



Exceptional Circumstances Procedure

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Procedure statement

The University recognises students may experience exceptional and unexpected difficulties outside their control which adversely impact their ability to complete or perform in assessments. The Exceptional Circumstances procedure sets out the processes through which students in these circumstances can request extensions, postponements and deferrals to assessment deadlines to support them in these circumstances.

Who needs to know about the Procedure?

- Deans of School and Pro Vice-Chancellors
- Deputy Deans and Associate Deans
- All staff, including those at Partner Institutions
- Professional Service Departments, including Student Academic Services
- Registered students, including Apprentices and those studying at Partner Institutions

Purpose of the Procedure

The Exceptional Circumstance procedure sets out how students experiencing exceptional and unexpected difficulties outside their control can request an extension for a coursework deadline, a postponed/further time-constrained assessment (TCA) or a deferred/further examination.

Contacts

Academic Registry is responsible for:

- Monitoring implementation across the University and its Partner Institutions
- Providing advice and assistance to staff
- Providing guidance and templates
- Institutional level annual reporting

Academic Operations is responsible for:

- Procedural and Systems training
- Oversight and Management of EC SharePoint and automated processes
- Operational training for staff

The team can be contacted through HALO.

Schools and Partner Institutions are responsible for:

- Operational implementation of the procedure
- Providing advice and assistance to students



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1. Introduction

Context

- 1.1. Students are expected to plan their work so they can meet assessment deadlines and sit examinations alongside any other obligations which they may have, study-related or otherwise.
- 1.2. It is the responsibility of all students to:
 - 1.2.1. ensure they are fit to undertake assessments; and
 - 1.2.2. undertake assessments as required and at the right time; and
 - 1.2.3. show diligence in the completion of all assessments; and
 - 1.2.4. overcome the effects of minor illness or personal difficulties and not use an Exceptional Circumstance request as a substitute for personal effort.
- 1.3. The University recognises students may experience exceptional and unexpected difficulties outside of their control during their studies, which could adversely impact their ability to complete or perform in assessments.

Key Terminology and Definitions

- 1.4. A full set of definitions for key terms referred to in this procedure is available [here](#).
- 1.5. In this procedure the term 'days' refers to consecutive **calendar** days, unless explicitly stated as 'working days'. In the context of this procedure, calendar (or working) days exclude Bank Holidays and periods of University¹ business closure.
- 1.6. Where this procedure refers to 'academic year' this is the student's current academic year, unless otherwise stated. A 'Student's current Academic Year' is the period in which a student is expected to complete the current level/stage of study or their course. The boundaries of a student's academic year are defined by the course's academic calendar (including dates related to Board of Examiners), the validated course length and the cohort intake date on which a student is registered (e.g. September, January, June).
- 1.7. Where this procedure refers to 'assessment', the same principles apply for reassessment unless explicitly stated as otherwise.
- 1.8. Where this procedure refers to Course Director, this may include equivalent Course roles and the Course Director's nominee, where appropriate. The Course Director's nominee is expected to be an appropriate member of the academic Course Team or another Course Director from the same School (where appropriate).

¹ Or Partner Institution business closure periods, where appropriate.



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- 1.9. For each academic calendar, all extended and postponed assessment must be submitted/attempted by the agreed final date set in the academic calendar applicable to the student's course. This is to ensure that the outcomes of the assessments are available to the appropriate Board of Examiners.
- 1.9.1. The agreed submission date for an extended or postponed **first submission** must be **no later than 14 days after the last day of the last assessment period**, for the level of study or year, of the relevant calendar
- 1.9.2. The agreed submission date for an extended or postponed **re-submission** must be **no later than 14 days after the last day of the last assessment period**, for the level of study or year, of the relevant calendar
- 1.10. Where the procedure refers to **extensions**, this is where an academic coursework deadline has been extended to a later date **in the same Semester/Trimester**. The assessment is submitted and marked in time to be considered at the relevant Module Board; **the extended date cannot be beyond the relevant Module Board date**.
- 1.11. Where the procedure refers to a **postponed** time-constrained assessment (TCA) (or in specific cases, examination), this is where a later assessment date is being given **within the same Semester/Trimester as the original scheduled assessment date**. Postponed assessments must be complete and marked in time to be considered at the relevant Module Board; **the postponed date cannot be beyond the relevant Board date**.
- 1.12. Where the procedure refers to a **deferral**, this is where agreement is given to delay an assessment beyond the relevant Module Board as the work will not be completed and marked by the Board. The outcome of deferred assessments will usually be considered at later Boards of Examiners meetings which will mean the student might progress or complete at a later date than their cohort.
- 1.13. All deferral decisions (and if approved, the timing of the deferral), will be governed by the [Regulations for Taught Awards](#) Sections 13.13-13.19.

