

Exceptional Circumstances

Procedure

1 Introduction

1.1 The Exceptional Circumstances Procedure applies to all students studying on taught programmes that lead to an Oxford Brookes award at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. Partner institutions should have procedures that are sympathetic to these procedures, which are managed locally.

1.2 The University considers an exceptional circumstance:

(a) to be personal circumstances that are out of the control of the student;

and

(b) that the student could not reasonably have prevented or accommodated

and they must have

(c) had a significant and demonstratively negative effect on the student's ability to study or undertake an assessment.

Additionally, the timing of the circumstances must be relevant to the affected assessments and / or period of study.

1.3 All elements must be met in order to substantiate a claim for exceptional circumstances.

1.4 On-going conditions and other disabilities that affect students are not covered in this policy because there are alternative routes for arranging reasonable adjustments which would allow for a student's entire period at the University. Students experiencing ongoing conditions or disabilities will benefit from registering with [Student Support Services](#) in order that their needs can be assessed and, where appropriate, an Inclusive Support Plan (ISP) can be put in place.

1.5 Assessment types have been placed into two broad categories: event assessments and deadline assessments.

(a) Event assessment – assessments taken under controlled and timed conditions such as exams, tests and presentations

(b) Deadline assessments – assessments not taken under controlled and timed conditions such as essays, assignments and placements.

2 Outline of the process

- 2.1 There are 3 types of applications a student can make under this procedure:
- (a) A full application (which will be considered by a panel)
 - (b) A grace period application for a brief extension
 - (c) Self certification for an event assessment
- 2.2 All claims for consideration of exceptional circumstances should be submitted via the application portal as soon as the circumstances become apparent and preferably ahead of the assessment deadline or the start of the event assessment. Any required supporting evidence must be supplied within ten working days of the initial application.
- 2.3 Students who become ill during an event assessment are required to notify a staff member immediately and should self-certify within 48 hours of the assessment. In such circumstances, any work undertaken prior to leaving the assessment will not be marked as the student will be assumed to be declaring themselves not fit to sit the assessment.
- 2.4 Students are responsible for submitting accurate information and evidence. Any student suspected of submitting dishonest claims will be referred to the student conduct procedure.
- 2.5 Personal information submitted by students as part of a claim will only be seen by staff who are directly involved in processing and making decisions on applications.

3 Full exceptional circumstances applications

- 3.1 A panel will consider the application. The panel will consist of a Chair and one other member. Where the panel decision is unable to reach a consensus the view of a third member will be sought. The panel may liaise with programme teams in Faculties regarding appropriate deadlines and appropriate outcomes.
- 3.2 Students are expected to supply full information in their initial claim and follow up with supporting evidence within ten working days. All claims that meet the administrative requirements of the process will be considered in full and therefore subsequent claims for the same period are unlikely to be considered unless there is significant new information which the student, for valid reasons, could not have provided previously.
- 3.3 The deadline for submitting an on-time claim is 48 hours after the start of the event assessment or 48 hours after the deadline for a deadline assessment. Any claim made more than 48 hours after the deadline will be considered to be late.
- 3.4 Students will be notified of the outcome of their application as soon as possible, normally within five working days of submitting a completed application.
- 3.5 Some decisions about allowances will be made by the examination committee, rather than the exceptional circumstances panel. The examination committee will not change or estimate marks.
- 3.6 Exceptional circumstances are expected to be rare. When considering an application the panel may view it in the context of the student's previous applications for exceptional circumstances.

4 Grace period

- 4.1 Students are responsible for submitting all work for deadline assessments by the specified deadline. However, the University acknowledges that very occasionally things can go wrong at the last moment. On this basis, a student who misses the deadline is permitted to use a 24 hour grace period to upload their work after the deadline, and still have access to the full range of marks.
- 4.2 Students must register that they are using the grace period using the relevant application, but are not required to provide any supporting evidence. This must be done within 24 hours of the assessment deadline.
- 4.3 It is expected that most students will never need to use the grace period as working to deadlines is a skill that most students will have developed in their previous studies. Repeated use may lead the University to question the student's fitness to study.

5 Self-certification

- 5.1 Students who unexpectedly cannot sit an event assessment on that day are permitted to self-certify using the online portal. Students must register that they are using the self-certification option using the application portal, but are not required to provide any supporting evidence.
- 5.2 It is expected that most students will never need to self-certify as the chances of unexpectedly being affected by circumstances that prevent you from sitting an assessment on the day of an assessment are low. Repeated episodes where a student cannot sit an event assessment may lead the University to question the student's fitness to study.

