



Special consideration in the November 2021 exam series: a guide for exams officers

We know that centres have questions about special consideration in the November 2021 series. To support you, we have created this supplement which contains extra information and should help answer your questions.

Due to the changes we have made because of Covid-19, you should use this supplement, rather than section 5.5 of the *Cambridge Handbook*, when deciding whether you should apply for special consideration for your candidates.

5.5 Special consideration

Special consideration is a change we make to a candidate's mark after an exam. This may be because something unexpected happened to the candidate, for example temporary illness, injury or bereavement that had an impact on their ability to perform in the exam. It can only go some way towards helping a candidate whose exam performance might have been affected.

Special consideration cannot change the circumstances the candidate faces. There will be situations where you should not enter a candidate for an exam because they are not fit to cope with the assessment. We can only make small adjustments to the mark awarded, in order to protect the assessment standard.

There are minimum requirements for special consideration:

- The candidate was affected at the time of the assessment.
- The circumstances were outside of the candidate's control.
- The candidate had been fully prepared for the exam and covered the whole course.

You should not apply for 'Candidate present for the assessment but disadvantaged' or 'Candidate absent for an acceptable reason' until after the exam. At this point you will be able to confirm how the candidate was affected by adverse circumstances, or the reason for their absence.

Our decision whether to award special consideration is based on various factors. These may vary from candidate to candidate and from one assessment to another.

NEW You should not apply for 'Candidate absent for an acceptable reason' if you have already applied, and been given, a component exemption.

We cannot provide a grade if a candidate has an exemption, and/or is absent for acceptable reasons, for all components in a syllabus.

Important information



Apply for special consideration no later than seven days after the last exam of the syllabus in the November 2021 series.

5.5.1 Special consideration principles

- (a) We assess all candidates according to the same marking criteria so that grades and certificates are equally valid.
- (b) We assess all candidates on what they know and can do, not on what they might have achieved if circumstances had been different.
- (c) Special consideration must not give the candidate an advantage over other candidates.
- (d) Special consideration must not affect the integrity of the assessment, and we will therefore restrict it in certain syllabuses.

5.5.2 Candidate present for the assessment but disadvantaged

- (a) We will normally give special consideration by applying an allowance of marks to an affected component.
- (b) The size of the allowance depends on the timing, nature and extent of the circumstances.
- (c) We cannot apply special consideration cumulatively.
- (d) We will not discuss how much special consideration should be given with centres, candidates or their parents.

5.5.3 Candidate absent for an acceptable reason

- (a) If a candidate is absent from a component for an acceptable reason we may calculate and award an assessed mark for the missing component.
- (b) In this case the minimum requirements for calculating an assessed mark are that the candidate should:
 - (i) have covered the whole course
 - (ii) have completed one component for the syllabus in the November 2021 exam series. Carry-forward marks do not count towards this.
- (c) We cannot calculate an assessed mark for Cambridge International A Levels where a candidate has not completed any A Level components in the exam series.
- (d) **NEW** We cannot calculate an assessed mark if the only component completed within a syllabus is an endorsed component.

5.5.4 Unacceptable reasons for special consideration

Candidates will not qualify for special consideration in the cases below. This list does not include every reason:

- (a) loss of teaching time due to circumstances related to Covid-19

- (b) long-term illness or other difficulties during the course affecting revision time, unless the illness or circumstances are apparent at the time of the assessment
- (c) bereavement more than six months before the assessment, unless there is an anniversary at the time of the assessment or there are on-going matters such as inquests or court cases
- (d) matters at home such as moving house or taking holidays (including school/exchange visits, field trips and competing in sporting events) at the time of the assessment
- (e) minor disturbance in the exam caused by candidates, such as bad behaviour and mobile phones
- (f) the consequences of committing a crime or being charged with an offence
- (g) the consequences of taking alcohol or any other non-prescribed drugs
- (h) the consequences of disobeying your internal regulations
- (i) not preparing candidates properly for the exam for any reason. See section 5.5.8(c)
- (j) staff shortages, building work or lack of facilities
- (k) misreading the instructions of the question papers and answering the wrong questions
- (l) making personal arrangements that conflict with the exam timetable
- (m) submitting no coursework at all and an exemption (if available) wasn't applied for.
- (n) not covering the course because the candidate joined part way through
- (o) permanent disability, unless a change in condition further affects the candidate at the time of the assessment
- (p) unless there is a good reason, not processing access arrangements, different venue arrangements and timetable deviations by the deadlines
- (q) misreading the timetable and/or not attending at the right time and in the right place.