Scope

- 1.14. This procedure provides academic support for students with unexpected personal difficulties (outside of their control) which directly impact one or more academic assessments.
- 1.15. It applies to:
- 1.15.1. all academic, summative assessments and reassessments; *and*
 - 1.15.2. all Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught courses; *and*
 - 1.15.3. all courses delivered by the University and its collaborative Partner Institutions².

² Unless otherwise formally agreed with the Partner.



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- 1.16. It does not apply to Postgraduate Research students.
- 1.17. It does not apply to attendance on placements or to practice-based assessments, but does apply to any academic assessments that arise from placements.
- 1.18. It does not apply where a University-wide disruption to learning, assessment or other institutional services has occurred which may have impacted a cohort, group or all students. Where this type of issue occurs a common approach will be determined by the University and applied to all affected students, in order to ensure equity.
- 1.19. It cannot be applied to assessment or reassessment attempts which have already been presented to, and agreed by a Board of Examiners.
- 1.20. It cannot be used for situations where a student is incapacitated (or otherwise unable to directly contact their Course Team) and unable to engage with their studies. Where such cases are reported to the University by a third party, such as the student's Trusted Contact, this should be recorded and referred to the Student Wellbeing Service through the [Raising a Concern form](#) and dealt with through alternative processes (such as Fitness to Study.)
- 1.21. In order for a personal difficulty to be considered as an 'Exceptional Circumstance' it must meet all of the following criteria:
 - 1.21.1. Be Exceptional (above and beyond the normal challenges faced by students); *and*
 - 1.21.2. Unexpected (i.e. could not reasonably have been anticipated by a student); *and*
 - 1.21.3. Outside of the student's control; *and*
 - 1.21.4. Have a demonstrable negative impact upon the student's ability to complete an assessment by the scheduled date or perform in an examination or TCA.
- 1.22. The University has defined tiers of decision making for Exceptional Circumstance requests, which each have clearly defined responsibilities (see sections 2 and 5).
- 1.23. The Exceptional Circumstance procedure **cannot**:
 - 1.23.1. Make changes to academic marks awarded; *or*
 - 1.23.2. Approve a change in the mode of assessment; *or*
 - 1.23.3. Extend the duration of an examination or TCA; *or*
 - 1.23.4. Void any assessment attempts which have already been made (regardless of whether those attempts have been presented to a Board or not); *or*
 - 1.23.5. Change a reassessment (confirmed by a Board of Examiners) to a first (uncapped) assessment.
- 1.24. The following circumstances fall outside this procedure, and must be taken through the appropriate alternative procedure (or route):
 - 1.24.1. **Reasonable Adjustment**: Where a student believes they may have a disability and would like reasonable adjustments to be made, they must make contact with the Student Wellbeing Service (or in the case of students at Partner Institutions, with the relevant designated staff



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member) in order to discuss and agree these adjustments and formalise a Learning Support Plan ([LSP](#))³.

1.24.1..1. For students with LSPs which **do not** include extensions as a specified reasonable adjustment, should they experience an additional short-term issue unrelated to their LSP condition, an Exceptional Circumstance request may be made to support assessment affected by that short-term issue.

1.24.1..2. For students with extensions as a specified reasonable adjustment in their LSP, they may make an Evidence-Based request if they believe an additional short-term issue unrelated to their LSP condition impacted their performance. They may not use Exceptional Circumstance requests to further extend, postpone or defer assessments already extended/postponed/deferred via their LSP.

1.24.2. **Material Administrative Error in relation to assessment:** students must report concerns of this nature as soon as possible, directly to either the Academic Operations Team or their Course Director, dependent on which area is responsible for organising the assessment.

2. Types of Exceptional Circumstance Request

2.1. There are two types of Exceptional Circumstance request a student may make (listed below),

2.1.1. Self-Certification Requests

2.1.2. Evidence-Based Requests

Principles applicable to all request types

2.2. All Exceptional Circumstance requests must be made directly by the student, and cannot be submitted by a third party.

2.3. Exceptional Circumstance requests must be made individually, the University cannot accept group requests.

2.4. All Exceptional Circumstance requests must be submitted using the appropriate form.

2.5. Only assessments listed on an Exceptional Circumstance request will be considered.

2.5.1. Students may not ask for additional assessments to be added to a request once it has been approved; should they wish to request additional assessments to be considered, they would need to make a new Exceptional Circumstance request.

2.6. Students and staff must ensure they meet their responsibilities regarding Exceptional Circumstances, as set out within this procedure.

³ Or equivalent, where developed with a Partner Institution.



