Policy on Circumstances Impact Process

1. **Introduction**

As part of its package of measures to support students through the Covid-19 pandemic, the University has introduced the Circumstances Impact Process (CIP). This replaced, on a temporary basis, the normal Extenuating Circumstances Process with effect from 23 March 2020 until a date to be determined which will be notified to students with reasonable notice in advance of its discontinuation. The CIP seeks to help to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic (and other adverse circumstances) on students in relation to their assessment and to provide every student with a full and fair opportunity to demonstrate their academic achievement.

The overarching principles guiding the development of the CIP were as follows:

(a) To help to mitigate any potential academic disadvantage caused by the Covid-19 pandemic or by other extenuating circumstances
(b) To ensure that awards achieved by students continue to meet sector and professional requirements and have the same value as degrees awarded in previous years
(c) To help to reduce anxiety and uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic as much as possible for students.

The CIP should be understood in the context of the wider measures put in place to mitigate the impact of Covid-19, including take-home papers, removal of penalties for late submission, and the mark safety net.

2. **Purpose and scope of the CIP**

The CIP takes account of circumstances which are outside a student’s control and negatively affect their academic performance, and provides the student, as far as reasonably possible, with a fair opportunity to demonstrate their academic achievement.
Under the CIP, students are able to make the following requests:

(a) Extensions to the deadline for coursework and dissertations/project reports (see section 5 below)
(b) Deferral of one or more Summer Term examinations to August/September (see section 6 below)
(c) Following publication of results after the July 2020 Awarding or Progression Boards, retaking one or more assessments (see section 7 below)
(d) Repeating the year of study (see section 8 below)
(e) Other provisions, including removal of penalties for late submission, exemption from an assessment, and retrospective consideration of disability (see section 9 below).

The University will offer advice to students on the implications of the various options and on how they might best proceed. Some of these decisions could mean that a student’s marks are not available for consideration at the relevant University’s Awarding or Progression Board and may therefore affect the student’s eligibility to progress to the next academic year in September 2020 or delay the publication of their degree result.

3. **Responsibility and delegation**

The policy is carried out under the auspices of the University Standing Committee on Special Cases, acting through the Teaching and Learning Deans and the Director of Student Services who will provide delegations.

4. **Submission of CIP request**

(a) If a student believes that their academic performance is affected by a circumstance outside their control (for example, by illness, personal circumstance, or disruption to their studies by external circumstance (for further information, see Appendix 1), they may make a request by submitting a CIP application form.

(b) The CIP application form and guidance on its completion for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students are available at [link]; the forms for use by students at NUIST and at the University of Reading Malaysia are available locally. **Incomplete forms will not be approved.** Help with completing the CIP form is available from Student Support Coordinators using the Ask a
Postgraduate students, Study Abroad students, HBS Greenlands students, students on MUIST Phase 3 programmes at NUIST, and students at the University of Reading Malaysia should contact the relevant support staff or School for information on how to submit a CIP request.

(c) Appendix 1 provides an indication of the types of circumstances which are admissible under the CIP.

(d) Given the disruption the current pandemic has caused to all aspects of life, in most cases evidence will not be required to support requests relating to assessments due during the period impacted by Covid-19 from 1 February 2020. If evidence is required in relation to a request, for example in the case of repeat year requests or issues which impacted a student’s performance prior to 1 February 2020, then the student will be contacted by the relevant Student Support Co-ordinator as soon as possible following the submission of the form.

(e) CIP forms must be submitted by the deadlines specified below or as otherwise notified by the University. If a student submits a CIP form after the deadline, it normally cannot be processed in time for the request to be implemented.

(f) There are some exceptional circumstances where a CIP form submitted after the deadline will be considered, namely where a student has been hospitalised, bereaved, incarcerated or suffered an equivalent physical or mental incapacity. In such cases, the student must submit the request as soon as reasonably possible, explaining the reason for the delay and giving evidence for this if required. Where it is not possible to accommodate a justifiable late request, a member of academic staff or a member of professional support staff will discuss with the student how the situation might be addressed and what further support is available.

