Understanding Exam Access Arrangements and Special Consideration.

As we enter the next phase of our planning for the summer grading process we turn our attentions to ensuring you are aware of our plans, at this stage, for making adjustments to assessment via special consideration.

It is important to note that this is for information and is an exercise in allowing us to ensure that we have everything on file for all students. It also ensures students are able to report to us any ‘mitigating circumstances’ that are eligible for consideration over the coming weeks.

Upon release of the guidance on 31st March we will be able to confirm our processes, again, this exercise is to allow us to start the collection of information that you may not have told us so we have enough time to process and work with you should we need to.

Whilst we are working on this, we also want to make sure you are aware of how we continue to meet any Exam Access Arrangements that some students are entitled to whilst we carry out the final Key Assessments.

Exam Access Arrangements: How we are applying these, and reasonable adjustments, to your in-class assessments.

It is important to note that Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration are two separate processes.

Throughout their time at St Brendan’s Sixth Form College students have been asked if they consider themselves to need access arrangements or if they have had this in their previous education establishment.

Exam Access Arrangements must be approved prior to assessment and students will have had opportunity to declare and submit evidence throughout their time at College.

For students with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), they have received a variety of support (if necessary) from a number of support services within the college throughout their time at College. Any Exam Access Arrangements have been applied throughout their time at College and this will continue.

If a student has an Education, Health Care Plan (previously the Statement of Special Educational Needs) then they will be receiving support from the Learning Development Department. This will include (if applicable) support in assessments throughout the student’s time at St Brendan’s Sixth Form College.

Concerning future assessments, the submission of JCQ applications for most arrangements has closed some time ago. However, if there is an emergency situation then I would invite either the student or parent/carer to contact examaccessarrangements@stbrn.ac.uk to discuss as soon as possible.

To support further with understanding access arrangements and reasonable adjustments we have taken the guidance directly form the Joint Council of Qualifications (JCQ) website.

***Access Arrangements***

*Access Arrangements are* ***pre-examination*** *adjustments for candidates based on evidence of need and normal way of working. Access Arrangements fall into two distinct categories: some arrangements are delegated to centres; others require prior JCQ awarding body approval.*

*Access Arrangements allow candidates/learners with special educational needs, disabilities or temporary injuries to access the assessment without changing the demands of the assessment. For example, readers, scribes and Braille question papers. In this way, Awarding Bodies will comply with the duty of the Equality Act 2010 to make ‘reasonable adjustments’.*

***Reasonable Adjustments***

*The Equality Act 2010 requires an Awarding Body to make reasonable adjustments where a disabled person would be at a substantial disadvantage in undertaking an assessment.*

*A reasonable adjustment for a particular person may be unique to that individual and may not be included in the list of available Access Arrangements.*

*How reasonable the adjustment is will depend on a number of factors including the needs of the disabled candidate/learner. An adjustment may not be considered reasonable if it involves unreasonable costs, timeframes or affects the security or integrity of the assessment.*

*There is no duty on the Awarding Bodies to make any adjustment to the assessment objectives being tested in an assessment.*

Special Consideration

(Also known as extenuating circumstances or mitigating circumstances)

# 1. What is Special Consideration in a normal exam series?

The Joint Qualifications Council (JCQ) define Special Consideration as follows:

*“Special consideration is a post-examination adjustment to a candidate’s mark or grade. This is to reflect temporary illness, temporary injury or some other event outside of the candidate’s control at the time of the assessment. It is applied when the issue or event 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 go some way to assist a candidate affected by a potentially wide range of difficulties, emotional or physical, which may influence performance in their examinations. It cannot remove the difficulty faced by the candidate.*

*This means that there will be some situations where candidates should not be entered for an examination. This is because only minor adjustments can be made to the mark awarded. To make larger adjustments would jeopardize the standard of the examination.”*

## 1.1 Providing opportunity to notify us of special consideration(s) (otherwise known as extenuating circumstances and/or mitigating circumstances)

Whilst we await the final guidance from Ofqual and the Awarding Bodies that will tell us how we apply special consideration, we wish to ensure we have given students the opportunity to tell us about any circumstance that might be eligible for special consideration. This will ensure, if eligible, we have everything on file and that we can apply any considerations we are permitted to equally, fairly and consistently.

By beginning this process now we wish to make it clear that we are not able, yet, to discuss the levels to which special consideration can be applied nor confirm eligibility. We are simply collecting the information now so that we are ready to implement the next phase once guidance is confirmed.

## 1.2 The purpose of completing this exercise now.

Again, the purpose of this exercise is to ensure that all students have opportunity to make us aware of the possible need to apply special consideration and for us to follow up and ensure we have all necessary documentation on file in order to make this a fair and consistent process.

## 1.3 Who should complete the form now?

**For students who have unfortunately already experienced one or more of the issues in section 2 (see below), please complete the form as soon as possible**, **even if you believe we know about the issue and are already working with you.** We would appreciate you completing the form by Sunday 28th March. You do not need to email us to let us know, we will pick up your submission from Monday 29th March 2021.

From the date of this communication onwards, it is imperative that any future request for special consideration (owing to a situation occurring at the time of assessment) is made on the day of the assessment **by submitting the form (link on page 4) AND emailing** **TAGqueries@stbrn.ac.uk** **to alert us you have updated the form.**

## 1.4 What guarantees can the College make about Special Consideration?

At this stage the College cannot and will not commit to providing any specific guarantees or promises about how the request for special consideration will be applied.

It is imperative that we follow the Awarding Body and any further Ofqual guidance to ensure we comply with all expectations.

# 2. Which students are eligible for special consideration?

Ordinarily special consideration must be applied for at the time of the assessment (i.e. when sitting formal exams) however with the cancellation of exams comes it is likely that we as a centre will be asked to consider and apply special consideration ourselves, rather than the awarding body.

As a guide to what is likely to apply the following is taken from the JCQ guidance for use from 01 September 2020

## 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 coursework or non-examination assessment, 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 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, training camps or other events at an international level at the time of the assessment, e.g. representing their country at an international level in chess or football;**
* 2.1.7 failure by the centre to implement **previously approved** access arrangements **for that specific examination series**.

## 2.3 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 room caused by another candidate, such as momentary bad behaviour or a mobile phone ringing;
* 2.3.5 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 candidate is found not guilty.)
* 2.3.6 the consequences of taking alcohol or recreational 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 quality of teaching, staff shortages, building work or lack of facilities; Special consideration must be applied for at the time of the assessment.5
* 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 coursework or non-examination assessment at all, unless coursework or non examination assessment 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 because of joining the class part way through;
* 2.3.16 a 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 by the published deadline.

If, having read this guidance, you believe you are eligible for special consideration (see the JCQ list above) then please complete our ‘Request for Special Consideration’ Form, which can be found by clicking on the link below.

[Registering for Special Consideration](https://forms.office.com/r/HmdbP4LDUc)

**It is the student’s responsibility to notify the College of any special consideration request AND to ensure any relevant documentation requested is provided in a timely fashion.**

**It is very important to remember our point in 1.3 above.**

The submission of the Request for Special Consideration Form is solely for the purpose, at this stage, of ensuring the College has everything on file and we are ready to apply due consideration as per the guidance that will follow from 31st March 2021.

The College cannot make any guarantees as to how the information will be used or to what level consideration will be made until the guidance has been provided to us. Future updates after the Easter break will allow us to provide more detail about this.

If you have any queries regarding the TAG process, please contact us on TAGqueries@stbrn.ac.uk and a member of our team will get back to you.