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- 2.7. Exceptional Circumstances requests **cannot** be used:
- 2.7.1. to extend, postpone or defer a group assessment which requires a single group submission / activity. (See section 2.13 for these cases)
 - 2.7.2. to extend or postpone an assessment already extended/postponed (or deferred) through a previous Evidence-Based request, or LSP.
 - 2.7.3. for an assessment already submitted/attempted.
- 2.8. When calculating a coursework extension for an approved Exceptional Circumstance:
- 2.8.1. the extension days will be in calendar days
 - 2.8.2. the extension period starts from the scheduled deadline for the attempt in question, not the date of receipt for the Exceptional Circumstance request or the decision date for that request.
 - 2.8.3. only periods of official University⁴ business closure should be excluded when calculating the revised extension date.
- 2.9. Where a Self-Certification or Evidence-Based request applies to a Time Constrained Assessment (TCA) (e.g. individual presentation, performance, practical demonstration), and is approved, the assessment will be **postponed** to a later date in the same Semester/Trimester (in line with 1.11).
- 2.10. Where an Evidence-Based request applies to an examination, this will (in most instances) require a **deferral** and the Course Director will confirm this in the decision (in line with 1.12 & 1.13).
- 2.10.1. If an examination is organised locally by the School or Course team and can be **postponed** to a later date in the same Semester/Trimester, the Course Director will confirm this in line with 1.12.
- 2.11. If, in processing or considering a request, a decision maker identifies either of the below, they should take the recommended action, taking into account the provisions set out in 2.12 where appropriate:
- 2.11.1. Process the Exceptional Circumstances Request
 - 2.11.2. They believe a student's circumstances may indicate a disability or other circumstance covered by the Equality Act 2010, but the student does not have an LSP. They should:
 - 2.11.2..1. Complete a [Care & Support referral form](#) to ensure the information is appropriately shared with the Student Wellbeing Service; *and*
 - 2.11.2..2. Explain the support available and encourage the student to engage with the Student Wellbeing Service in agreeing a [Learning Support Plan](#) or other appropriate support.

⁴ Or Partner Institution.



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- 2.11.3. They have a concern that the student may be at risk, they should complete the additional Raising a Concern section of the [Care & Support referral form](#), which will also provide an option to request advice from the Student Wellbeing Service.
- 2.12. Where an Exceptional Circumstance request is declined, the communication of that decision to the student must:
 - 2.12.1. Provide the reason for declining the request; *and*
 - 2.12.2. Explain the appropriate route to take if they wish to request a review of the decision (see section 7 for details); *and*
 - 2.12.3. Take care to mitigate any impact on the student, providing appropriate support options and ensuring the timing of the communication allows the student to access support e.g. communications should not generally be sent on a Friday afternoon.

Additional Principles applicable to Group Work Assessment

- 2.13. Where the request relates to group work assessment, the following additional principles apply:
 - 2.13.1. If the group assessment involves submission of individual pieces of coursework (or an individual product / assessment activity), an Exceptional Circumstance request may be made by the affected individual to extend or postpone their own submission deadline / assessment date **only**; all other members of the group without approved Exceptional Circumstance requests are required to submit on the scheduled deadline.
 - 2.13.2. If the group assessment requires a single group submission / product / activity, an extension or postponement to the group deadline it is not permitted through the Exceptional Circumstance Procedure, unless 2.13.2.2 applies.
 - 2.13.2..1. If an individual member of the group is unable to complete the group assessment due to personal issues, they must notify the relevant Module Leader and Course Director in advance of the deadline. The affected student will then be supported in completing an appropriate alternative Module assessment, in line with the agreed Course validation.
 - 2.13.2..2. Where 2.13.2.1 is not feasible for academic or professional reasons, it may be possible for the Exceptional Circumstance Procedure to be used, however this will only be where an exemption has been agreed between the Course Team, School and the Academic Operations Team. Where the exemption applies, students will be provided with guidance on how to make the application.

3. Declaring Fit to Sit

- 3.1. When a student submits an assessment or attends an in-person assessment, they deem and declare themselves fit to do so.
- 3.2. A student who has made such a declaration may not apply for a deferral unless they provide independent evidence to state that they were unable to declare themselves fit to sit.



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- 3.3. A student who does not consider themselves fit to sit a summative assessment because of unforeseen circumstances should use this procedure to request an extension, postponement or deferral rather than attempting / submitting the assessment.
- 3.4. Where there is clear evidence that the student became ill during an examination, or Time Constrained Assessment and was not in a fit state to continue with the assessment, the Assessment Management Team or Invigilation team will provide evidence to the Exceptional Circumstances Panel and this will be considered as the independent evidence in 3.2.

4. Self-Certification

- 4.1. Self-Certification can only be used to request an **individual** coursework extension or postponed individual TCA. Each request must be for one single element of module assessment (i.e. not for multiple assessments in one module.)
- 4.2. Self-Certification **cannot** be used to defer an examination (or TCA which cannot be postponed)
- 4.3. A Self-Certification request can **only** apply to one assessment deadline/date.
- 4.4. Students may **only** have two **approved** Self-Certification requests in any academic year, even where a student studies with more than one subject (e.g. combined honours).
- 4.5. Self-Certification does not require the student to provide evidence.
- 4.6. Students will be asked to confirm a reason category in their Self-Certification request, to enable appropriate support to be provided (as required) and to support Quality Assurance processes (Section 8).
- 4.7. If a student with an approved Self-Certification extension/postponement wishes to then request a further extension/postponement for the same assessment attempt, an Evidence-Based request must be completed.
- 4.8. Where a Self-Certification request is approved, this will continue to stand (and count as one of the two approved requests) even if the student chooses to subsequently submit / attempt the assessment earlier than the extended / postponed date⁵. Students may not request to transfer the Self-Certification approval to a different assessment to that listed on the original request form.

