

Exceptional Circumstances Policy and Procedure



1. Scope and Purpose

This policy articulates the policy in place for the submission, consideration and approval of Exceptional Circumstances claims for registered Bath Spa University students. on taught programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

The University operates the Exceptional Circumstances policy under the following principles. The policy aims to:

- a. Apply the 'Fit to Sit/Submit' principle which applies to all assessments
- b. Operate a process for the consideration of Exceptional Circumstances that is equitable and fair to ensure that students are not disadvantaged by such circumstances.
- c. Apply a set of transparent and accessible criteria alongside assessing a variety of evidence sources and information as part of the decision making process.
- d. Guide students to sources of academic and student support services and opportunities to enable students to manage the challenges and demands of academic study and refer students appropriately to key University Services.
- e. Ensures that students are fully aware of the potential implications on their studies and their ability to progress into the next stage of study or complete their award from their exceptional circumstances application/s
- f. Works in line with key University student support procedures including Academic Access Plans and Support to Study and ensures referral to Student Wellbeing Services where deemed appropriate
- g. Review the outcomes from this policy on a regular basis and implement improvements as a result.

2. Policy

2.1 Definition

Exceptional Circumstances are defined as:

“unexpected exceptional events outside of a student’s control that occurred during or shortly before the assessment which are likely to have a negative impact on a student’s ability to complete and where appropriate submit an assessment”.

It is expected that, during a student's studies, they would normally be able to meet set assessment deadlines throughout the academic year. However, the University recognises that this may not always be possible for a wide variety of reasons. Students are able to submit work late (for a capped mark¹) in line with the Assessment and Feedback Policy or request a formal extension to the deadline. However, if there are unexpected events outside of a student's control that have affected a student's ability to complete and where appropriate submit an assessment, an Exceptional Circumstances claim can be submitted to inform the University.

It is the University's responsibility to ensure that students are not unfairly disadvantaged by such circumstances and to treat all claims fairly and equitably.

2.2 Deferral

If Exceptional Circumstances are approved, this would normally 'defer' a student's coursework deadline to the next assessment deadline in the academic year. Deferred assessment is treated as a first attempt (i.e. uncapped), with the full range of marks available. Students can also seek to 'defer' a referred (capped) piece of work to the next assessment period through this policy.

Details of the coursework submission deadlines throughout the year are available on the Central Assessment Board schedules on the [Policies](#) page under "Academic and Student".

An approved Exceptional Circumstances claim will not excuse students from completing their assessment(s) but will defer the coursework deadline for those modules or assessments approved on the claim to the next University assessment point. Students will still be required to demonstrate that they can achieve the required learning outcomes to successfully pass each of their modules and to meet the programme requirements for progression or award.

2.3 Impact on progression and completion

Students should consider the current University progression rules when working towards their modules and assessments and considering whether to submit an Exceptional Circumstances claim. ***The August reassessment period represents the last assessment point within each academic year and students should check whether deferring their assessment/s to the next academic year would impact upon their eligibility to progress to their next year of studies.***

¹ pass/fail assignments cannot be submitted after the published deadline without an approved extension

Students are provided with guidance regarding the impact of Exceptional Circumstances on progression on the [Exceptional Circumstances MyServices page](#) and the [Undergraduate Progression Flowchart](#).

Final year students are informed that they will not be eligible to attend Graduation until all assessments have been successfully completed. Therefore, deferring coursework through Exceptional Circumstances may result in the student becoming ineligible to graduate with the majority of their cohort. The student will be invited to a later Winter or Summer graduation, depending on when the student successfully completes their award.

2.4 Fit to Sit/Submit Principle

The University Exceptional Circumstances Policy is based on the Fit to Sit / Submit principle. When students submit an assessment or sit an examination, students are declaring that they are fit to do so. Students should not then claim at a later date that their performance in an assessment or examination was affected by Exceptional Circumstances.

If a student is not fit to sit / submit, a short extension (usually one week, but this can be extended by agreement of the module tutor) can be requested from the module tutor, or an Exceptional Circumstances claim can be submitted to request that the assessment is deferred to the next assessment point in the academic year.

