



## SPECIAL CASES COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

### **1. Status and purpose**

The Special Cases Committee was established in 2013 by the College's Management Team. Its two main tasks are 1) to oversee and make decisions regarding students who exceed or are in danger of exceeding the time limits for their course; 2) to handle requests for extensions based on mitigating circumstances.

### **2 Time limits**

- 2.1 The duration of the courses validated by the University of Wales is as indicated in the validated course documents.
- 2.2 The duration of the master's courses, as agreed with The University of Manchester in the programme specification, is specified in Appendix A.
- 2.3 The present policy does not cover the courses mentioned in 2.1 and 2.2 because the College has no say in their duration. The duration of these courses is fixed by the validating Universities, so only their termination comes under the auspices of the Committee.
- 2.4 The duration of the BA course, as stipulated by Spurgeon's College, is specified in Appendix B.
- 2.5 The Online version of the BA has a separate policy on course length, see Appendix C.

### **3 Extensions and suspensions for BA students**

- 3.1 A student who is running out of time to complete their course can apply for an extension to their period of registration. A student can also ask for a suspension of studies in case they foresee that they will be unable to study for at least a semester.
- 3.2 A student who thinks that they qualify for an extension or suspension needs to send a formal application to the Committee, c/o the Senior Registrar. An application needs to be accompanied by relevant supporting documentation.
- 3.3 The Committee can decide to grant a suspension or an extension to a student who is unable to request such suspension or extension due to severe illness or similar circumstances.
- 3.4 An extension or suspension can be granted:
  - on compassionate grounds, for example, in cases of serious domestic difficulty
  - in case of illness
  - because of exceptional professional commitments

## **4 Termination**

- 4.1 If unforeseen or unavoidable circumstances prevent or hinder progress, a student is expected to discuss the situation with their pastoral tutor or the Director of Studies at the earliest opportunity.
- 4.2 A student who has started one or more units but submitted no work for over a year, or completed units and not started others for over a year, may be deemed to have withdrawn from the course, unless there are mitigating circumstances.
- 4.3 In such a case the Committee will send the inactive student a letter, giving them two months to become active. Such letters will normally be issued in June with a view to a final decision regarding termination around 1 September.
- 4.4 The Committee can terminate the registration of an inactive student.

## **5 Mitigating circumstances**

The Committee handles requests for extensions based on mitigating circumstances. The extensions policy is in Appendix D.

## **6 Meetings**

The Committee meets as required but decisions can also be reached by correspondence. The Committee can decide to hear a student and other persons such as a student's pastoral tutor.

## **7 Reporting**

The Committee reports (in general terms only) to the Examinations Scrutiny Board

## **8 Storing evidence**

Records on decisions will be kept in the student's file. Confidential supporting evidence will be kept in a distinctively coloured, sealed envelope, labelled as to contents and date. Such envelopes can only be opened with permission from two of these three members of staff: Principal, Vice Principal (Director of Studies) and Senior Registrar. They will be destroyed when the student has completed their course and been awarded a qualification, at the moment when the file is moved from the student records to the tower filing room.

## **9 Membership**

The Committee has as its members:

- The Vice Principal (Director of Training)(chair)
- The Senior Registrar (minutes)
- The Vice Principal (Director of Studies) (convenor)
- The Chaplain (vice chair)

Decisions need to be taken by at least three members of the committee acting together.

The Tutor in Ethics is available to attend the committee if needed.

In the absence of the Registrar another member of the Academic Administration team may attend to take the minutes.

All members of the Committee have a vote. Although the chair has the casting vote in the event of the committee being deadlocked on any particular decision, they may refer contentious issues and issues of precedent to the Principal.

