

A6 Exceptional Circumstances Policy

- A6.1 The College's Exceptional Circumstances (EC) procedures are designed to align with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator Good Practice Framework for handling requests for additional consideration (OIA, 2020), but we may need to vary this to ensure fairness, health and safety, or to implement reasonable adjustments for disabilities.
- A6.2 We expect you to manage your studies alongside your professional and personal commitments, including normal life challenges such as pressure during assessment periods. An exceptional circumstance is one that is unexpected, unforeseen, and that significantly impacts your ability to perform in summative assessments.
- A6.3 Exceptional Circumstances are short-term and are focused on the assessment period. Where you are affected by longer-term circumstances which affect your ability to complete your studies, this will be dealt with under the Leave of Absence (A7) or Fitness to Study (A8) Policies.
- A6.4 By sitting or submitting a summative assessment, you declare that you are 'fit to sit', and that you are not aware of any exceptional circumstances which could affect your performance.
- A6.5 For the avoidance of doubt, you do not need to apply for Exceptional Circumstances for formative assessments. Instead, you should contact your tutor to discuss your circumstances.
- A6.6 The table below outlines what we would typically consider to be exceptional circumstances:

Valid Exceptional Circumstances	Not Exceptional Circumstances
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illness or injury; • Death or serious/life-threatening illness of a close family member or friend; • Acute deterioration or flare up of an ongoing illness or disability, including mental health conditions. This includes any disabilities where reasonable adjustments are in place; • Being the victim of a serious crime; • Computer or internet connection problems outside of the student's control that prevent or delay access to an online assessment; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misreading the assessment timetable, assessment instructions, or submission deadline; • Failing to follow the instructions of staff in relation to assessment set up; • Computer failure where the student should have backed up their work; • Exam stress which is not evidenced medically; • The need to sit external exams; <i>e.g., the SQE</i>; • Events where you can control the date of the event or can choose not to attend; <i>e.g., house moves</i>;

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unforeseen impacts of a religious observance; <i>e.g., fainting during a period of fasting;</i> • The unforeseen need to perform a religious observance; <i>e.g., sitting shiva;</i> • Unexpected caring responsibilities for a family member or dependent; • Significant personal or family issues leading to acute stress; • Accommodation crisis such as eviction or the home becoming uninhabitable; • The performance of public duties; <i>e.g., jury service;</i> • Attendance at court under a witness summons or similar. 	<p><i>holidays, or family celebrations arranged after enrolment;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any condition in receipt of reasonable adjustments, unless there is an acute deterioration or flare up; • Circumstances connected with any employment; • Minor illnesses such as colds or hay fever unless the symptoms are particularly severe.
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Exceptional Circumstances Procedure

- A6.7 If exceptional circumstances arise during an assessment, stop the assessment immediately. You should notify the Module Leader by email and submit an Exceptional Circumstances claim form on the day of the assessment.
- A6.8 If you become aware of exceptional circumstances before assessment, you must submit a claim form as soon as possible, and no later the original assessment date. If you choose to sit the assessment, you are declaring that you are 'fit-to-sit' and that you are not aware of any reason to claim Exceptional Circumstances.
- A6.9 Claim forms submitted later than five calendar days after the date of the assessment will usually be rejected. You may be able to appeal this decision through the Academic Appeals process (A13) if you can provide evidence that you were unable to submit a claim form on time. *E.g. you were hospitalised on the day of the assessment, or you suffered a bereavement on the day of the assessment.*
- A6.10 You must use the Exceptional Circumstances claim form, available on ServiceNow, to submit your claim. The Exceptional Circumstances claim form requires you to:
- Complete full details of the assessment(s) to which the claim relates, including how your performance has been adversely affected;
 - Supply independent supporting evidence, or self-certification in certain circumstances.
- A6.11 On receipt of a claim, the Student Services Team will consider the request and decide on an outcome, which may include consultation with the Registrar.

- A6.12 The Student Services Team will aim to confirm an outcome in writing within seven working days of receipt, but this may be longer in complex cases or during closure periods (such as bank holidays).