Timeframe for submitting a Self-Certification request

- 4.9. Students must submit a Self-Certification request:
- 4.9.1. No earlier than 14 calendar days before the relevant assessment deadline/date; *and*

⁵ Including on the original, scheduled deadline/date for the module assessment.



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- 4.9.2. No later than:
4.9.2..1. **For coursework:** by 2pm on the assessment deadline day.
4.9.2..2. **For TCAs:** by the scheduled assessment start time on the relevant date.

- 4.10. Any request received later than the criteria set out in 4.9 will be declined and the student will be required to submit an Evidence-Based request if they wish to ask for an extension/postponement of the assessment.

Decision-Making Process and Permitted Outcomes for a Self-Certification Request

- 4.11. The Academic Operations team will make the decision based on the eligibility criteria below:
- 4.11.1. The request was submitted within the required timeframe; *and*
 - 4.11.2. The student has not already had two approved Self-Certification requests for the current academic year; *and*
 - 4.11.3. The request relates to a coursework deadline, or TCA which can be postponed; *and*
 - 4.11.4. The assessment has not previously been extended / postponed
- 4.12. The Academic Operations team's decision will normally be communicated to the student within 3 working days of receipt of the Self-Certification Request.
- 4.13. If a Self-Certification Request is approved, the only outcomes a student can be offered are:
- 4.13.1. **For coursework:** a 7 calendar day extension to the original published assessment deadline.
 - 4.13.2. **For TCAs:** a postponed opportunity⁶ to take the assessment within the same Semester/Trimester as the original deadline (prior to the relevant Module Board).
- 4.14. Where a TCA is postponed the Academic Operations team, in liaison with the Course Director is responsible for determining the new date.
- 4.15. If the request is declined as not meeting one or more criteria in 4.11, the student will be notified of the reason for the decision and (as appropriate) advised of other appropriate routes for support (for example, if the TCA assessment listed can only be **deferred** and does not meet 4.11.4, the student will be advised to use the Evidence-Based request route if they wish to request a deferral).
- 4.16. If the request is declined and as a result the student is unable to submit, the assessment will be considered a fail and any further attempts will be considered a capped reassessment, except in the case of a retake of a failed module.

⁶ This period will be determined by relevant calendar timescales and course factors, as appropriate (for example differences can apply to the timing of postponed attempts for some Apprenticeship courses).



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5. Evidence-Based Requests

- 5.1. Evidence-Based requests can be used to request coursework extensions, postponed TCAs or deferred examinations.
- 5.2. Evidence-Based requests must specify the reason for the request.
 - 5.2.1. The acceptable reasons upon which a request may be made are set out in Appendix 1.
 - 5.2.2. Requests made on grounds considered unacceptable by the University will be declined. Appendix 1 provides a list of reasons not normally considered acceptable.
- 5.3. Evidence-Based requests must be submitted with appropriate supporting evidence, in line with criteria set out in Appendix 2.
 - 5.3.1. A student may confirm when submitting their request that the University⁷ already holds the evidence regarding their circumstances;
 - 5.3.2. It is not possible to consider a request where no evidence, or information about evidence already held, has been provided; any such requests will be declined.

Timeframes for submitting an Evidence-Based Requests

- 5.4. It will be the responsibility of the student to submit the application, alongside the necessary supporting evidence, within the below time periods:
 - 5.4.1. No earlier than 14 calendar days **before** the relevant assessment deadline/date; *and*
 - 5.4.2. No later than 7 calendar days **after** the relevant assessment deadline/date.
 - 5.4.3. *Where multiple assessments are included on a single request, all deadlines/dates must meet the above criteria.*
- 5.5. A late request made after the timeline given in 5.4.2 will not normally be considered. However, the Academic Registrar, (or nominated representative) retains the right to consider a request at their discretion where they deem there to be a credible explanation as to why the application was not made within the required timescales.
- 5.6. Any request received after the outcome of the assessment has been presented to and agreed at a Board of Examiners cannot be considered under the Exceptional Circumstance procedure and must be declined. In these circumstances the Appeals procedure should be used [Academic appeals - Canterbury Christ Church University](#)

⁷ Or Partner Institution, as appropriate.



