the question paper and answering the wrong questions;
- 2.3.12 making personal arrangements such as a wedding or holiday arrangements which conflict with the examination timetable;
- 2.3.13 submitting no controlled assessment/coursework at all, unless controlled assessment/coursework is scheduled for a restricted period of time, rather than during the course;
- 2.3.14 missing all examinations and internally assessed components/units;
- 2.3.15 failure to cover the course as a consequence of joining the class part way through;
- 2.3.16 permanent disability or learning difficulties (diagnosed or undiagnosed) unless illness affects the candidate **at the time of the assessment** or where the disability exacerbates what would otherwise be a minor issue - **(difficulties over and above those that previously approved access arrangements would have alleviated);**
- 2.3.17 failure by the centre to process access arrangements on time.

Candidates who are present for the assessment but disadvantaged

3.1 Special consideration will normally be given by applying an allowance of marks to each component affected within a specification. The size of the allowance depends on the timing, nature and extent of the illness or misfortune. The maximum allowance given will be 5% of the total raw marks available in the component concerned, including controlled assessment/coursework.

3.2 The decision made by the awarding body will be based on various factors which may vary from one subject to another. These may include:

- the severity of the circumstances;
- the date of the examination in relation to the circumstances; and
- the nature of the assessment, e.g. whether written papers are affected as opposed to controlled assessment/coursework, or whether an oral or practical is involved.

3.3 Special consideration cannot be applied in a cumulative fashion, e.g. on the basis of a domestic crisis at the time of the examination **and** the candidate suffering from a viral illness.

The following circumstances must apply at the time of the assessment.

Awarding bodies will not enter into discussion with candidates or their parents as to how much special consideration should be applied.

Private candidates should liaise with the school or college which made entries on their behalf in respect of an application for special consideration.

The examples listed below are provided for illustrative purposes only.

5% This is the maximum allowance and will be reserved for the most exceptional cases, such as:

- terminal illness of the candidate;
- terminal illness of a parent/carer;
- very recent death of a member of the immediate family;
- very serious and disruptive domestic crisis leading to acute anxiety about the family.

4% Very serious problems such as:

- life-threatening illness of candidate or member of immediate family;
- major surgery at or near the time of the examination;
- severe disease;
- severe injury arising from a car accident;
- very recent death of member of extended family;
- severe or permanent bodily injury occurring at the time of the examinations;
- serious domestic crisis at time of examinations.

3% A more common category, (more cases will fall into this category) including:

- **recent** traumatic experience such as death of a close friend or distant relative;
- **recent** illness of a more serious nature;
- flare-up of severe congenital conditions such as epilepsy, diabetes, severe asthmatic attack;

- **recently** broken limbs;
- organ disease;
- physical assault trauma before an examination;
- recent domestic crisis;
- witnessing a distressing event on the day of the examination.

2% The most common category of allowance - the majority of cases will fall within this category:

- illness at the time of the assessment;
- broken limb on the mend;
- recent viral illness;
- concussion;
- effects of pregnancy (**not pregnancy per se**);
- hay fever on the day of an examination;
- extreme distress on the day of an examination; (**not simply exam related stress**)
- allowance on last paper taken in a day when a candidate has been entered for three or more examinations timetabled for the same day **and** the total duration of those papers is **more than 5 hours 30 minutes (GCSE examinations)** or **more than 6 hours (GCE examinations)**.

(Where extra time has been used following formal approval, this should be included in the calculation.)

(Supervised rest breaks **must not** be included in the total duration of the papers when applying for special consideration.)

1% Reserved for more minor problems:

- noise during examination which is more than momentary;
- illness of another candidate which leads to disruption in the examination room;
- stress or anxiety for which medication has been prescribed;
- minor ailments;

- headache;
- minor upset arising from administrative problems, such as wrong time allocated.

0% The application was reviewed but the addition of marks was deemed inappropriate. (Where the request fails to meet the criteria, it will be rejected.)

Candidates who are absent from a timetabled component/unit for acceptable reasons

4.1 When a candidate has missed a timetabled component/unit for acceptable reasons and the centre is prepared to support an application for special consideration, an adjustment may be made to the terminal grade. **However, the component/unit must have been missed in the terminal series and the minimum requirements of section 4.3 must be met.**

Awarding bodies cannot give advice as to whether a candidate is fit to take an examination. Centre staff should follow their internal procedures for dealing with candidates who feel unwell on the day of an examination.

4.2 For unitised examinations taken in an examination series prior to certification, candidates should be re-entered for any missed units at the next assessment opportunity. **Unless there are difficulties arising, e.g. group performances which cannot be repeated, special consideration will not be awarded.**

This principle also applies where entire cohorts miss units due to adverse weather conditions or for any other reason, or where individual candidates miss units as a result of a change of centre.

4.3 Minimum requirements for enhanced grading in cases of acceptable absence

In all cases, candidates must have covered the whole course.

GCE: normally at least 50% of the total assessment must be completed.

- **AS three unit award:** two units out of three must have been completed. (Partially completed units are not acceptable).
- **AS two unit award:** one unit worth at least 50% or one externally assessed unit worth 40% **must** have been completed.

- **Enhancement given at AS Level will be carried forward to A Level.**
- **A Level six unit award:** 50% of the total assessment **must** have been completed with **at least one A2 unit completed.**
- **A Level four unit award:** 50% of the total assessment **must** have been completed with **at least one A2 unit completed.**
- An A Level award will not be issued on the basis of AS units alone.

GCSE: normally at least 50% of the total assessment must be completed. However, an exception will be made for those GCSE specifications originally designed to operate as modular assessments. This is in recognition of the fact that the current terminal requirements were not in place when these qualifications were first developed.

In cases where there is a single examined unit worth 60% of the overall qualification, or two examined components totalling 60%, the minimum requirement for enhanced grading is reduced to 40%.