University of St Andrews

S-coding

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Purpose	This policy provides all information relating to S-coding and the process to be followed.

Version number	**Purpose / changes**	**Document status**	**Author of changes, role and school / unit**	**Date**
1.8	Exclusion of 4 ScotCOM modules from S-coding process.	Updated	Academic Policy Officer (Digital & Student Experience)	July 2025

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

POLICY ON S-CODING

1. Overview

S-coding is one of the forms of academic adjustment permitted under the Policy on Extenuating Circumstances. It provides an official acknowledgement on the transcript that performance in a module contributing to degree classification was affected by circumstances outside the student's control, that it has not proved possible to compensate sufficiently for the impact of these circumstances through appropriate adjustments, and therefore the result achieved may not be fully representative of their capability. S-coding may be used to mitigate the effects of such circumstances on degree classification, and in some cases to provide an additional opportunity for assessment.

1.1. Scope

S-coding cannot be applied to module results at 1000-level or 2000-level, since these are not considered in degree classification.

Both passing and failing results can be S-coded, including failing results that would not normally give the right to reassessment (grades below 4.0, including 0X), and results in modules that do not normally offer reassessment. However, results that have been coded 'C' as a result of an academic misconduct outcome cannot be S-coded.

No more than 25% of an undergraduate student's total credits at 3000-level and above taken within the Honours part of the programme can be S-coded.

No more than 50% of the taught component of a taught postgraduate student's total credits can be S-coded. The taught postgraduate dissertation component cannot be S-coded.

Exceptions:

- S-coding of module results at 1000-level and 2000-level may be requested by students on programmes where an overall cumulative GPA is calculated as part of the degree award (e.g. the Joint Degree Programme with the College of William & Mary).
- Credits gained during the study abroad component of a WIYA programme are not considered in degree classification; these credits cannot be S-coded, and they are not considered when calculating the 25% limit.
- ScotCOM modules MD4004, MD4005, MD5011, and MD5012 in the School of Medicine cannot be S-coded.

1.2. Effect

Where S-coding is applied to an assessment result, the effect depends on the grade awarded:

- If the result is a passing grade:
  - the credits are retained
  - the result is counted towards completion of degree programme requirements
  - the S-coded grade may be excluded from the degree classification algorithm

- If the result is a failing grade:
  - no additional credits are awarded
  - a further assessment opportunity is offered in the next appropriate assessment diet, to be treated in the same way as the result being S-coded (e.g. if the S-coded result was a first attempt, the further assessment will also be considered as a first attempt)

- the original failing S-coded grade may be excluded from the degree classification algorithm

In the degree classification process[1], the algorithm is run twice, once including all S-coded module results and once omitting them. If the resulting classifications differ, the student is awarded the higher one.

S-coded module results are displayed on the academic transcript with the code 'S' in place of the usual 'P' or 'F', for example 5.6S or 13.1S.

If a failed module result is S-coded, it is *possible* for the following assessment result to be S-coded in turn, but this is not automatic: S-coding of the following result will be subject to a new request based on circumstances specifically affecting that particular assessment opportunity.

2. Criteria for Granting S-coding

S-coding will only be granted where all or most of a student's work for a module has been significantly affected by extenuating circumstances[2], and where it has not been possible to compensate sufficiently for the impact of these circumstances through appropriate adjustments, such as:

- extensions of coursework deadlines
- exemption from certain components of assessment (subject to the maximum proportion of the overall module credit that can be exempted, as defined by the relevant school)
- deferred assessments
- alternative assessments

Where a student knows of an illness, bereavement or other special circumstances before an exam, S-coding will not normally be approved if the student could have requested deferral of the exam.

S-coding will not be granted without a written request from the student. Once granted, an S-code will appear on the academic transcript, and cannot be withdrawn.

In cases where students take modules from more than one School within the same semester, the relevant Schools should liaise with one another to gain a full understanding of the student's situation. However, in cases where students submit S-coding requests to multiple Schools, Schools will not be bound to follow the decision of other Schools. In cases where Schools reach different decisions, justifications should be provided to account for the divergence.

