

Exceptional Circumstances Policy

including Assessment Extensions



BATH SPA
UNIVERSITY

1. Purpose

1.1 This policy sets out our approach to supporting you if you experience exceptional circumstances that affect you being able to participate in an assessment at the required time or by the required submission date. In considering your exceptional circumstances we will:

- Be compassionate
- Assess your circumstances as they relate to you at that time
- Make decisions that are fair and transparent
- Consider if you may need any further support

1.2 If you have any concerns about sharing the personal nature of your circumstances, please seek advice from Student Wellbeing Services, the Students' Union Advice Centre or another member of staff you feel comfortable talking to at the University or at your partner institution.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy applies to all students studying at BSU, including at our London campus and at partner institutions, and operates in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

2.2 This policy provides you with information about:

- Support for managing your assessment schedule
- What we mean by exceptional circumstances
- How we can help when you experience exceptional circumstances
- What action you need to take and when
- How we will consider your circumstances and respond to you
- Broader matters you need to understand in relation to your progression between different levels of study if you request to postpone an assessment/s.

3. Definitions

- **Exceptional circumstances:** situations that you could not anticipate and/or are beyond your control and which affect you being able to participate in an assessment at the required time or by the required submission date. More information about the type of circumstances we will accept are set out in Section 4.3.
- **Assessment Extension:** where we approve a short period of time beyond the original submission date for you to submit your assessment without any mark penalty due to your exceptional circumstances.

- **Exceptional Circumstances Postponement:** where we provide you with a later date in the year for you to undertake your assessment due to your exceptional circumstances. An exceptional circumstances postponement can be without any mark penalty if it is your first attempt, or it may be capped if you are undertaking a resit.

4. Policy

4.1 Your assessment schedule and support

We require you to complete all your assessments. Each programme has an assessment schedule that is designed to ensure your assessment loading is reasonable, and we expect you to meet the required deadlines or assessment dates. A range of support services are available to help you manage the demands of study. More information can be found here: <https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/about-us/governance/policies/exceptional-circumstances/>

4.2 Fit to sit/submit principle

When you submit an assessment or participate in an examination or practical assessment, you are declaring that you are fit to do so. You should not then claim at a later date that your performance in an assessment or examination was affected by Exceptional Circumstances. If you are not fit to sit an assessment you should submit an Exceptional Circumstances request through the process set out in this policy.

If you become unwell during a live assessment (e.g. practical examination) and you state that you are no longer fit to sit, this will be noted by the member of staff and the Assessment Board will decide how to address your circumstances.

4.3 What are Exceptional Circumstances

Exceptional circumstances are situations that you could not anticipate and/or are beyond your control. These include health related matters such as:

- Illness, injury or accident
- Unexpected hospitalisation
- Escalation, flare-up of an on-going illness, condition or disability
- Deterioration in an on-going illness, condition or disability
- Recent diagnosis of a disability or long-term health condition
- Impact of a recent change in medication, or starting or stopping medication
- Delay in receipt of support for disability or long-term condition
- Other significant health-related matters

Exceptional circumstances also include incidents such as:

- Death or serious illness of a close family member, dependent, partner or friend
- Unexpected caring duties for a child, family member or friend
- Miscarriage, stillbirth and termination
- Maternity related issues including birth trauma and pregnancy complications
- Assault or harassment
- Victim of other crime
- Serious personal disruption (such as relationship breakdown, house fire)
- Moving home or threat of eviction
- IT issues (such as digital poverty, laptop malfunction or theft)
- Unexpected loss of financial income (e.g. delayed student loan)
- Unanticipated religious observance
- Other significant incidents

Other exceptional circumstances are where something unexpected goes wrong **during** a live assessment task (e.g. practical assessment, presentation, examination). You do **not** need to use this Exceptional Circumstances Policy in those situations as BSU or the partner institution will address this as part of assessment irregularities in the Academic Regulations.