2.5 Examples of eligible exceptional circumstances

In line with the University's definition of exceptional circumstances, the following examples are likely to be considered eligible exceptional circumstances and as such form part of the criteria used to assess each exceptional circumstances application:

Serious personal accident, injury or illness
Hospitalisation (including operations)
Death or serious illness of close family member, dependent, partner or friend
National disruption or national mourning
Serious complications in pregnancy or maternity
Unexpected caring duties for child, family member or friend
Sudden deterioration or escalation of ongoing illness, condition or disability
Serious personal disruption (such as a relationship breakdown, separation, divorce, house move, victim of crime)
Serious incident (such as assault or harassment)

Major household problem (such as break-in, fire, homelessness)
Absence for public service (such as jury service, service with reserved forces)
Recent diagnosis of disability or long-term condition
Recent change, commencement or cessation of medication
Delay in the receipt of appropriate support for disability or long-term condition
IT issues (such as digital poverty or laptop malfunction or theft)

2.6 Examples of other exceptional circumstances

In line with the University's definition of exceptional circumstances, the following examples may be considered eligible exceptional circumstances as part of supporting significant and impactful student opportunities to develop their studies, careers and employability skills. Additional evidence to support the claim may be requested.

Competing in national/international sports
Participation in cultural events
Faith-related observances and practices
Significant opportunities to benefit your career or studies
Significant financial issues which impact your studies and ability to complete assessments

2.7 Examples of ineligible exceptional circumstances

The following examples are likely to be considered as ineligible exceptional circumstances and students should use these as a guide to whether their circumstances would meet the Exceptional Circumstances criteria.

Short-term or minor illness (e.g sore throat, cough, cold)
Transport issues
Misreading of assessment submission dates and times
Personal events that could have been anticipated (such as a holiday, wedding, sports event or field trip) and where you have control over the date or may choose not to participate
Inadequate planning, organisation or time management or pressure of work

Pressure of academic workload, including the management of multiple submission deadlines (there may be exceptions related to disruption pertaining to placement modules, semesters abroad and where an assessment is contingent on work-related activities, which will be assessed on a case-by-case basis)

Demands of paid employment

Language of assessment not being the student's main language
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2.8 Longer-term conditions

Ongoing medical or mental health conditions are not usually considered under the exceptional circumstances procedures as the University provides a number of services, including Academic Access Plans and Support to Study procedure, for students with longer-term conditions via our Student Wellbeing Services (SWS). These support mechanisms are designed to ensure students are offered every reasonable measure to enable the completion of their studies.

Students should refer to SWS for further information regarding the support available to them alongside the guidance as part of the University's supporting you in your studies webpages: <https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/students/supporting-you-in-your-studies/>

There may be times, however, when there is a sudden deterioration or escalation of ongoing illness or disability, including mental health. In these circumstances, students would be able to put forward an Exceptional Circumstances claim.

2.9 Timing of Submissions

Exceptional Circumstances claims must be submitted as close as possible to the date of the affected assessment. Claims should not be submitted so far in advance that the impact of the Exceptional Circumstances cannot be assessed.

2.10 Retrospective or Late Submissions

Retrospective or late claims for Exceptional Circumstances following the relevant University Central Assessment Board will only be considered in certain circumstances and students should fully explain why they were unable to submit a claim before the assessment board. Please see Section 3.4.

3. Procedure

3.1 Submission of Exceptional Circumstances claims

Students should submit claims for Exceptional Circumstances via the [MyServices](#) system.

Students should refer to the guidance on the [Exceptional Circumstances](#) web pages regarding the “*Examples of eligible and ineligible Exceptional Circumstances*” section prior to submitting a claim.

Students may apply for Exceptional Circumstances for more than one module if the same circumstances have affected more than one assessment. The claim form should clearly explain the details of the circumstances, which assessments and modules have been affected, and how these circumstances have affected the student’s ability to submit.