Where a student requests that an S-code be applied to a module, the student must also indicate what other modules in the same semester are subject to S-code requests. If the request does not encompass all modules taken in that semester, the student must provide a compelling justification for why S-coding is only appropriate for certain modules. Examples of such a justification might include:

- differing amounts of assessment having been completed in different modules before the circumstances arose
- the ability of the student to complete different types of assessment being affected by the circumstances in different ways
- other adjustments offered to compensate for the circumstances being more effective in some modules than in others
- the circumstances relating directly to subject matter in a particular module

[1] See Classification Policy
[2] See Extenuating Circumstances Policy.

Decisions on S-coding requests will be based only on the submitted evidence of extenuating circumstances. The grade for the module and the possible effect on the student's degree result will not be taken into account. **If appropriate adjustments have already been made to mitigate the extenuating circumstances relied upon, including disability adjustments, S-coding will not normally be granted**.

2.1. Retrospective Requests

An S-coding request is considered to be retrospective either if it is submitted after the grades for the relevant modules have been released to the student or if it is submitted after the student has been informed of all of the marks on which the grades for the relevant modules are based. **S-coding will be granted retrospectively only in truly exceptional circumstances**. A retrospective request can only be granted by the relevant member of the Proctor's Office (for undergraduate students, the Dean of Learning & Teaching; for taught postgraduate students, the Provost).[3]

A student submitting a request for retrospective S-coding must provide a compelling and substantiated explanation of why the circumstances affecting their studies were not brought to the attention of the School before the module result(s) were released. This normally means that the success of a request for retrospective S-coding depends on new evidence (such as a late medical diagnosis) having become available. Retrospective S-coding requests that rely on circumstances of which the School was already aware, or could reasonably have been made aware of, will not be granted.

Requests for retrospective S-coding are time-limited to a period of three months after the release of the module result. Retrospective S-coding is not available after a student has graduated.

The Dean or Provost has discretion to give exceptional permission for a request to be considered by the School after this deadline. Such permissions will only be granted when new compelling evidence (usually medical evidence) for an extenuating circumstance that materially impacted the applicant's ability to study has come to light that was not available before the expiry of the three-month deadline or when the applicant was demonstrably incapable of engaging effectively with the University during the intervening period. Requests for such exceptional permission **must** be submitted to the Dean or Provost no later than: a) two calendar months after the date when the new compelling evidence has become available, or b) two calendar months after the end of the period when the applicant was incapable of effectively engaging with the University; late requests will not be considered. Students may not appeal the decision of the Dean or Provost to refuse such exceptional permission.

If a non-retrospective S-coding request has been denied, a student cannot challenge the decision by submitting a retrospective request. Instead, the student should follow the appeals process contained within this policy in Section 4.

3. Process

3.1. Process—Students

Any request for S-coding must be made by the student. Student Services may support student requests for S-coding, but will not initiate requests.

To request S-coding for one or more modules, a student must submit a formal request by emailing a completed application form to the Director of Teaching of each relevant School. The request

[3] Responsibilities assigned to the Dean and Provost in this policy may be delegated in practice to the appropriate Associate Dean (Students) or the Associate Provost Students.

should be submitted as early as it is feasible to do so. In particular, it must be submitted before publication of the module results in order to avoid being considered a retrospective request.

The form asks the student to provide the following:

- details of the modules for which S-coding is being requested
- details of any modules taken in the same semester for which S-coding is not being requested, and the rationale
- details of the relevant extenuating circumstances, with evidence[4], or details of another School or Unit (such as Student Services) from which details and evidence can be obtained[5]
- the rationale for the request being made retrospectively, if applicable

If the request is retrospective, and the student is currently eligible to graduate (i.e. they have already received sufficient module results to meet their degree requirements), they will not be able to graduate until the Dean or Provost makes their decision on the request. In this situation, the student must inform Registry and the Graduation Office at the time that they submit the S-coding request.

The student will be informed of the outcome by email, within the timeframes outlined in the following section.

3.2. Process—Schools and Dean/Provost

All S-coding requests are considered by a School S-coding Committee appointed by the Head of School, taking due account of diversity considerations. The S-coding Committee should comprise at minimum[6] the Director of Teaching and at least two other (non-student) experienced members of academic staff. A member of professional services staff may be asked to assist in taking minutes, but should not participate in the discussion.

The S-coding Committee will consider the submitted information in confidence. In order to limit the dissemination of potentially sensitive details of the student's circumstances to the necessary minimum, the details of S-coding requests must not be discussed at Module Boards. The student may also request in their application form that the details provided should be considered solely by the Director of Teaching (and, for retrospective applications, the Dean or Provost); the Director of Teaching has discretion to decide such a request.

