

THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD LEARNING AND TEACHING SERVICES

**Statement of Procedures for Anonymous Degree Classification**

**(Effective from 2008-09)**

**1. Principle**

It is a requirement of Senate that all undergraduate and taught postgraduate degrees shall be classified anonymously, with effect from the cohort graduating in 2009. Robust reporting of students' special circumstances is essential to ensure that anonymous classification operates fairly and consistently. This statement outlines how departments should operate anonymous classification and ensure that special circumstances are reported effectively by students and staff. Departments should ensure that records for existing students are maintained in the appropriate format with immediate effect, in accordance with the guidance below, to enable anonymous classification to take place.

**2. Administration of Anonymous Classification**

**2.1 The pre-Examination Board Meeting**

A small subset of the Departmental Examination Board membership should meet prior to the full Examination Board, to consider all students who are to be classified, for whom special circumstances have been reported. The membership of the pre-Examination Board meeting should be determined by individual departments. It could include the Exams Officer, Director of Teaching or their equivalent, Level tutors, or external examiners, where appropriate.

The pre-Examination Board meeting should consider all available evidence of adverse personal circumstances that may have affected students' module grades at Level 2 or above. It is expected that the pre-Board meeting will consider students by name. The meeting should identify all those candidates for whom there are mitigating circumstances which could have a bearing on overall degree classification. Where such cases are identified, the meeting should agree a recommendation for the Departmental Examination Board, detailing the nature and extent of mitigation that is appropriate. It will not normally be appropriate to include details of the adverse circumstances themselves. The pre-Examination Board meeting should be aware of any module grades that have already been adjusted to take account of special circumstances, to avoid any unintentional "double counting" of such circumstances.

The Pre-Examination Board meeting should be run in accordance with institutional guidance on the management of exam boards, which is available at: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/lets/design/handbook/examboards.html>

## **2.2 The Departmental Examination Board Meeting**

Departmental Examination Boards should identify candidates by registration number. The recommendations from the pre-Examination Board meeting on special cases will form part of the results data presented to the Examiners. In all other respects, Departmental Examination Boards should operate according to standard procedures. Guidance is available at: <http://www.shef.ac.uk/lets/design/handbook/examboards.html>

## **2.3 Reporting Special Circumstances**

Students, academic departments and professional support services all play important roles in ensuring that the pre-Examination Board meetings are fully informed of all students' relevant adverse personal circumstances.

### **2.3.1 Ensuring Students Report Special Circumstances**

Students should be clearly informed that they have a responsibility to notify their departments where special circumstances which could have a bearing on degree classification exist. Departments should encourage students to submit evidence on an ongoing basis as and when the special circumstances apply so that appropriate support can be provided, if required, as soon as possible. Students should be made aware of the procedures for submitting such information.

A special circumstances reporting form is available from Student Services, at [http://www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/07/49/40/special\\_circumstances\\_form.pdf](http://www.shef.ac.uk/content/1/c6/07/49/40/special_circumstances_form.pdf). Students should complete and submit the form, together with accompanying documentary evidence, to their department. The form enables students to note the modules or module components for which the special circumstances may have adversely affected their performance.

Advice on reporting special circumstances is prominently displayed on the Student Services Information Desk (SSiD) website and is included in the generic information for student handbooks provided by Learning and Teaching Services (LeTS). The Taught Programmes Office (TPO) email all students one month before the final examination period to remind them to notify their departments of any special circumstances which should be considered by the Examiners.

In addition, departments should communicate to students the importance of reporting special circumstances, by:

- Reinforcing this message to students, e.g. via notice-boards, emails, meetings with students etc;
- Providing department-specific information on the procedures for reporting special circumstances; and
- Informing final year students via email of the date by which evidence of special circumstances should be submitted for consideration in determining their degree classification.

### **2.3.2 Ensuring Staff Report Special Circumstances to the pre-Examination Board Meeting**

In each department, a member of staff should be responsible for collecting all evidence of special circumstances which will be considered at the pre-Examination Board meeting. This could be the Exams Officer, Director of Teaching or their equivalent, or a designated secretary. Departments should ensure that all staff report special circumstances to this central point of contact.

Departments should also ensure that all special circumstances are reported to the Taught Programmes Office (TPO), by copying the Special Circumstances reporting form to the TPO Director. TPO can then place a flag on the student record and notify all other departments involved in teaching the affected student that special circumstances exist.

### **2.3.3 Systems for recording special circumstances**

The CIS record will be flagged by TPO to show that special circumstances exist for all students for whom departments have reported special circumstances. Departments are encouraged to use the Departmental Assessment System (DAS) to improve the electronic recording of students' special circumstances, since DAS can record flags on student records at the level of individual modules and module components. Using DAS, departments are also able to flag up whether the notes on a student's record should be considered by the pre-Examination Board meeting.

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