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Decision-Making Process and Permitted Outcomes from an Evidence-Based Request

- 5.7. When an Exceptional Circumstances application is received there will be an initial assessment on whether the application meets the relevant procedure requirements as set out by these procedures.
- 5.8. If it is determined that there are no grounds or basis the application will be declined, and the student will be informed no later than 3 working days of the Exceptional Circumstances request submission.
- 5.9. Where it is determined that there are grounds, the application will be determined by two officers of the Academic Operations team, or equivalent staff in Partner Institution. If they are in agreement with the decision the student will be notified of the outcome. All other claims will be reviewed by the full Exceptional Circumstances Panel, which will comprise of 3 members of staff.
- 5.10. The remit of the Exceptional Circumstances Panel is to:
 - 5.10.1. Review cases referred and take decisions in line with these Procedures;
 - 5.10.2. Monitor the use of the Procedures through data reports provided by the Academic Operations team;
 - 5.10.3. Ensure that EC outcomes align with the required Board of Examiners timeframes;
 - 5.10.4. Note the time period of the relevant Boards of Examiners.
- 5.11. The below outcomes may be applied:
 - 5.11.1. To grant the application for extension
 - 5.11.2. To determine the appropriate length for the approved extension, deferral or postponement
 - 5.11.3. This will normally be for a period of 7-14 calendar days and this will normally commence from the day of the original submission deadline
 - 5.11.4. Where circumstances prove necessary longer extensions will be approved by the panel. Longer extensions may be accompanied by other requirements for the student to undertake (for example seeking support from Student Wellbeing Services).
 - 5.11.5. To ensure the extension deadline agreed does not exceed the last date for submission for the calendar the course operates on
 - 5.11.6. Decline the application
- 5.12. The Exceptional Circumstances Panel may apply a deferral. All deferral decisions (and if approved, the timing of the deferral), will be governed by the Regulations for Taught Awards Sections 13.13-13.19.
- 5.13. The student will receive the outcome in writing within 3 working days of the Exceptional Circumstances Panel meeting.



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6. Composition, convening and conduct of the Exceptional Circumstances Panel

- 6.1. The Exceptional Circumstances Panel will consist of at least three members, one of whom shall be the Chair.
- 6.2. Panel Members will be drawn from:
 - Academic Registrar
 - Director of Academic Operations
 - Directors and Heads of Service from Academic Registry and Academic Operations
 - Head of Student Support & Access
 - Head of Student Wellbeing
 - Deputy Deans of School
 - Associate Deans of School
 - Course Directors
- 6.3. The Panel Chair will be independent from the students under consideration and therefore may not be the Course Director or other staff involved with the student's course of study.
N.B.: Chairs should be individuals with significant experience of Board of Examiners processes.
- 6.4. Standing Panels will be set up to meet on a regular basis, to ensure timely consideration of requests. Panels may consider requests from a range of courses at the same meeting.
- 6.5. Panels are not course specific and will consider any request from any student on any undergraduate or postgraduate taught course.
- 6.6. The Panel will consider each request on its own merits and, where the request is approved, offer an appropriate outcome based on this procedure.
- 6.7. The Panel Administrative officer is responsible for:
 - 6.7.1. ensuring all decisions are communicated to the student within the timeframes; and
 - 6.7.2. the relevant Course staff and Professional Services teams are made aware of the decision.

7. Requesting a Review of an Exceptional Circumstance decision

Scope

- 7.1. Students may only use this process where they have received a decision for a submitted Exceptional Circumstance request.
 - 7.1.1. If a student has not submitted an Exceptional Circumstance request, but after a Board of Examiners decision has been provided to them, the student wishes to identify issues which may have impacted their studies or assessment, they must do so through the [Academic Appeal Procedure](#).



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- 7.2. Where a student's request is declined due to one of the following reasons (which fall outside the scope of the Exceptional Circumstance procedure), the student may not use the Exceptional Circumstance Review route. If the student wishes to request consideration of their issues in relation to the assessment(s) in question, they must use the Academic Appeal Procedure to do so.
 - 7.2.1. A Self-Certification or Evidence-Based Request was received for an assessment already submitted/attempted; *or*
 - 7.2.2. Any type of request was received after marks and/or feedback had been provided for the assessment(s); *or*
 - 7.2.3. Any type of request was received after the assessment(s) had already been presented to and agreed by a Board of Examiners.

Timeframe and Process for making a Review request

- 7.3. An Exceptional Circumstance Review request must be received within 10 working days of the decision notification.
 - 7.3.1. The Director of Academic Operations or nominee may agree to extend the time allowed to submit a Review request, where there is a good cause to do so. For example, the student being ill or otherwise incapacitated.
 - 7.3.2. Review requests received after the assessment in question has been presented to and agreed by a Board of Examiners will not be considered.
- 7.4. To request a Review of an Exceptional Circumstance decision (other than those listed in 7.1-2), a student must use the appropriate form.
- 7.5. Students must submit with their form, appropriate supporting evidence which demonstrates the issues raised in their request statement.
- 7.6. Students may get advice on completing the Review request form from CCSU Advice Centre (advice@ccsu.co.uk).
- 7.7. Students will receive confirmation of the form's submission.
- 7.8. Students are advised to retain a copy of the form for their record.