The School S-coding Committee's decision is final in cases where:

- the request is declined; or
- the request is upheld, **and** it has not been made retrospectively, **and** it does not exceed the limits on S-coding set out in section 1.1

In all other cases, the decision of the School S-coding Committee is only advisory, and it must be referred to the Dean or Provost for a final decision. The overall process is detailed as follows, and summarised in the flow chart at the end of this section.

1. The student submits the application form to request S-coding by email to the relevant Director(s) of Teaching.
2. The Director of Teaching acknowledges receipt of the application, giving an approximate indication of the expected timeline for considering it.

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[4] See the Policy on Extenuating Circumstances for guidance on appropriate forms of evidence.

[5] The University recognises that it may distress a student to give repeated explanations of special circumstances. Where evidence is held by Student Services or another Unit of the University, the student can, in their written submission, ask that this other source be contacted to provide further information. The student can also request that sensitive details submitted in their application are considered only by the Director of Teaching.

[6] In the case of a conflict of interest, the Head of School may approve appropriate substitutions.

3. The Director of Teaching convenes the S-coding Committee on a date of their choice. For non-retrospective requests, this may take place shortly after receipt of the request, in order to minimise the response time for the student, or at any time before publication of module results.
4. The S-coding Committee considers the details provided in the application form—unless the student has requested that the details be considered only by the Director of Teaching, in which case the Director of Teaching makes a recommendation to the S-coding Committee.
5. All decisions, and their rationale, are minuted, and remain confidential to the S-coding Committee. One member of the committee takes responsibility for the secure handling and storage of documentation.
6. If the S-coding Committee declines the request—the Director of Teaching or delegate informs the student by email of the outcome and the rationale (within 5 working days of the decision), and the process ends.
7. If the S-coding Committee upholds the request, and it is not retrospective, and limits on the proportion of S-coded credits are not exceeded—the Director of Teaching notes the outcome for reporting to the relevant Module Board, the Director of Teaching or delegate informs the student of the outcome (within 5 working days of the decision), and the process ends. Where the student has indicated that they are seeking S-coding in other Schools, the Director of Teaching should consult with those Schools regarding the S-coding limits.
8. If the S-coding Committee upholds the request, and either it is retrospective, or the S-coding limits would be exceeded—the Director of Teaching or delegate refers the application to the Dean or Provost.
9. The Dean or Provost makes a final decision on the request and informs the student by email of the outcome and the rationale (within 5 working days of their decision), copied to the Head of School, either the Director of Teaching or Director of Postgraduate Studies (Taught), and (only if the decision is to uphold the request) Registry.

See appendix for a flowchart of the process.

4. Appeals

A student has the opportunity to provide full details of relevant extenuating circumstances in their application for S-coding. Therefore, a decision to refuse an S-coding request may only be appealed on the grounds of irregular application of academic regulations that has materially impacted on the decision. The process is defined in the Policy on Student Academic Appeals.

5. Complaints

If a student is dissatisfied by the standard of service, action or lack of action by or on behalf of the University they may choose to pursue these concerns under the Complaints Handling Procedure.