<b>Document control box</b>			
Title	Terms of Reference Special Cases Committee		
Date approved	March 2016	Implementation date	
Next review date			
Version	5	Supersedes version	4
Approving body	Leadership Team		
Quality Code consulted	B3, B4		
Member of staff responsible	Vice Principal (Director of Training)		

## **Appendix A: Time-limits for the master's courses**

### **Full-time (non-vocational)**

The full-time mode of the programme lasts for 51 weeks. Work for the first part of the programme, the taught units, will be completed by the end of May. Once a student has qualified for Part Two by passing the first part, they may complete the dissertation during the remaining months of the year. The University of Manchester has set the maximum period of registration for full-time candidates at two calendar years.

The full-time Postgraduate Certificate programme lasts for a semester; the full-time Postgraduate Diploma programme lasts for two semesters.

### **Part-time (non-vocational)**

Part-time students attempt one unit per semester so that their studies on Part One last for two years. Assuming a September start, work for the first part of the programme will be completed in May of the second year of registration. Students starting in February will complete Part One by the end of January two years later. Students registered part-time for the Postgraduate Certificate have a year to complete their course; students registered part-time for the Postgraduate Diploma have two years to complete.

Once a student has qualified for Part Two of the programme by passing the first part, they may complete their dissertation during the remaining period of registration. The University of Manchester has set the maximum period of registration of part-time candidates at five calendar years. This also applies to students on the Radical Free Church Movements pathway who have more flexibility within their period of registration.

### **Full-time vocational**

For candidates who follow the pathway Advanced Christian Studies in order to become accredited ministers in the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the study is intrinsically related to work in a placement and therefore the full-time mode of the programme lasts for two years. Work for the first part can be completed by February of the second year. Full-time ministerial students attempt units to the value of 120 credits over three semesters, attending College for two days per week. Exceptionally the unit Professional Ministry and Practice will be taught over all four semesters of the programme.

Once a student has qualified for Part Two of the programme by passing Part One, they may complete their dissertation during the remaining months of the second year. The earliest date for submission of the dissertation is 1st September. The maximum period of registration for full-time candidates is three calendar years.

### **Part-time vocational**

For part-time ministerial candidates the programme lasts for three or four years. Part-time ministerial students attempt units to the value of 120 credits over four semesters, attending College for one day per week. Work for Part One can be completed by the end of May in the second year.

Once a student has qualified for the second part of the programme by passing Part One, they may complete their dissertation during the remaining period of registration. The maximum period of registration for part-time candidates is five calendar years.

### **In-service**

Students on the in-service pathways Applied Theology and Preaching attempt the four units of Part One over three years. They are expected to commit an average of twelve hours per week to self-directed study. Once a student has qualified for Part Two of the programme by passing the first part, they may complete their dissertation during the remaining period of registration. The University of Manchester has set the maximum period of registration of in-service candidates at five calendar years.

Students registered for the Postgraduate Certificate attempt the two units over eighteen months; students registered for the Postgraduate Diploma have three years to complete their units.

### **Appendix B: Time-limits for the BA course**

The University of Manchester does not specify the duration of an undergraduate course provided a student makes some progress. In the programme specification of the BA course, Spurgeon's College has set the following time limits:

#### **Full-time**

The full-time mode of the programme lasts for three years, with students attempting 120 credits per year. The maximum period of registration for full-time candidates is five calendar years.

#### **Part-time**

Part-time students normally attempt 60 credits (6 units) per year although other quantities are possible. Most students therefore complete level 4 (Certificate level) in two years and the entire Degree in six years. The maximum period of registration for the Degree for part-time candidates is ten calendar years. For the Certificate in Theology this is four years, for the Diploma in Theology eight years.

These time-limits are reduced pro rata at the outset of the candidature when a candidate is admitted to study with transferable credit (APL).