Grounds on which a Review will be considered

- 7.9. A Review request will only be considered under one (or more) of the following grounds:
 - 7.9.1. There is evidence which demonstrates the processing and/or decision-making for a request was not undertaken in line with the Procedure.
 - 7.9.2. There is new evidence available which could not reasonably have been provided at the time of submitting the request, and which may have had a material impact on the decision reached on the request.



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7.10. Students are not permitted to request a Review of:

7.10.1. The professional judgement of an Exceptional Circumstance decision maker or Exceptional Circumstance Panel in determining whether the request met the criteria for approval and, where approved, the outcome offered in line with the procedure.

7.10.2. The proposed date for postponed / deferred examination or TCA attempt.

7.10.3. The application of the Regulations for Taught Awards regarding deferrals.

Consideration of a Review request and possible outcomes

7.11. If a Review request is received which is not eligible for consideration under the Exceptional Circumstance Procedure, the request will be declined and details of the reason for doing so will be provided to the student.

7.12. If the request is eligible for consideration, the Director of Academic Operations will appoint a Reviewer to consider the case.

7.13. The Reviewer will be a member of staff outside the student's School and not involved in the consideration of the case previously.

7.14. The purpose of the Review is to determine (as appropriate to the ground(s) set out by the student):

7.14.1. whether the procedure was appropriately followed in processing and/or taking a decision on the Exceptional Circumstance request;

7.14.2. whether the evidence provided is new and may have had a material impact on the decision for the request.

7.15. In reaching a decision, the Reviewer will consider the statement and evidence provided by the student, along with any relevant information / evidence held by the University (or the relevant Partner Institution) regarding the Exceptional Circumstance request in question.

7.15.1. The Reviewer will not meet with the student or staff members, however they may request additional written information or evidence from either party, where this is necessary in order to reach a decision.

7.16. The Review will normally be completed within 20 working days of assignment to the Reviewer.

7.16.1. Occasionally, it may be necessary to extend the timeframe for completing the review. Where this is the case, the Reviewer will notify the student and keep them regularly informed of progress and the expected date they will receive the review outcome.

7.17. If the Reviewer determines one or more ground has been demonstrated as met, the only outcome which will be given is to void the original Exceptional Circumstance decision and refer the Exceptional Circumstance request to an Exceptional Circumstances Panel for a new decision.

7.17.1. The new decision of the Panel will be binding.



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- 7.18. If the Reviewer determines the case has not demonstrated it meets one or more ground, they will confirm this to the student and the original Exceptional Circumstance request decision will continue to stand. This represents the end of the internal procedure.

Completion of the University's internal Exceptional Circumstance procedure

- 7.19. The following decisions represent the completion of the University's internal Exceptional Circumstance procedure:
- 7.19.1. A Review request is submitted too late for consideration under the Exceptional Circumstance procedure; *or*
 - 7.19.2. Where the Reviewer refers the Exceptional Circumstance request to a Panel (7.17), and that Panel declines the request; *or*
 - 7.19.3. The Reviewer finds no grounds to have been demonstrated by the student.
- 7.20. The University subscribes to the Office of Independent Adjudicator (OIA) scheme. Should a student remain dissatisfied after finishing the internal Exceptional Circumstance procedure, they have the right to submit a complaint to the OIA.
- 7.20.1. The student should refer to the OIA website to establish whether their complaint is something that the OIA would consider under its Rules. The OIA will normally only review issues after a student has completed the University's internal Exceptional Circumstance Procedure. Full details regarding the OIA's rules and guidelines are available on their website: [Can you complain to us? - OIAHE.](#)

8. Quality Assurance

- 8.1. The University will review anonymised data on Exceptional Circumstance implementation on an annual basis, for the purpose of identifying areas of good practice or development.
- 8.2. The University will review the operation of arrangements annually, including data on implementation within Partner Institutions.
- 8.3. In submitting an Exceptional Circumstance request a student may reveal sensitive personal information (including Special Category Data). The University will respect confidentiality, unless a safeguarding issue is disclosed. The University will ensure all information is managed and stored in line with the Student Privacy Notice.
- 8.4. An Exceptional Circumstance will not be recorded on a student's final Transcript.