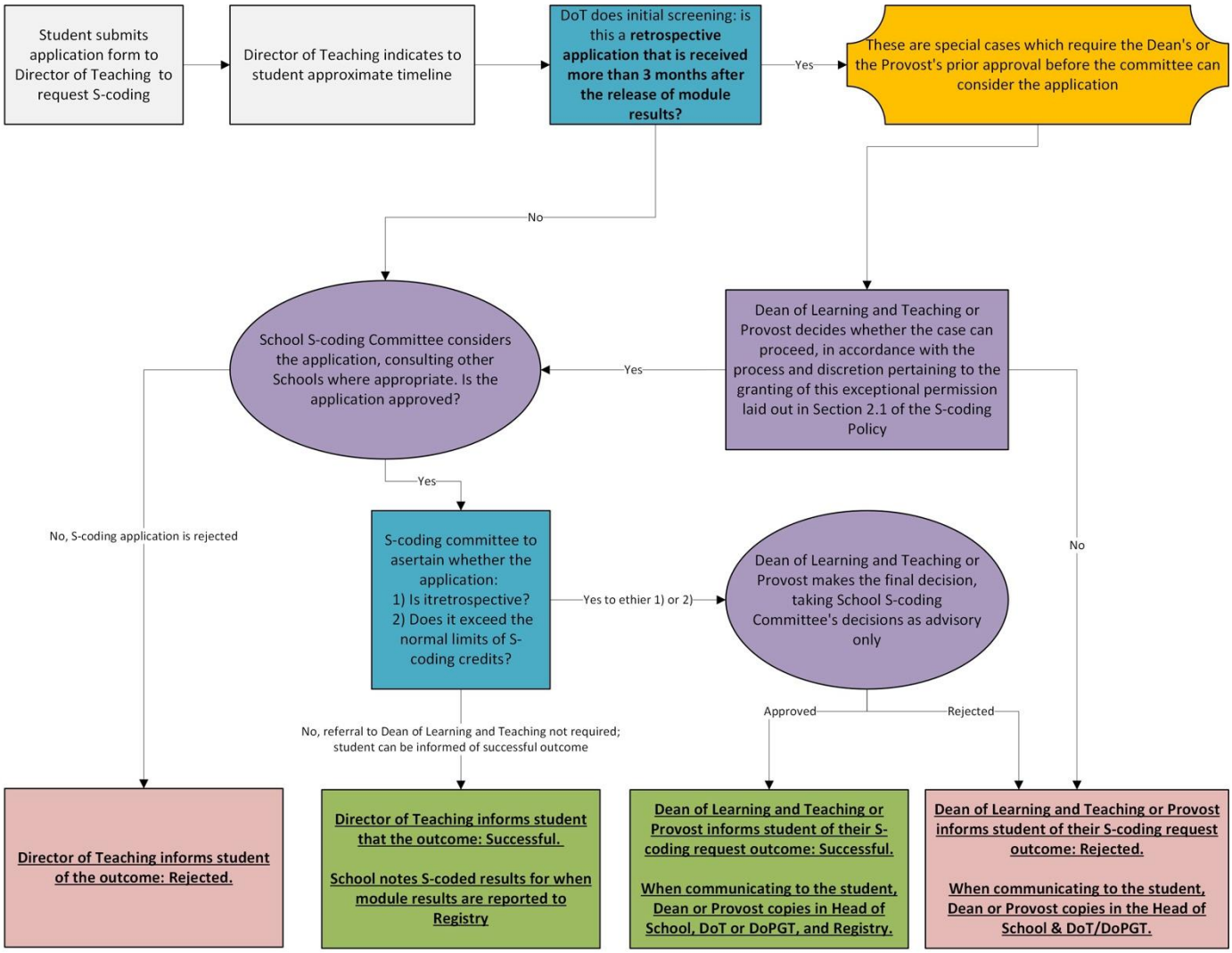
6. Communication

The University will be mindful of when communications are sent to students, especially when the content is unfavourable, potentially distressing, and/ or sensitive.

To ensure students can access the support they need, the University will try to avoid sending such messages on Fridays or late in the day, when immediate help may not be available.

If sending a message at these times is unavoidable, information about when and how students can access appropriate support must be included.

Appendix:


Student submits application form to Director of Teaching to request S-coding
Director of Teaching indicates to student approximate timeline
DoT does initial screening: is this a **retrospective application that is received more than 3 months after the release of module results?**
Yes
These are special cases which require the Dean's or the Provost's prior approval before the committee can consider the application
No
School S-coding Committee considers the application, consulting other Schools where appropriate. Is the application approved?
Yes
Dean of Learning and Teaching or Provost decides whether the case can proceed, in accordance with the process and discretion pertaining to the granting of this exceptional permission laid out in Section 2.1 of the S-coding Policy
No, S-coding application is rejected
Yes
S-coding committee to asertain whether the application:
1) Is itretrospective?
2) Does it exceed the normal limits of S-coding credits?
Yes to ethier 1) or 2)
Dean of Learning and Teaching or Provost makes the final decision, taking School S-coding Committee's decisions as advisory only
No
Approved
Rejected
No, referral to Dean of Learning and Teaching not required; student can be informed of successful outcome
Director of Teaching informs student of the outcome: Rejected.
Director of Teaching informs student that the outcome: Successful.
School notes S-coded results for when module results are reported to Registry
Dean of Learning and Teaching or Provost informs student of their S-coding request outcome: Successful.
When communicating to the student, Dean or Provost copies in Head of School, DoT or DoPGT, and Registry.
Dean of Learning and Teaching or Provost informs student of their S-coding request outcome: Rejected.
When communicating to the student, Dean or Provost copies in the Head of School & DoT/DoPGT.

