

# Service Excellence

## Special Circumstances, Coursework Extensions and Concessions

Summary for Schools – December 2017

### Service Excellence Overarching Aims

- Improve services for the users – whether students, administrative staff or academics.
- Create greater efficiency and effectiveness in our services by removing duplication and redeploying resource where appropriate.
- Use an evidence based approach to drive process improvements and simplification while allowing for flexibility where agreed as appropriate.
- Improve data quality and consistency to enhance evidence based decision making.

### Consultation

Via a series of workshops, interviews, visits and other events we have consulted with students, the Students' Association, 18 schools and deaneries (both academic and professional services staff), all College offices, Student Disability Service, Student Counselling Service, Academic Services, and Student Systems. Through this consultative approach we have identified the proposal which is now being drafted into a full business case (expected February 2018).

**The key changes are outlined below.** Further consultation on system specifications; operating framework and training/guidance starts in December 2017 and will continue into early 2018.

### Key Changes

#### Coursework Extensions (CE) and Special Circumstances (SC)

- A single University wide online application form and system to support processing and management of cases. System linked to student and course records (EUCLID) with part pre-populated application, reduced duplication of data, case reports generated with minimal administration, improved reporting and better management of internal evidence requests for SC e.g. SDS and Personal Tutors.
- Enhanced training and guidance materials for staff including case studies, decision matrices to support staff and in turn students and improve consistency of decision making / application of policy.
- No external evidence requirements for extensions.
- Academic (assessment) requirements, at a course level, will be recorded up-front. Decisions on extensions will be made at School level by professional services staff.
- Extension requests turnaround time of 2 working days; late applications re-routed to SC.
- Significant reduction in the number of Special Circumstances Committees (SCC); proposal to host these at College level. **SCC committee membership will be reviewed to ensure an appropriate balance of expertise and representation.**; once SCC decisions are made they are binding and passed to the Schools for action at course and programme level.
- In response to very clear student demand, increase the frequency of SCC; recognising the limits on what SCC may be able to conclude without being adjacent to the exam board and risks of handling multiple applications.

## Policy

- Many changes are dependent upon changes to UoE policy. During 2017/18 the project team is working alongside Curriculum and Student Progression Committee (CSPC) regarding the review of, and proposals for, change to policy. Any agreed changes would not come into effect until 2018/19 at the earliest, subject to Board and CSPC approval towards the end of 2017/18.
- It is proposed that a live pilot will not take place in semester two of 2017/8 because of the relation to policy and because piloting within current policy was seen to potentially advantage students in the pilot. It will be possible to test the system and processes to support the process in a test environment.

## Areas for Further Review

- Although in the initial scope of this project, further work is still required to evaluate the benefits of including concessions as part of this project. Initial consultations indicate that, if we proceed, there is merit in aligning to SC and CE proposals (which can also be seen as a form of concession/relaxation or regulation or policy). Concessions that are student driven e.g. interruptions of or extension to duration of study, will map more closely to SC/CE processes than concession driven by Board of Examiners. This work started in December 2017 and continues into early 2018, with workshops being planned for early January 2018.
- Support for students with chronic conditions; further discussions are planned with Student Disability Service and Counselling Services to consider possible variant processes or alternatives to repeated SC applications.

## Some Current Project Considerations

- Communications: Engagement with the project team and key stakeholders, particularly Schools could have been more extensive e.g. some workshops had limited sign-up. The project team will endeavour to raise awareness and undertake more outreach work but we are mindful of capacity of Schools to engage with multiple projects at any one time (often with same key leads).
- Scalability: The project team is currently undertaking modelling to assess the target operating model for the proposals. The degree to which the committees are lifted to a higher level, and the regularity of committee meetings is moveable within the current proposition, although a final decision will be taken in accordance with the Service Excellence Design Principles.
- Technical: Links from EUCLID to LEARN are known to be problematic so there is a risk of duplication e.g. assessment deadlines in 2 places; APT is not used by all Schools and there is some inconsistency in how assessments are set-up e.g. where to apply extensions. Phase 3 of the Student Administration & Support programme will begin to address these issues, with scoping of that work to begin in April 2018.
- Non-Technical: this is more than a technical change project, deliberately focussing on business processes before scoping system enhancements. Extensive work will be required to support the wider changes associated with this project; this project will need support after initial roll out.

## Further Information

Project WIKI: <https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/SESAS/Special+Circumstances%2C+Extensions+and+Concessions>

Key contacts:

Project Sponsor: [Stephen Warrington](#), Director of Teaching, School of Engineering

Business Lead: [Olwen Gorie](#), Head of UG Teaching Organisation, Edinburgh College of Art.

Service Excellence: Nathalie Caron and Shirley McCulloch - [Service.Excellence.Programme@ed.ac.uk](mailto:Service.Excellence.Programme@ed.ac.uk)