

Postgraduate Research Special Considerations and Suspension: Guidance for Faculties

This guidance document is intended for use by: Postgraduate Research (PGR) Special Considerations Boards; the Faculty Director of the Graduate Schools; and Faculty Graduate School Office staff in handling requests made under the [Regulations Governing Special Considerations and Suspension of Candidature for Postgraduate Research students](#).

1. Timing of requests and retrospective suspensions

- 1.1 The Regulations state that '*in exceptional circumstances, and on the decision of the Faculty Director of the Graduate School, requests **may be accepted up to five working days after the assessment or deadline***'. The Regulations also state that '*retrospective suspensions are not normally permitted*'. Retrospective suspensions and 'late' requests should only be considered where there is a genuine reason that the request could not have been submitted at the time. If the research student is studying on a Tier 4 visa, guidance must be sought from the Student Records Team before a retrospective suspension is considered.

2. Requests by research students for their supervisory team not to view their request

- 2.1 Research students may ask that members of their supervisory team are not given sight of their request and supporting evidence. They must detail the reason for such a request on the special considerations form. The Chair of the PGR Special Considerations Board will then consider this request. Acceptable reasons would include where the circumstances surrounding a request relate to the supervisory team. Where the Chair deems the request not to be reasonable on grounds of confidentiality, a meeting may be arranged with the research student to discuss their concerns. The supervisory team **must not** be informed until consent is received from the research student.

3. Requests by research students for their request to be considered in a different Faculty

- 3.1 Research students may ask that their request is considered in a different Faculty. They must detail the reason for such a request on the form. The Faculty Director of the Graduate School will then consider this request. Acceptable reasons would include where the research student is also a member of staff in the Faculty, and they would like to keep their circumstances confidential from their colleagues. Where the Faculty Director of the Graduate School deems the request not to be reasonable, a meeting should be arranged with the research student to discuss their concerns. The request **must not** be submitted to the Special Considerations Board until consent is received from the research student.

4. How to ensure that online communications take place in a safe and secure manner

- 4.1 Any electronic communication related to Special Considerations must take place in a safe and secure environment, respecting the confidentiality of the process. Special Considerations Boards should use private and secure University of Southampton Sharepoint sites where possible. Any email communication must be via a University account, and use the word 'Confidential' in the subject line.

5. Recommendation codes

- 5.1 The full range of recommendations open to the PGR Special Considerations Board are detailed below and on the respective forms and in Section A4 of the regulations.

For requests for suspension of candidature (not related to Special Considerations)

Boards should select one of the following recommendations for mitigation:

Grant requested period of suspension of candidature
Grant an adjusted period of suspension of candidature (<i>please detail adjusted period below</i>)
Reject suspension of candidature
Refer to full PGR Special Considerations Board*

For requests for Special Consideration

Boards should select one of the outcomes below

A. The circumstances presented are currently not accepted as justification for affecting candidature, or affecting performance at an assessment.
B. The circumstances presented are currently of such a minor nature, they are unlikely to have affected candidature, or performance at an assessment.
C. There are sufficient grounds for believing that the student's candidature or performance at an assessment has been or would be adversely affected.

AND one of the following recommendations for mitigation

Recommendation for mitigation: (<i>please tick</i>)
Suspension of candidature
1. Grant requested period of suspension of candidature
2. Grant an adjusted period of suspension of candidature (<i>please detail period below</i>)
3. Reject suspension of candidature
Extension to candidature
4. Grant requested period of extension to candidature
5. Grant an adjusted period of extension to candidature (<i>please detail period below</i>)
6. Reject extension to candidature
Extension to Progression Review submission deadline
7. Grant requested extension to Progression Review submission deadline
8. Grant an adjusted extension to Progression Review submission deadline (<i>please detail period below</i>)
9. Reject extension to Progression Review submission deadline
Reschedule a Progression Review or, in exceptional circumstances only, a viva voce examination
10. Grant requested rescheduling of Progression Review or <i>viva voce</i> examination
11. Grant adjusted rescheduling of Progression Review or <i>viva voce</i> examination (<i>please detail below</i>)
12. Reject requested rescheduling of Progression Review or <i>viva voce</i> examination
Extension to a revised thesis submission deadline (following a viva voce examination)
13. Grant requested extension to revised thesis submission deadline
14. Grant an adjusted extension to revised thesis submission deadline (<i>please detail period below</i>)
15. Reject extension to revised thesis submission deadline
Special Considerations
16. Disregard Progression Review Report in accordance with the relevant progression regulations following this disregard
17. Disregard Progression Review Report and Viva and allow an additional attempt in accordance with the relevant progression regulations following this disregard.
18. Disregard Progression Review Viva and allow an additional attempt in accordance with the

relevant progression regulations following this disregard.
19. Disregard viva voce examination and allow an additional attempt in accordance with the relevant examination regulations following this disregard.
20. No further action
Logging of exceptional circumstances
21. Log circumstances
22. Do not log circumstances

6. Records of the Special Considerations Board

- 6.1 The exemplar *Record of PGR Special Considerations Board spreadsheet* (available on the Quality Handbook) details the mandatory and optional information to be noted as part of the records of the meetings of the Special Considerations Board. The spreadsheet can be used by the Faculty Graduate School Office as it is, or as a guideline to develop their own templates. The spreadsheet can also be used to record virtual meetings, and as a method to present all requests that have been considered since the last face-to-face meeting. The information recorded in the columns shown in red are mandatory, and Faculty Graduate School Offices may find additional information recorded in the columns shown in green useful, but not mandatory.

7. Data on applications

- 7.1 Data on requests should be incorporated into the Faculty's Annual Report on Research Degree Provision, which is subsequently scrutinised by the PGR QME Subcommittee. The *Record of PGR Special Considerations Board spreadsheet* shows the data that must be included as part of the Faculty's Annual Report on Research Degree Provision, although Faculties may wish to consider breaking the information down further.

8. Training

- 8.1 Meetings of the Special Considerations Forum are intended to sharing best practice - membership includes Faculty Directors of the Graduate Schools, and Faculty Graduate School Office Team Leaders, and Directors of Doctoral Programmes. Meetings take place twice a year, and are supported by the Quality Standards and Accreditation Team.

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