6 Possible outcomes

- 6.1 Grace period and self-certification are automatic processes.
- 6.2 For grace period applications the extra time will be 24 hours.
- 6.3 For self-certification applications, the student will normally be able to take the assessment later, with access to the full range of marks. However, this might not be possible depending on the module and course requirements. The decision will take into account any achievement in other components. The module leader or examination committee will make the final decision.
- 6.4 All full exceptional circumstances applications will be assessed and either accepted or declined. If they are accepted, the following outcomes are possible:
 - (a) Extra time to prepare for a deadline assessment or to carry out placement requirements - the amount of extra time will normally be determined by the amount of time a student has been affected by the exceptional circumstances. Extra time will be in addition to any automatic extension a student has via their inclusive support plan.
 - (b) An opportunity to take the assessment at a later date, with access to the full range of marks. This might not be possible depending on the module and course requirements. The decision will take into account any achievement in other components.

- (c) Disregard of a module, with the opportunity to take it again at a later date. This might not be possible depending on the module and course requirements. The decision will take into account any achievement in other components.

6.5 Most assessment submissions are completed online and computers are available at the University. Therefore if extra time is given, it is expected the student will submit their work on or before the revised submission date, even if it is not considered a 'working day' for the University. Only if there is a need for an assessment to be physically handed in should this date be amended and this should be agreed with the module leader in advance.

6.6 If a student submits an application for consideration of exceptional circumstances after they have sat an event assessment, the work will not receive credit, so the student will need to complete the assessment again.

7 Late applications

7.1 Any late application must contain a valid reason why it could not be submitted within the deadline.

7.2 Students cannot submit applications for exceptional circumstances beyond the Monday of the week before the subject examination committee, e.g. if an examination committee are meeting on Tuesday 14th June, the final deadline for the application would be Monday 6th June. Information about the date of the subject examination committee will be available from the programme team or on the [Brookes website](#).

8 Academic appeal

8.1 Any student wishing to raise any exceptional circumstances that the University was not made aware of before the Monday of the week before the subject examination committee must do so using the academic appeal process. The academic appeal process is available from the date of the release of module marks and there is a two month deadline to submit appeals.

8.2 Any academic appeal raised on the basis of exceptional circumstances must contain a valid reason to explain why information could not have been submitted prior to the subject examination committee deadline.

9 Review

9.1 All requests for a review must be submitted within ten working days of the issue of the original decision. Requests for a review submitted more than ten working days after the original decision was issued are unlikely to be considered.

9.2 For a review to take place, a student must demonstrate one or both of the following grounds:

- (a) There is evidence to suggest that the request was not considered in accordance with these procedures
- (b) There is evidence to suggest that there was an administrative error or some other irregularity in the consideration of the request.

9.3 If the above grounds are not met, the review will not be considered.

- 9.4 A review will be undertaken by a member of the Student Investigation and Resolution Team who was not a part of the panel that considered the original claim.
- 9.5 If a review is not considered, or the review upholds the original decision in relation to a claim the reviewer will issue a "Completion of Procedures" letter.

10 Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA)

- 10.1 If the student has completed the University's internal procedure for consideration of exceptional circumstances and they are still dissatisfied with the outcome, they may be able to refer their case to the [OIA](#) providing that the complaint is eligible under the OIA's Rules.
- 10.2 A letter stating that case has completed the University's internal complaint procedure shall include information on the OIA and comply with the OIA's guidance for a Completion of Procedures letter.

11 Evidence

- 11.1 Applications other than grace period and self-certification submissions should be supported by appropriate evidence. The nature of evidence will vary depending on the circumstances but it must:
- (a) confirm the existence of the exceptional circumstances and the relevant timeframe
 - (b) confirm the impact of the exceptional circumstances on the student concerned
 - (c) be comprehensible for the panel.
- 11.2 The panel reserves the right to request clarification regarding particular evidence or further evidence. Requests may include, but are not limited to:
- extra supporting documentation
 - the evidence being sent directly from a third party
 - the translation of documents into English, as required.

12 Repeated use of the Exceptional Circumstances Procedure

- 12.1 The University has a responsibility to monitor the progress of students throughout their studies and intervene where progress is not being made at the expected rate. Where a student is not moving through the levels of their studies at the expected rate because their circumstances are causing them to make multiple applications for exceptional circumstances, the University may contact the student to identify any underlying issues or additional support needs. In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate for the University to commence the Fitness to Study procedure.