4.4 **Circumstances we do not normally accept**

We do not normally accept the following circumstances as exceptional for the purposes of this policy. This is because they are not exceptional and/or you could have anticipated them, and/or they were within your control. These include:

- Minor illness that does not prevent you doing your work
- Challenges with planning your workload; including where assessment or reassessment deadlines may be close together. Support is available from Student Wellbeing Services if you need support with your studies.
- Misreading or misunderstanding an assessment task brief and deadline. We commit to providing you with clear assessment briefs and the opportunity to ask a member of staff at the time of the assessment if you do not understand it.
- Minor delays on public transport on or the roads. We expect you to anticipate that delays are common and that you should build some leeway into your schedule
- Religious festivals or events which are in the calendar
- Oversleeping
- Holidays / Weddings
- Demands of paid employment
- Language of assessment not being your first language. Language Support is available from [the English Language Unit](#).

If you are unsure as to whether your circumstances are exceptional, please contact the Student Information team.

4.5 Experiencing exceptional circumstances - how we can help

If you experience exceptional circumstances in the lead up to an assessment, we can provide you with:

- **An Extension of up to 14 days:** when you can submit your written work after the original deadline.
- **An Exceptional Circumstances Postponement (ECP):** where you are given a later date in the year for you to undertake your assessment which will be determined by BSU or the partner institution. Students can also seek to postpone a referred (capped) piece of work to the next assessment period through this request. A Postponements can be used for written assessment tasks as well as for rescheduling a practical assessment task. It is important to recognise that there are broader matters to consider if you are thinking of submitting a request to postpone the submission of your assessment. Please see Section 4.8 for more information.

Extensions and Exceptional Circumstances Postponements are not given to you automatically. You need to make a request to explain your circumstances and we will consider if these meet the requirements. If we accept the circumstances, your extension or exceptional circumstances postponement will be approved.

4.6 Applying for an Extension

You must apply **before** the assessment deadline if you need an Extension. You will be required to contact your Module Leader to set out the exceptional circumstances that are leading you to request an Extension.

- Extension requests for up to 14 days will be considered by your Module Leader and you will receive a response within 3 working days.

Your Module Leader will let you know if we need any extra information to consider your request. Further detail about the circumstances in which we may need extra information is in Section 4.10.

The exact length of your Extension will be confirmed in your extension outcome - this may be less than 14 days at certain times of year due to marking and moderation timeframes.

A decision to provide you with an Extension is not automatic and if your request does not meet the criteria, it will be rejected. You must therefore assume that you do not have an Extension until you receive a reply from the Module Leader.

In accordance with the University's Assessment and Feedback Policy, if your Extension is rejected, you can still submit your assessment up to 7 days after the published deadline for a capped pass mark. However, if your assessment

item is a pass/fail assignment, you will not be able to submit beyond the published deadline.

4.7 Extensions and Academic Access Plans

BSU recognises that the effects of long-term physical health, sensory, cognitive, or mental health conditions may present obstacles to meeting assignment deadlines.

Academic Access Plans don't include additional time for you to complete your assessment, and so you will need to request an extension through the usual process if you:

1. Experience exceptional circumstances
2. Need extra time to complete your assessment and your AAP includes a Non-Standard Reasonable Adjustment (NSRA) for flexible deadlines.

Your request will still be considered in the usual way, but you should make clear within your request any adjustments you have within your AAP relating to the need for flexible deadlines.

4.8 Applying to postpone an assessment to a later date

(a) When you can apply and broader matters to consider

You must apply **before** the Assessment Board to request an Exceptional Circumstances Postponement to a later date (please see Section 4.11 about actions you can take **after** receiving your assessment results from the Assessment Board).

You may need to Postpone your assessment/s if your exceptional circumstances mean that:

- You are unable take an assessment on a scheduled date. This includes practical assessments, examinations, presentations and other assessments that are scheduled for a specific day and time.
- An Extension will not be sufficient time for you to complete your assessment.

If you need to postpone an assessment and you have an Academic Access Plan, you **will** need to make an Exceptional Circumstances Postponement request.

It is **important** to consider the wider implications of requesting to postpone an assessment including:

- Postponing your assessment to the next reassessment period could impact upon your eligibility to progress to the next academic year.

- If you are approaching the end of your studies, you will not be allowed to attend Graduation until you have completed all your assessments successfully.