Students who have agreed Exceptional Circumstances in place for an assessment can still submit the assessment on time for the original submission deadline. This will “void” the Exceptional Circumstances claim and the mark ratified at the Central Assessment Board will stand. Students cannot subsequently ask for an Exceptional Circumstances claim to be reinstated once the assessment has been submitted.

Exceptional Circumstances cannot be used to waive the late submission penalty when coursework is submitted after the published deadline.

Claims will initially be considered by the Assistant Registrar - Assessments and Progression or their nominee who will make a decision to approve or not approve the claim if their findings demonstrate clear information or evidence to enable them to make a decision on the student’s claim. In all other cases, the claim will be considered by the Exceptional Circumstances Panel.

3.2 Exceptional Circumstances Panel

The terms of reference of the Exceptional Circumstances Panel shall be:

- to make a judgement on Exceptional Circumstances claims that cannot be resolved by Assistant Registrar - Assessments and Progression or their nominee
- If required, make proposals or recommendations for further actions

The Exceptional Circumstances Panel shall be comprised of:

Membership

- Registrar (Chair)
- Assistant Registrar - Assessments and Progression
- Assistant Registrar - Engagement and Success
- Representative from Student Wellbeing Services

Secretary

- Member of Student Information Team

The possible decisions of the Panel are as follows:

- The claim is approved

- The claim is not approved

The Panel may also make recommendations with regards to progression or other study-related recommendations. Students may be referred to Student Wellbeing Services following the consideration of an Exceptional Circumstances claim.

Students whose claims are taken to an Exceptional Circumstances Panel will be notified of this and of the date of the Panel meeting and they will be given the opportunity to submit additional evidence to support their claim, should they wish to do so.

Following the meeting of the Exceptional Circumstances Panel, students will be notified by the Student Information Team of the outcome within 5 working days of the panel.

3.3. Stage Two Review

Students may request a Stage Two: Review of the outcome of the submission of their Exceptional Circumstances claim.

Students should refer to Section 11 of the [Appeals Policy and Procedure](#) for further details regarding Stage Two: Review processes and procedures.

3.4 Retrospective Exceptional Circumstances

Retrospective or late claims for Exceptional Circumstances can be submitted up to 10 working days following the receipt by the student of their official University results email. The claim should be submitted via the online form on the [Exceptional Circumstances MyServices page](#) and should be accompanied by a clear explanation as to why it was not possible for the student to submit the claim on time.

Retrospective Exceptional Circumstances claims will follow the same approval procedures outlined in Sections 3.1 and 3.2 above.

3.5 Support for Exceptional Circumstances and Student Studies

The University offers a range of student support services and opportunities to enable students to manage the challenges and demands of academic study. Students are encouraged to seek support from Academic Advisors, module and course leaders, the [Writing and Learning Centre, Student Wellbeing Services, Students' Union Advice Centre](#) or to use other mechanisms, such as a study break, as appropriate.

Students are encouraged to use the University's [Assessment Action Plan template](#) to help to map out their assessments and reassessments, where appropriate, throughout the academic year.

3.6 Evidence for Exceptional Circumstances claims

Students will not need to submit evidence as part of their application. Where deemed relevant, students may be asked for evidence to support their claim. Examples include:

- Medical certification (doctor's note, hospital appointment, hospital or letter from a medical or specialist service)
- Letter from solicitor or court
- Written evidence from police (including crime reference number)

If a student submits a claim or evidence which is found to be false, forged or has been tampered with in any way, it will result in disciplinary action being taken against the student.

3.7 Monitoring and Review

Academic Board will receive an Annual Report on Exceptional Circumstances that will consider the effectiveness of this procedure.

Document Details

Responsible Office: Academic Governance and Policy

Responsible Officer: Head of Academic Governance and Policy

Approving Authority: Academic Board

Date of Approval: September 2022

Effective Date: September 2022

Related Policies and Procedures: Academic and Student Policies

<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/about-us/governance/policies/>

Supersedes: Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure

Next review due: July 2023