Long Description for S-Coding Policy Flowchart

Title: *S-Coding Application Process Flowchart*
Purpose: This long description provides a complete, text-only explanation of the decision pathway shown in the flowchart.

Overview

The flowchart describes the full decision-making process for handling an S-coding request at a university. It starts when a student submits an application and ends with an approved or rejected outcome. The flow includes checks by the Director of Teaching (DoT), the School S-coding Committee, and—when needed—the Dean of Learning and Teaching or the Provost.

Step-by-Step Linear Description

1. Application Submitted

- The student submits an S-coding application form to the Director of Teaching.

2. Initial Response from Director of Teaching

- The Director of Teaching indicates an approximate timeline to the student.

3. Initial Screening Question

The Director of Teaching performs a screening check:

Question: *Is this a retrospective application that is more than three months late?*

- **If *Yes*:**
  The case is classified as a special case and **requires prior approval** from the Dean or Provost *before* the School S-coding Committee can consider it. The Dean or Provost makes the decision based on processes and rationale outlined in Section 2.1 of this Policy.
- **If *No*:**
  The application proceeds directly to the School S-coding Committee.

4. School S-Coding Committee Review

The School S-coding Committee considers the application and may consult other Schools where appropriate.

Decision: *Is the application approved at committee level?*

- **If *No*:**
  The S-coding application is rejected.
  → The Director of Teaching informs the student of the rejected outcome.
- **If *Yes*:**
  The application moves to an additional check.

5. Additional Committee Checks

The S-coding Committee must determine two further points:

1. Is the application retrospective?
2. Does it exceed the normal limits of S-coding credits?

If both answers are No:

- The case does *not* require referral to the Dean or Provost.
- The student can be informed of a successful outcome.
- The Director of Teaching informs the student, and the School records S-coded results for reporting to Registry.

If either answer is Yes:

- The case must be referred to the Dean of Learning and Teaching or the Provost.
- The School S-coding Committee's decision is advisory only.

6. Dean / Provost Final Decision

The Dean of Learning and Teaching or the Provost reviews the case and makes the final decision.

Decision: *Approved or Rejected?*

Approved Outcome

- The Dean or Provost informs the student of a successful S-coding request.
- Copies of the communication are sent to the Head of School, DoT or DoPGT, and Registry.

Rejected Outcome

- The Dean or Provost informs the student of the unsuccessful outcome.
- Head of School and DoT or DoPGT are copied into the communication.

End of Long Description

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.1	Clarifying definition of 'retrospective' with	Approved	-	January 2022

	regard to S-coding requests			
1.2	Further clarification of 'retrospective' in the context of S-coding requests	Approved		February 2022
1.3	Clarification of delegated decision-making regarding retrospective requests.	Updated	Academic Policy Officer (Digital & Student Experience), Education Policy & Quality	26 July 2023
1.4	Clarification of process regarding retrospective s-coding. Updated flowchart.	Updated	Academic Policy Officer, Education and Student Experience	May 2024
1.5	Updated to clarify circumstances for AVP's approval of retrospective S-coding requests that are beyond the 3-month limit	Updated	Administrative Officer Education and Student Experience	July 2024
1.6	updated to remove references to Honours Classification Policy and Postgraduate Taught Masters Classification Policy, instead referring to the new and combined Classification Policy	Updated	Administrative Officer Education and Student Experience	July 2024
1.7	Updated to clarify AVP's discretionary decision in footnote 4 is not appealable	Updated	Academic Policy Officer	October 2024
1.8	Exclusion of 4 ScotCOM modules from S-coding process.	Updated	Academic Policy Officer (Digital & Student Experience)	July 2025
1.9	Further clarifications on retrospective S-coding regarding deadline for submission. Section 6 added as per LTC's approval regarding announcing bad news on Friday. Updated references to AVP Dean. Flowchart updated, and an	Updated	Academic Policy Officer (Taught Degrees)	December 2025

	accessible decision tree now accompanies the flowchart.			