### **Appendix C: Time-limits and credit transfer in Online Learning**

1. The Certificate in Theology is awarded on the successful completion of 120 credits. It may be studied on a part-time basis for two to three years. In exceptional situations the study can last up to four years.
2. The Diploma in Theology is awarded on the successful completion of 240 credits. It may be studied on a part-time basis for three to five years from the initial registration. In exceptional situations the study can last up to eight years.
3. The Degree is awarded on the successful completion of 360 credits. It may be studied part-time for six to nine years from the initial registration. In exceptional situations the study can last up to ten years.  
Students registered with the University of Wales work towards the degree of Bachelor of Divinity (Honours), those registered with the University of Manchester towards the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Theology (Honours)
4. The above time-limits are reduced pro rata at the outset of the candidature when a candidate is admitted to study with transferable credit, as described below. Thus students who enter the scheme with 120 credits will have two to three years to complete the Diploma and three to six years to complete the Degree.
5. The time-limits may be extended in exceptional cases upon formal application to the Special Cases Committee at Spurgeon's College, c/o the Senior Registrar. Any

application needs to be accompanied by relevant supporting documentation. The application is handled in accordance with the requirements of the validating University.

6. The performance of a student in previous studies and/or any prior experiential learning can be counted towards the requirements for the award of a degree. Such prior study or experiential learning shall be current, relevant to the course and needs the approval and credit-rating of the University. The prior study shall have been completed at a University or other institution whose schemes have been recognised by the University of Manchester.

7. The number of transferred credits which may be accepted to count towards the degree of the University of Manchester is normally 120. In special cases, where there is extensive overlap between the student's previous course and Spurgeon's course as validated by the University of Manchester, up to 240 credits may be accepted.

## Appendix D: Extensions policy

### Extensions policy

1. Students on all taught courses should submit assessed coursework by the required dates.
2. Students registered with the University of **Wales** who fail to submit will be deemed to have failed that piece of assessed work. Any work that comes in after the deadline will be regarded as a re-submission and receive a maximum mark of 40%.
3. For students registered with The University of **Manchester**, assessed coursework submitted after the deadline without good cause will incur a penalty determined by the lateness of its arrival:
  - \* ten marks will be deducted for the first day after the deadline
  - \* ten additional marks will be deducted for each day thereafter (including weekends)This penalty also applies to long essays and dissertations.
4. Students who are unable to submit assessed coursework by the deadline should complete an MC1 form and send it to the Senior Registrar requesting an extension of the date of submission. They should also submit any supporting evidence as mentioned on the form. If the request is made because of known circumstances, it should be made **at least two weeks** before the required date. Requests which are submitted closer to the date or even after it can be considered if they pertain to new and unforeseen circumstances. The letter or email should state the reasons (mitigating circumstances) why the work will not be completed on time. In the case of illness, a medical certificate should accompany the written application. Requests which do not state valid reasons will be rejected.
5. Grounds for an extension are *unforeseeable* or *unpreventable* circumstances that could have a *significant adverse effect* on the performance of a student, including:
  - Significant illness or injury;
  - The death or critical illness of a close family member;
  - Family crises or major financial problems leading to acute stress;
  - Absence for jury service or maternity, paternity or adoption leave, or unavoidable commitments with the armed forces
6. Circumstances that will *not* normally be regarded as grounds for an extension include:
  - Holidays and events that were planned or could reasonably have been expected;

- Assessments that are scheduled close together;
  - Misreading the timetable or misunderstanding the requirements for assessments;
  - Inadequate planning and time management;
  - Failure, loss or theft of a computer or printer that prevents submission of work on time: students should back up work regularly and not leave completion so late that they cannot find another computer or printer;
  - Consequences of paid employment;
  - Exam stress or panic attacks not diagnosed as illness.
7. The Senior Registrar will present the requests to the Special Cases Committee; if a request is approved, a new deadline for submission of the work will be set, normally **two weeks** after the first deadline.
  8. The University of Manchester does not admit appeals against decisions regarding extensions other than on procedural grounds.
  9. Students are generally discouraged from asking for extensions for coursework. They should make every possible effort to avoid running out of time. **Being busy in church or at work will not be accepted as a valid excuse because all staff and students are busy.** Students who have more work than they can cope with could consider attempting fewer modules per semester.
  10. Exiting students and those changing courses should be aware that late submission in the second semester (whether for good reasons or not) will inevitably prevent them from graduating in that year, whilst changing course could become impossible.
  11. Tutors can set informal deadlines prior to the formal deadline. Such deadlines are advisory rather than strictly binding but they serve the good practice of staff and students. They help students and staff to spread their workloads.
  12. Students are urged to submit essays as and when they have been written, and not to pile them up in order to hand them all in at the last moment. In this way they will profit from the feedback given on early essays to improve the later ones.
  13. Requests will be monitored in order to identify students who make repeated requests.
  14. The Director of Studies will grant extra time at the end of semester 1 to students whose are - as a consequence of the timetable - attempting more credits in their first semester than in their second semester. In case of students attempting more credits in the second semester than in the first, those who are not in their final year will be granted extra time at the end of the second semester. Every year the Senior Registrar will present a list of such students to the Committee.