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Appendix 1 - Acceptable & Unacceptable Reasons for Requests

9. Circumstances that would normally be considered as grounds for requesting an Exceptional Circumstance:

Acceptable Grounds for Making a Request	
Reason Category	Additional details
Accident or injury	
Appearance at Court or participation in legal/court proceedings of an ongoing nature	Including being a witness or juror in a protracted court case
Recent Bereavement	Or evidence of ongoing impact of a bereavement
Crime	including being the victim of violent crime, theft or being investigated by the police
Exceptional Unexpected Caring Responsibilities	including illness of child, parent, sibling, spouse or partner
Exceptional Unexpected Professional Difficulties	including direct involvement with OFSTED or other professional body inspection (e.g. CQC), or events such as NHS OPEL implementation
Exceptional Family Crisis	including major illness of relative or partner, divorce or separation
Exceptional Financial Difficulties	where there is clear evidence that the situation is serious, unexpected and not of the student's own making
Hospital Appointment	when reasonably cannot be rescheduled and directly conflicts with an examination or time-constrained assessment
Involvement in a national or international event	including participation in a regional, national or international sporting, fine art or musical event
Major and Exceptional Travel Disruptions	where evidence clearly shows that an alternate mode would not be possible or could not have been remedied by better time organisation
Pregnancy, Maternity and Paternity	including a difficult or unplanned pregnancy
Medium-Term / Long-Term Health issues (not related to disability under Equality Legislation) Including where a student is undergoing diagnostic tests or a number of consecutive hospital / specialist treatments	Medium-Term / Long-Term Health issues (not related to disability under Equality Legislation) Including where a student is undergoing diagnostic tests or a number of consecutive hospital / specialist treatments
Serious or significant personal incidents	including house fire, homelessness, unexpected house move, direct experience of natural disaster
Short-term Illness	including flu, COVID, gastroenteritis, migraine, emergency dental issues



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- 9.1. Circumstances that would **not** normally be considered as grounds for requesting an Exceptional Circumstance:

Unacceptable Grounds for Making a Request
Term-time holidays or weddings
Normal work/life/study pressures
Childcare issues (unless exceptional and unexpected)
Pregnancy of a relative or friend (not student's partner or spouse)
General financial difficulties
Minor ailments e.g. cough, cold or headache
Hangover
Oversleeping
Misreading assessment deadline/date or examination timetable
Medical conditions not diagnosed or properly supported by a medical professional, including medical notes that state 'patient informs me that...' or 'student declared they had been unwell...'
Taking the wrong examination
Doing the wrong coursework assessment
Stress resulting from involvement in an Academic Misconduct, Student Conduct, or Fitness to Practise Procedure
Academic workload pressure: including multiple deadlines within a short period of time, including where this has resulted from previous approved Exceptional Circumstance requests
Not understanding the subject or question
Difficulties in accessing resources or computing accounts due to outstanding University debt (unless evidence to prove that it is not of the student's own making)
Issues between friends
Unexceptional transportation difficulties including delayed public transport or car breakdown
Computer difficulties or equipment failure: including loss of file, uploading incorrect file to the relevant VLE, inability to access internet or computer breakdown (unless this relates to specialist software/equipment required for reasonable adjustment in relation to a student's disability) UNLESS MS365 or One Drive was not accessible and confirmed by CCCU IT department
Supporting a friend at court
Circumstances supported solely by evidence from a relative/partner/friend, or individual where there is a conflict of interest



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Appendix 2 - Criteria for Supporting Evidence (for Evidence-Based)

10. All Evidence-Based requests must be supported by evidence appropriate to the reason for making the request.
 - 10.1. Evidence (or information about evidence already held, see section 10.5) must be submitted with the request.
 - 10.1.1. Evidence **cannot** be submitted after the request form.
 - 10.2. The evidence supplied is the student's choice, but must:
 - 10.2.1. Be in the form of documentation (i.e. not video or audio files); *and*
 - 10.2.2. Be from a professional source; *and*
 - 10.2.3. Name the student or (where the issue relates to a third party) clarify the relationship of that individual to the student; *and*
 - 10.2.4. Be dated; *and*
 - 10.2.5. Be recent enough to clearly demonstrate the student's circumstances, and their impact on the timeframe around the assessment deadline.
 - 10.3. Professional sources of evidence can vary and should be appropriate to the reason. They can include statements from:
 - 10.3.1. Registered Medical Professionals,
 - 10.3.2. Agreed support action records held by the University within one of its systems.
 - 10.3.3. University Student Wellbeing Service or Chaplaincy staff, where the student has already been receiving support from either area regarding the issue affecting them;
 - 10.3.4. An employer;
 - 10.3.5. An external body, such as registered Charities or the Citizens' Advice Bureau;
 - 10.3.6. A community or faith leader.
 - 10.4. The University cannot accept the following items as the only form of evidence for a request:
 - 10.4.1. Statements from family or friends;
 - 10.4.2. Newspaper articles or social media postings;
 - 10.4.3. Appointment cards (where the reason for the visit is not specified);
 - 10.4.4. Photocopies⁸ of over-the-counter medications;
 - 10.4.5. Photographs of a personal nature.
 - 10.5. If a student asks for evidence already held within the University (or a Partner Institution) to be added to their Exceptional Circumstance request, they must do so at the point of submitting their request.

⁸ Including scanned pictures of over-the-counter medication packaging.