Outcomes of a successful claim

- A6.13 Successful Exceptional Circumstances claims will result in one of the following:
- A **one-week extension** to a coursework submission deadline, from the original submission deadline;
 - A **two-week extension** to a coursework submission deadline or postponement of an examination, from the original date;
 - A **deferral** of a coursework or postponement of an exam to the next standard assessment point.
- A6.14 Students may apply for an extension or postponement up to a maximum of two weeks following the original submission deadline. Students who require longer than this must apply for an assessment deferral.

Eligibility Criteria

- A6.15 The Student Services Team will review claims against the following criteria:
- Students may self-certify for a one-week coursework extension on the grounds of health or bereavement;
 - Students may apply for a two-week coursework extension or postponement of an examination with independent evidence;
 - Coursework extensions or examination postponements may be for a maximum of two weeks, cumulative to include any extensions through self-certification;
 - Students requiring more than a two-week coursework extension or exam postponement may apply for a deferral of assessment with evidence;
 - Students may only defer a module assessment once;
 - Deferred assessments will take place at the next available standard assessment point after ratification of first sit marks by the Module Panel.
- A6.16 We will typically reject a claim if any of the following apply:
- You sat or submitted the assessment, therefore declaring that you were fit-to-sit;
 - The claim was submitted more than five working days after the date of the assessment;
 - The claim is for exceptional circumstances which have been defined as invalid;
 - You have submitted more than two EC claims for the same assessment;
 - The claim is submitted without accompanying evidence, where it is not eligible for self-certification.

- A6.17 Where a claim is rejected, the outcome for the module shall be determined in line with the Programme Regulations (B3).
- A6.18 You can appeal the rejection of an Exceptional Circumstances claim through the Academic Appeals Policy (A13).

Self-Certification

- A6.19 For sudden acute illnesses such as a severe migraine, stomach bug, or COVID, which do not require a doctor's visit, you can self-certify an Exceptional Circumstances claim without the need for independent evidence.
- A6.20 You may also self-certify an Exceptional Circumstances claim in the event of bereavement of a close family member or friend.
- A6.21 You may self-certify for a maximum coursework extension of one week.
- A6.22 If you submit more than one self-certified claim within a 6-month period, you may be required to submit independent evidence or be asked to attend a meeting with Student Services, your supervisor, or your Module Leader to ensure that any support needs are considered before the claim is approved.

Evidence

- A6.23 All supporting evidence will be treated in strictest confidence, following the College's Privacy Policy (available on the website). Evidence will not be shared outside of the Student Services Team, the supervisor, your Module Leader, and the Registrar.
- A6.24 Evidence should be presented in English, or where applicable, with an accompanying translation.
- A6.25 Evidence must not include material which could be deemed offensive or graphic, for example images of injuries where a doctor's note or statement would suffice.
- A6.26 Where students provide evidence from a private medical letter service, we may request evidence that the student is engaging with their regular GP for support.
- A6.27 We reserve the right to check the authenticity of evidence submitted as part of an Exceptional Circumstances claim. If you submit inauthentic documentation or misrepresent material facts in your claim or self-certification, you may face disciplinary action (A11).

Managing multiple requests

- A6.28 We maintain a record of all Exceptional Circumstances claims submitted, to identify trends and to ensure consistent decisions.
- A6.29 We will monitor the number and frequency of Exceptional Circumstances claims made by individual students. If you submit more than one claim within a 6-month period, this may indicate that there are longer-term issues which need support. We may invite you to a meeting with the Module Leader to discuss support options and a plan for study before approving additional claims.

- A6.30 If the Module Leader is concerned that your ability to complete their studies is being affected by multiple Exceptional Circumstances, they may recommend that you take a Leave of Absence (A7), or the Fitness to Study procedure (A8) may be triggered.

Unforeseen impacts of religious observances

- A6.31 You are expected to manage your studies alongside any planned religious observances. Therefore, a planned observance alone is not usually a valid reason for an Exceptional Circumstances claim. However, if the observance unexpectedly affects your ability to complete an assessment (e.g., fainting during an exam due to fasting), you may apply for consideration under this policy.
- A6.32 If an unforeseen religious obligation, such as a specific observance following the death of a close relative (e.g., Shiva), affects your ability to complete an assessment, you should also apply for consideration under this policy.