5. **Coursework and dissertation/project report extensions (including PGT submissions)**

(a) Under the CIP, students are able to request extensions to the deadline for submission of coursework and dissertations/project reports. Where the grounds for the request are considered to be reasonable by the responsible
body (as specified in (b) below) acting reasonably, the request for an extension will normally be granted.

(b) Requests for extensions will normally be considered, under delegated authority, by the School Director of Academic Tutoring, except where the extension extends beyond 31 August 2020, in which case the request will be considered by the University Standing Committee on Special Cases.

(c) Students must normally submit the CIP form requesting an extension before the deadline for submission of the coursework. If, however, the student was not able to submit the form due to hospitalisation, bereavement, incarceration or equivalent physical or mental incapacity, then a statement which details the reason for the lateness must be included in the CIP form. Students must continue to work to, and submit by, the deadline if they have not yet been notified of the decision on their CIP request.

(d) Where a student has already been granted an extension and expects not to be able to submit by the extended deadline, they can request, in advance, a further extension, which will be considered in accordance with this policy. Students must continue to work to, and submit by, the deadline if they have not yet been notified of the decision on their CIP request.

(e) Extensions for undergraduate work will normally specify a deadline for submission of the work which, in the Summer Term, is not later than 14 May 2020 for Finalists and slightly later for other Parts. This enables marking to be completed, the mark processed, and the overall result approved by the relevant University Awarding or Progression Board, so that the student can receive their result at the same time as others in the student’s cohort.

(f) Longer extensions in the case of undergraduate students will mean that there may be a delay in the student receiving their result, which may affect their ability to progress to the next Part of their course in the next academic year or to graduate at the same time as others in their cohort. Students who wish to request a longer extension should consult their School Director of Academic Tutoring, Academic Tutor, Student Support Coordinator, HBS School Office, or ISLI Helpdesk, for further advice prior to the submission of a CIP form.
(g) In accordance with (a) above, postgraduate students who have been adversely affected by a circumstance beyond their control can continue to request extensions on coursework or dissertations/project reports until the end of their programme, where appropriate, including during the period following the Summer Term.

(h) If students have any questions or concerns in relation to extensions, they should contact, as appropriate, the Student Support Coordinators, HBS School Office, ISLI Helpdesk, or (in the case of research students) the Graduate School Office for further advice.

6. **Advance requests to defer one or more Summer Term 2020 examinations to August/September 2020**

(a) Under the CIP process, students who, due to their circumstances, do not feel able to take one or more Summer Term 2020 examinations are able to request, in advance, to defer any such examination until the examination period in September. Students must submit such a request before their Summer Term examinations begin. No evidence is required.

(b) CIP requests for deferrals will be considered by designated persons, as specified in the statement of delegations.

(c) Where the grounds of the request are considered to be reasonable by the designated person acting reasonably, a request for deferral will normally be granted.

(d) Deferral of an examination will mean that the examination result for the module in July 2020 will be shown as ‘Deemed Not to have Sat’ (DNS). Provided that the original scheduled examination was a first attempt, a deferred examination will not be counted as a second attempt for that piece of assessment and therefore the mark will not be capped. If the original scheduled examination was already a second attempt, the mark will be capped in accordance with the University’s policy.

(e) If students have any questions or concerns in relation to deferral of examinations, they should contact, as appropriate, the Student Support Coordinator, HBS School Office, ISLI Helpdesk, or (in the case of research students) the Graduate School for further advice.
7. **CIP requests following publication of results: Retakes**

(a) Following the publication of their results in July 2020, students have the opportunity to request to retake one or more of their Easter Vacation/Summer Term 2020 assessments (including examinations, coursework and dissertations/project reports). The retakes would be held in the September 2020 re-sit period. For this purpose, an Easter Vacation/Summer Term 2020 assessment is an examination held in the Summer Term or coursework or other assessment with an original or extended submission deadline in the period 28 March - 12 June 2020.