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- 10.5.1. Evidence will **not** be sought from within the University (or Partner) without a specific, written request from the student to do so, and **only** where they have provided clear information about what existing evidence they wish accessed and specified which Team or Staff Member holds it.
- 10.5.2. The University will not seek evidence from outside the University (from an individual or organisation) on a student's behalf.
- 10.6. Where a student is providing evidence that relates to a living person other than themselves (for example to demonstrate caring responsibilities), in their request they must provide confirmation of that person's permission for the evidence to be shared with the University for the purposes of Exceptional Circumstance consideration⁹.

⁹ Unless GDPR exceptions apply, see [EC](#) webpage guidance for more details.



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Appendix 3 – Student and Staff Responsibilities

11. Student Responsibilities

- 11.1. It is the responsibility of students to ensure they:
- 11.1.1. are aware of their assessment deadlines/dates and take appropriate steps to ensure they meet those deadlines/dates wherever possible; *and*
 - 11.1.2. have read information provided by the University on the Exceptional Circumstance procedure, and sought timely clarification if needed; *and*
 - 11.1.3. are aware of and have considered the implications of making an Exceptional Circumstance request before submitting it (and where they are unclear, discuss this with their Course Team), for example:
 - 11.1.3..1. extending a coursework deadline or postponing (or deferring) an examination/TCA may impact upon other, future deadlines;
 - 11.1.3..2. students are not permitted to request extensions, postponements or deferrals of other assessments on the basis of increased workload resulting from previous extensions / postponements / deferrals;
 - 11.1.3..3. extending a coursework deadline or postponing (or deferring) an examination/TCA may lead to delays in the provision of Module results (and in some cases, progression or award decisions);
 - 11.1.3..4. for students subject to visa requirements, delayed results (particularly where this occurs close to the end of their course), could impact upon their visa requirements and/or application to the Graduate Route.
 - 11.1.4. continue to work towards completing or taking their assessment, and for coursework assessments submit as soon as possible, while awaiting an outcome for any request submitted; *and*
 - 11.1.5. meet the submission, timeframe, criteria and evidence requirements for the type of EC request they are making, as set out in this procedure; *and*
 - 11.1.6. retain a copy of their request, for their record; *and*
 - 11.1.7. monitor their email account on a regular basis following submission of their request, respond in a timely fashion to any communications from a member of their Course Team and contact the Course Team in a timely fashion if they have questions about their request outcome; *and*
 - 11.1.8. are aware of any new deadline/date (and associated assessment requirements), set as a result of an approved request, in advance of that deadline/date.
- 11.2. Students are expected to act with integrity in making use of this procedure.
- 11.2.1. Where there is reasonable suspicion that student misconduct may have occurred in relation to any element of the Exceptional Circumstance procedure, the student may be subject to action under the University's [Student Conduct Procedure](#).
- 11.3. If a student believes the Exceptional Circumstance procedure has not been followed in processing or reaching a decision on their request, they may raise this matter through the relevant route. See section 7 for details.



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- 11.4. Should a student fail to meet an extended coursework deadline offered through an approved Exceptional Circumstance, the standard procedure in relation to late submission of coursework will apply (or the assessment will be recorded as a 'non-submission' where no attempt is made).
- 11.5. Should a student fail to attempt a postponed / deferred opportunity for a TCA or examination resulting from an approved Exceptional Circumstance request, the assessment will be recorded as a failed.

12. Staff Responsibilities

- 12.1. All staff responsible for any element of this procedure (administrative or decision-making) must undertake initial training when they first take up the responsibility, followed by annual refresher training.
- 12.2. It is the responsibility of the relevant Staff Members (administrative or decision-making) to:
 - 12.2.1. process Exceptional Circumstance requests in accordance with this procedure; *and*
 - 12.2.2. consider each request on its merits and impartially; *and*
 - 12.2.3. communicate the decision and, where approved, outcome to the student within the timescales set in this procedure; *and*
 - 12.2.4. where declining a request, provide a reason for doing so and information about the appropriate route to request a Review of the decision; *and*
 - 12.2.5. for Student Route students, take into consideration whether any issues raised within the request may impact the student's attendance/engagement and, where appropriate, notify to the Compliance team.
- 12.3. Where a student studies with a Partner Institution, the Partner must follow the agreed process (as appropriate for franchised or validated courses) for processing requests, and referral to the Exceptional Circumstances Panel (where required).
- 12.4. Should there be reasonable suspicion of student misconduct in relation to any element of the Exceptional Circumstance procedure, take timely and appropriate action in line with the University's Student Conduct Procedure.
- 12.5. It is the responsibility of the University (or Partner Institution) receiving the request to maintain a record of all requests and decisions taken, storing all data securely in line with the University's [Student Privacy Notice](#) and [Retention Schedule](#).

The Exceptional Circumstances Panel will report any Exceptional Circumstance decisions which result in a recommendation for a **deferral** to the Board of Examiners for agreement. The Board will take its decision on the deferral in line with the Regulations for Taught Awards.



Exceptional Circumstances Procedure

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