



Academic Guides

Applying for Special Considerations remotely A Guide for Postgraduate Research Students

All aspects of our lives been impacted by coronavirus and the lockdowns.

The way in which you study and how you are assessed will also have changed.

The University has introduced several changes to help take this into account.

The current health crisis has however not stopped other unforeseen life events happening, and general changes made by the University during this health crisis cannot take all individual circumstances into account.

How this guide can help you

Special Considerations are how you inform the University when your studies are impacted by unforeseen circumstances beyond your control.

The process is key to helping you manage the impact of those circumstances, and to inform the University of the impact on your studies sooner rather than later.

We have some top tips to help you with some of the challenges that this process may present.

The key challenge being - *How to capture often difficult and complex circumstances and describe their impact in a short form?*

Special Considerations – help & support

While you can still contact your supervisor, Faculty Graduate School Office, or the Advice Centre advisers, staff are now working remotely, which means there may be delays in getting a response. Therefore, reading and following this guide will help you make a strong start with your application in case you are close to the deadline.



Special Considerations – the basics

The University [Regulations Governing Special Considerations and Suspension of Candidature for Postgraduate Research Students](#) outline the process, timescales, provide a non-exhaustive list of the situations that are considered ‘extenuating circumstances’, as well as the potential outcomes that are available.

You will also find basic information about the process on the Doctoral College website: [Special Considerations | Doctoral College | University of Southampton](#)

PLEASE NOTE – University may introduce changes to the process in light of the Covid-19. For instance, Health Sciences and Medical PhD students who are drafted back to NHS to help with the pandemic may suspend without applying through the Special Considerations process. For more details and up-to-date information contact your Faculty Graduate School, or check the Quality Handbook [here](#).

Which Special Considerations?

The University [Regulations Governing Special Considerations and Suspension of Candidature for Postgraduate Research Students](#) outline two different Special Considerations applications:

[SC1](#) – for requests for special consideration that are related to extenuating circumstances, which are unexpected and unplanned.

[SC2](#) – for suspension of candidature requests that are unrelated to extenuating circumstances (for example maternity, paternal leave, employment commitments, placements or other planned breaks).

Top tips – the basics...

STEP 1 - READ

The first step is to take time to read the Special Considerations regulations to understand the process and possible outcomes better. You will find the Special Considerations Regulations for PGR students [here](#).

STEP 2 - REFLECT



Start with some **basic questions before starting the process**:

- Which form do I complete (see above)?
- What are the potential outcomes offered by this process?
- Do your circumstances meet the key principles and purpose set out in the regulations?
- What are the deadlines for applying?
- Are there any implications for my visa? (international students)

STEP 3 - COMPLETE

The Special Considerations form's section:

“Please describe your circumstances and how they have impacted upon you and your studies?”

Top tips - describing the circumstances

This is a process where your application is likely to be compared to the aims and criteria of the process. What are the key words in the regulations? Can you use the words from the regulations in your description of your circumstances?

Top tips – describing the impact

It is easy, when applying, for your focus to be on your circumstances and assume that their impact is self-evident. It is important to make the impact explicit.

When thinking about impact consider:

- Providing clear and concise examples of the practical effect on you
- The consequence of these for the assessment/s
- Steps you may have taken to manage the impact – for example support services/medical professionals contacted

What do I tick on “Section 3: The request (select all that apply)”?

Consider which of the listed options best addresses your needs? Do you need more time to submit a progression review? Do you need to reschedule a viva, or more time to submit corrections? If in doubt, discuss it with your supervisor, who should be able to guide you on the most appropriate option for you.



Conclusion

It is normal and understandable that applying for this process will seem challenging when you have already faced tough times. It is well worth reading through this guidance, contacting the support on offer and submitting the strongest possible application. The Special Considerations process may be part of more generally opening up about challenges faced, reaching out for help and support and managing difficult circumstances as best you can.

Important relevant links & forms

- Regulations Governing Special Considerations and Suspension of Candidature for Postgraduate Research students: [Regulations Governing Special Considerations and Suspension of Candidature for Postgraduate Research Students](#)
- Doctoral College information on Special Considerations: [Special Considerations | Doctoral College | University of Southampton](#)
- Special Considerations form for extenuating circumstances: [SC1 form](#)
- Special Considerations form for planned suspension: [SC2 form](#)

Further help and guidance

For further guidance on the Regulations Governing Special Considerations, contact The Advice Centre. Tel: 02380 592 085 Email: advice@susu.org

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