If you are unsure about the implications for your circumstances, please contact the Student Information Team before applying. Communication of approved Postponements will confirm your circumstances in relation to progression and graduation.

(b) How to apply and how your request will be considered

You must apply for an Exceptional Circumstances Postponement by completing the Exceptional Circumstances Postponement form on MyServices which will ask you to set out your unexpected circumstances and the assessment/s you want to postpone. Your School/partner institution will be informed if you submit a request for a Exceptional Circumstances Postponement. You can upload any evidence you currently hold to support your request if you wish, and we will let you know if we need any extra information. More information about when we may need extra information is in Section 4.10 below.

Where your request is clear and straightforward you will normally receive a decision within 5 working days. The decision will be to either:

- Approve your request and confirm when the postponed assessment will take place
- Reject your request and provide you with the reason why
- Request more information to help consider your request; and/or
- Refer your request to the Exceptional Circumstances Postponement Panel

The Exceptional Circumstances Postponement Panel will meet to consider requests that are complex and require wider expert advice to help inform the decision. The Panel comprises:

- Academic Registrar (Chair)
- Deputy Academic Registrar – Assessments and Progression
- Deputy Academic Registrar – Engagement and Success
- Staff member from Student Wellbeing Services

The Panel will meet as required. The Panel will decide either to:

- Approve your Exceptional Circumstances Postponement request and confirm when the next deadline and Assessment Board consideration will be
- Decline your request, including the reason why
- Request more information to help consider your request further

You will be informed of the Panel decision within five days of its meeting.

4.9 Waiting for a response to your request and the status of your assessment

A decision to provide you with an Extension or Exceptional Circumstances Postponement is not automatic and if your request does not meet the criteria, it will be rejected. You must therefore assume that you do not have an Extension or a Exceptional Circumstances Postponement until you receive a reply.

4.10 Extra information to support your request

You are always welcome to provide extra information with your Extension or Exceptional Circumstances Postponement request if you think that will be helpful. This could include evidence you already hold, for example appointment or referral letters or records from your doctor's surgery, email/letter records from a healthcare or wellbeing service, or any letters, reports or emails from bodies such as the police, local council or other organisation.

We will **not normally require** you to provide extra information, but we reserve the right to do so. Situations **in which we might request you to provide extra information** after submitting your initial request include where:

- You submit requests for Extensions or Exceptional Circumstances Postponement on a regular basis which may signal that you need support with your wellbeing or workload planning
- The reasons for requesting an Extension or Exceptional Circumstances Postponement may have longer-term implications and we might need to support you in additional ways
- You have been the victim of crime, and we will ask for a crime reference number
- There are other circumstances in which extra information would help

We recognise that there may be delays in you obtaining extra information due to reasons beyond your control. Where a delay happens, we will still consider your request and provide you with a provisional decision. A final decision will be subject to receiving the extra information we have requested.

4.11 Actions you can take after receiving your results

Within 10 days of receiving your formal assessment results following a meeting of the Assessment Board, you can use the process set out in this Policy to submit a Exceptional Circumstances Postponement request for an assessment that you did not submit which will have been awarded a mark of zero.

In making this submission, it must be made clear why it was not possible to request the Exceptional Circumstances Postponement before the assessment took place and we will normally seek supporting evidence from you.

You can also use the process in this Policy to a request to postpone a resit or referred piece of work (for a capped mark) to the next assessment period. In

doing so, it is important to consider the broader implications for your study progression as set out in Section 4.9.

4.12 Dishonest requests or providing false information

This policy is designed to support you in your studies and to be fair to all students. We will take disciplinary action if you submit a request which is dishonest, or where the extra information you provide (e.g. medical certificate) is false or tampered with in any way.

4.13 Appealing rejection decisions

If you are unhappy with the decision to decline your Exceptional Circumstances Postponement request, you can request a review. More information is set out in the Stage 2 (Review) section of the [Academic Appeals Policy](#)

4.14 Monitoring and review of this policy

Academic Board will receive an annual report on Extensions and Exceptional Circumstances Postponements which will include consideration of the effectiveness of this policy.

Document Details

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Responsible Officer: Academic Registrar

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[Policies – Bath Spa University](#)

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