5.5.5 Shortfall in coursework

- (a) For circumstances unrelated to Covid-19 where a candidate has not produced enough coursework, please see points (b) to (f) below.
- (b) Where a candidate has not produced enough coursework due to an unexpected illness or other misfortune, we may be able to accept a reduced amount. It will not be possible in every case, for example, if the candidate has not met the coursework

assessment objectives, or the shortfall has been caused by an unacceptable reason. To receive a grade the candidate should have completed at least 50 per cent of the coursework.

- (c) If a candidate does not complete any coursework they will receive a 'NO RESULT' for that syllabus.
- (d) You should contact us as soon as you become aware of the shortfall, so we can give you further guidance.
- (e) When you apply, tell us how much of the coursework the candidate has completed overall as a percentage and give a breakdown of marks across the assessment objectives. Candidates should always try to finish the coursework, and we will look at the remaining time the candidate has left before we reply. We will not normally agree to accept less coursework beforehand.
- (f) We will not give special consideration to allow for your individual teaching arrangements.

5.5.6 Lost or damaged coursework

- (a) Where a candidate's work has been lost or damaged you must tell us as soon as possible. You must tell us what has happened and how.
- (b) You must be able to prove that the work was done and that you monitored it.
- (c) If you have recorded marks we will allow you to submit them as normal. If work is lost before you mark it, you must send any existing coursework for the candidates affected. Send a copy of your application when you send your samples for moderation. If there is no work you must include a copy of your application when you send your samples for moderation.

5.5.7 Coursework extensions

- (a) You can apply for an extension to the deadline for submitting coursework marks and samples.
- (b) Email info@cambridgeinternational.org along with the relevant evidence before the first coursework deadline.

5.5.8 Other situations where we may consider special consideration

- (a) There may be complex cases that need special consideration. We may ask our assessment managers or senior examiner to decide how to award it. This means the results may not show the special consideration straight away.
- (b) Where a syllabus lists set works (e.g. set texts in a literature syllabus) and you have prepared candidates for the wrong work, we may consider special consideration. We will only consider cases where:

- There is evidence candidates have been fully prepared for the assessment objectives in the syllabus.
- The incorrect work studied was assessed in the previous year or is listed in the same syllabus booklet.

We will consider each application separately. The Head of Centre must make sure candidates are taught the correct works.

5.5.9 Applying for special consideration

- (a) You must use either the 'Special consideration' area of [Direct](#) or *Exam Day – Form 7*.
- (b) You must only apply for special consideration if the Head of Centre fully supports it. Candidates must not complete the form themselves.
- (c) You must be able to provide evidence to support your application if we ask to see it. You must keep this evidence until we publish results.
- (d) You must submit applications within seven days of the last exam in the series of the syllabus affected. We will not usually accept late applications.
- (e) We may not consider your application if you do not send us the right information. We will reject incomplete applications. You will have to complete the application again and resubmit it to us.
- (f) A friend or relative of the candidate should not produce the evidence to support special consideration applications. Where this is unavoidable, a senior member of centre staff must countersign and authorise the evidence. We can refuse evidence a friend or relative has produced.
- (g) The Head of Centre or exams officer may attach a letter with the application to help explain any unusual circumstances.
- (h) We will tell you if your application is approved or rejected if you use *Exam Day – Form 7*. If you use [Direct](#) you must check your account for the outcome.

[Direct](#)

Go to <https://direct.cie.org.uk>, log in and go to the 'Special consideration' area.

You can submit applications for:

- Present but disadvantaged candidates.
- Absent candidates.
- Coursework-related special consideration (except 'component adjustments').

Administrative forms



Forms available from the 'Support Materials' section of [Direct](#):

- Special Consideration (Shortfall in Coursework): Coursework and Moderation – Form 2
- Special Consideration (Lost Coursework): Coursework and Moderation – Form 3
- Special Consideration: Exam Day – Form 7

Extra guidance



Our guide to applying for special consideration online is in the 'Help' section of the 'Special consideration' area of [Direct](#).

Cambridge Associates/ Associate Centres



Associate Centres should apply for special consideration using the relevant form rather than [Direct](#). They should download the relevant form from the 'Support Materials' section of [Direct](#) and send it to their Cambridge Associate. The Cambridge Associate should check the form and email it to us within seven days of the last exam of the syllabus affected.

5.5.10 Appeals against special consideration decisions

To appeal against an outcome, please see section 7.4 of the *Cambridge Handbook*.

5.5.11 Cambridge Primary and Lower Secondary Checkpoint

You cannot apply for special consideration for Cambridge Primary and Lower Secondary Checkpoint candidates. This is because the whole marking process is linked to the curriculum framework.

If a candidate does not sit a paper, the diagnostic feedback we send you will not include this candidate. We will not send their statement of achievement and report to student for this syllabus.

5.5.12 Honorary certificates

You may ask for an honorary certificate if a candidate:

- Was entered but died before finishing the minimum amount of assessment.
- Was entered but is terminally ill and did not complete the minimum amount of assessment.