## Appendix E: University of Manchester Mitigating Circumstances Codes

The following codes are used by the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures to categorise decisions made by the Mitigating Circumstances Committee.

### Rejected Mitigating Circumstances

- SR1:** Circumstances not sufficiently serious to influence performance or ineligible circumstances.
- SR2:** Timing of circumstances not critical to influence performance.
- SR3:** Circumstance already taken into consideration (for example for a disability or extension granted).
- SR4:** Insufficient evidence to support circumstances.

### Accepted Mitigating Circumstances and Actions required

- SR5:** Circumstances affected the timely submission of coursework. Reinstate marks deducted for late submission or deadline extension granted. (Date to be agreed by the Special Cases Committee.)
- SR6:** Circumstances prevented student from attending examinations, submitting coursework or completing any other form of assessment. Take missing assessment as first sitting or omit the missing component (depending upon the weighting of the missing assessment). The following rules should be followed:
  - In the case of a final year student for whom a further attempt at the assessment is not possible due to severity of their circumstances, the Board of Examiners may use discretion to exclude marks/unit(s) from the calculations (if the available results provide sufficient evidence to judge whether the student would have met the appropriate learning outcomes in the absence of their circumstances).
  - In the case of first and second year students, there may be instances where it is not possible to set a missed assessment as a first attempt, due to the nature of the assessment and/or the intended learning outcomes. In an instance such as this, the Board of Examiners may use discretion to exclude component marks from the overall calculation of the unit (if the available results provide sufficient evidence to judge whether the student would have met the appropriate learning outcomes in the absence of their circumstances).
- SR7:** Circumstances considered to have influenced performance in one or more units. Review marks to consider if they are out of line with unaffected unit marks. If only one component is affected, the student may be offered a first sit opportunity at the discretion of the Board of Examiners.
- SR8:** Circumstances considered to have influenced performance across a whole semester. Review marks to consider if they are out of line with unaffected unit marks in the semester and/or in a previous year of study (if applicable).
- SR9:** Circumstances considered to have influenced performance across a whole year. Review marks to consider if they are out of line with unaffected marks in a previous year of study (if applicable).
- SR10:** Student is registered as Dyslexic and allowed 25% extra time for all units.

**NB:** Action should only be taken if the Board of Examiners considers marks for the unit(s) affected to be significantly out of line with unaffected units. (Under normal circumstances this will be considered to be by 10 marks.)

The Board of Examiners may determine from the evidence available that a student whose performance in the assessment for a unit has been adversely affected by mitigating circumstances will be awarded either:

(i) the percentage mark from the assessment completed as the mark for the unit as a whole if at least half [50%] of the assessment has been completed without having been affected by mitigating circumstances

or

(ii) a pass if less than half of the assessment has been completed without having been affected by mitigating circumstances (see guidance note below).

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures **guidance note:**

The School's default position is:

- where a student has completed 30-49% of the assessment without having been affected by mitigating circumstances they be awarded a pass for the unit as a whole;
- where a student has completed 29% or less without having been affected by mitigating circumstances they be required to sit the affected assessment as a first sitting at the next opportunity. Programme Administrators will provide details of students in this category on the examination grid.
- Course units awarded a pass will be excluded from the calculation of the average. This will not apply to any units for which passes are required for external accreditation (at Spurgeon's College: PMP units).