

Special Consideration Policy

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Purpose

This policy sets out the regulations pertaining to Special Consideration procedures and is aimed at our students, studying members undertaking formal CIPFA assessments and centres.

Scope

This policy will also be used by our staff to ensure that they deal with all requests for Special consideration in a fair and consistent way.

Special consideration

Definition

Special consideration is applied when an issue or event has had, or is reasonably likely to have had, a material effect on a student's ability to take an assessment or demonstrate their normal level of attainment in an assessment.

If a student is disadvantaged during their assessment, CIPFA can on occasion make mark adjustments as part of a process called Special Consideration. Applications for Special Consideration can be submitted if a student has fully prepared for the assessment but their performance on the day of the assessment has been affected by factors beyond their control.

Special consideration may go some way to assist a student affected by a potentially wide range of difficulties, emotional or physical, which may influence performance in their assessments. But it cannot remove the difficulty faced by the student due to the assessment itself.

This means that there will be some situations where a student should not be entered for an assessment. This is because only minor adjustments can be made to the mark awarded. To make larger adjustments would jeopardise the standard of the assessment and compromise the achievement of other students.

In those cases, when closer to the assessment date, the student feels unable to make a reasonable attempt on the assessment day, they should consider deferring the attempt. If the student decides to take the assessment, they may be asked for their reasons for not deferring the attempt.

A student should, in the first instance, discuss the application of special consideration with the training provider, centre or employer concerned.

Awarding organisations cannot give advice as to whether a student is fit to take an assessment. Centre staff must follow their internal procedures for dealing with students who feel unwell on the day of an examination.

Categories of application

Please note that applications received late will not be considered under any circumstances. In all categories the required evidence must be submitted.

Students should apply for special consideration via their account online.

Special consideration application submitted by the invigilator

If there is a disturbance in the assessment venue that affects the students sitting at that venue, it will be noted by the local invigilator on the Invigilation report and brought to the attention of CIPFA Student Support.

All such disturbances are reported to the Examinations Panel. If the disturbance is found to have significantly affected several students sitting at the venue, Special Consideration may be awarded to the students affected.

Students do not need to report this separately or apply for special consideration unless they feel they were affected differently to all other students at the venue.

Special consideration application submitted by the student

Students wishing to apply for special consideration must complete the online application and supply all relevant evidence.

Medical certification must be relevant, sufficiently detailed and confirm that performance in an assessment was affected by the condition.

In cases of bereavement, students are required to attach relevant supporting documentation, such as a copy of a death certificate or employer notification. In exceptional circumstances CIPFA may accept notification from the student's employer as medical evidence to support the application.

Principles of agreeing Special Consideration

These principles will be followed when making decisions about a student's need for mark adjustments under Special Consideration. Where long-term circumstances have prevented the student from reaching the required standard, it may not be possible to make an adjustment.

Students will be eligible for Special Consideration if they have been fully prepared and have covered the whole course or apprenticeship but performance in the assessment or in the production of summative coursework is materially affected by adverse circumstances beyond their control.

These include:

- temporary illness or accident/injury at the time of the assessment
- bereavement at the time of the assessment
- domestic crisis arising at the time of the assessment
- serious disturbance during an assessment, particularly where recorded material is being used
- accidental events at the time of the assessment such as being given the wrong assessment paper, being given a defective assessment paper or CD, failure of practical equipment, failure of materials to arrive on time
- failure by the centre to implement previously approved access arrangements for that specific assessment session.

Students will NOT be eligible for Special Consideration if preparation for or performance in the assessment is affected by:

- 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
- bereavement occurring more than six months before the assessment, unless an anniversary has been reached at the time of the assessment or there are ongoing implications such as an inquest or court case
- domestic inconvenience, such as moving home, lack of facilities, taking holidays (including school/exchange visits and field trips) at the time of the assessment
- minor disturbance in the assessment room caused by another student, such as momentary bad behaviour or a mobile phone ringing
- the consequences of committing a crime, where formally charged or found guilty (However, a retrospective application for Special Consideration may be considered where the charge is later dropped or the student is found not guilty.)
- the consequences of taking alcohol or recreational drugs
- the consequences of disobeying the centre's internal regulations
- the failure of the centre to prepare students properly for the assessment for whatever reason
- staff shortages, building work or lack of facilities
- misreading the timetable and/or failing to attend at the right time and in the right place
- misreading the instructions of the question paper and answering the wrong questions
- making personal arrangements such as a wedding or holiday arrangements which conflict with the assessment timetable
- missing the assessment
- a disability or learning difficulties (diagnosed or undiagnosed) unless illness affects the student 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).

Special Consideration will normally be given by applying a set allowance of marks to the assessment affected. The size of the allowance depends on the timing, nature and extent of the illness or incident. The maximum allowance given will be 5% of the total raw marks available in the relevant component.

Alternatively, students may be granted a free resit. This free resit can only be applied to the same or equivalent module as the original exam. The free resit can only be applied next available exam session unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The decision made by the awarding organisation 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 assessment in relation to the circumstances, and
- the nature of the assessment, whether a written assessment or an oral assessment is involved.

Special Consideration will not be applied in a cumulative fashion for multiple reasons.

Other problems

There are circumstances which arise by accident and where specialist input may be required. For example, an incorrect question paper was handed to the student or a question paper was defective in some way such as an incorrectly printed page.

These cases are given Special Consideration by other means than those detailed so far. They may need to be referred to the Head of Qualifications and Membership and a senior assessor of the assessment team.

Where the request for Special Consideration fails to meet the criteria, it will be rejected.

Evidence that may be required

A student who wishes to apply for Special Consideration must detail the detail the circumstances that arose at the time of the assessment on the application form accompanied by official evidence such as:

- a detailed statement from the student's centre
- an invigilator's report
- a death certificate
- a copy of a medical or professional statement, or a
- psychologist's report, which includes recommendations

Application and timelines

Special Consideration applications should be made online via the student's account. The application should be submitted along with the required evidence.

Special Consideration will need to be applied for each time and will not be carried over to future assessments.

Please refer to our timelines table below as late processing or applications will be refused.

Process	Time
Student applications and supporting evidence for Special Consideration	Within 10 working days of the assessment.
CIPFA acknowledgement of application and supporting evidence for Special Consideration	Within 5 working days of the application being received
Invigilator reporting of disturbance at the venue	Within 48 hours of the assessment
CIPFA confirmation of Special Consideration decision to student	As ratified by the series Examination Panel

Monitoring and evaluation

Data will be collected at the time of declaration by those students disclosing the need for Special Consideration. Confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018) and our regulatory requirements for Ofqual data returns.

Policy version and owner

Policy owner	Head of Qualifications & Membership
Version	1.2
Update	September 2023
Approval	SMB 05 September 2023
Policy review date	September 2024

Regulatory references

Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition
Condition G7: Arrangements for Special Consideration