(b) This provision allows students to make an informed decision about the assessments in which they believe that they have underperformed due to their circumstances and whether to request to retake one or more of their assessments in August/September. By requesting a retake, a student is declaring that, due to their circumstances, they do not regard their attempt at this assessment as valid and are agreeing to their original mark for the assessment being annulled (i.e. in effect deleted from the record), as is normal practice under the University’s standard Extenuating Circumstances Process. Students are responsible for their decision to retake an assessment and therefore to annul their original mark.

(c) Students should submit a single CIP form indicating all the assessments which they wish to retake; they should **not** submit a CIP form for each assessment affected. The deadline to submit the CIP form will be 5 working days after the date on which the marks and result are published following the University Progression/Awarding Boards in July 2020.

(d) CIP requests for retakes will be considered by designated persons, as specified in the statement of delegations.

(e) Where the grounds of the request are considered to be reasonable by the designated person acting reasonably, a request for a retake will normally be granted and the mark for the original assessment will be annulled.

(f) Provided that the original assessment was a first attempt, the retake will also count as a first attempt, the result will not be capped for classification purposes, and there is no charge for the retake. If the original assessment
was already a second attempt, the mark will be capped in accordance with the University's policy.

(g) In the case of a retake of coursework in August/September, the re-submission, as determined by the School, may be:

(i) on a different topic/set of questions
OR
(ii) a resubmission of the original work and, where appropriate, a further question or questions about the work undertaken for the original submission. This is the only option for dissertations/project reports: no student should be asked to undertake a new dissertation/project).

(h) As explained in (b) above, where a student decides to retake an assessment in August/September 2020 and achieves a lower mark for the module in the August/September assessment than in the Summer Term, the mark achieved in August/September will stand. **Students are therefore advised to consider carefully whether they have underperformed in the Summer Term assessment and whether they can be confident of improving the mark in a retake.** Students are advised to discuss this, wherever possible, with their School/Department in accordance with the arrangements to be specified by the School.

(i) If a student who had passed the Part/Finals in the Summer Term 2020 examination period chose to retake assessments and achieves a result of Failed or Not Qualified in August/September 2020, their individual case will be reviewed by the University Progression Board or Programme Examiners’ Meeting, as appropriate, and module marks may be compensated to meet the minimum pass requirements for the Part/Finals.

(j) Where a student fails or is not qualified at the first attempt in the September 2020 examinations, they will be eligible for a second attempt which will be a resit under the standard, non-emergency arrangements. However, the next resit examination(s) will normally be in the Summer Term 2021. The student’s status will be 'suspended exam only' for 2020/21 and they will not pay tuition fees for 2020/21. A student who is taking assessment(s) at the second attempt in the academic year 2020/21 will be liable for a resit fee and resit marks are subject to capping in accordance with the University’s policy.
(k) If students have any questions or concerns in relation to any aspect of the retake process, they should contact, as appropriate, the Student Support Coordinator, HBS School Office, ISLI Helpdesk, or (in the case of research students) the Graduate School for further advice.

8. Repeating a year of study

(a) If a student considers that a large part of their studies in the academic year 2019/20 has been significantly disrupted for any reason beyond their control, they may request to repeat the academic year. The deadline to submit these requests will be 5 working days after the date on which the student’s marks and result are published following the University Progression/Awarding Boards in July 2020.

(b) Students requesting a Repeat Year for 2019-20 will have to provide evidence that they were unable to study in the Autumn Term 2019. No evidence is required for the Spring and Summer Terms 2020.

(c) There are significant financial and other implications in repeating a year of study. Students who wish to request a repeat year must discuss the possibility with their Student Support Coordinator, HBS School Office, or ISLI Helpdesk.

(d) CIP requests to repeat the year will be considered by designated persons, as specified in the statement of delegations.

9. Other provisions

Under the CIP, a student may also request the following:

(a) Removal of penalties for late submission
The School Director of Teaching and Learning may remove penalties for late submission in the light of circumstances beyond a student’s control which prevented the student from submitting coursework or a dissertation/project.

(b) Exemption from an assessment
A School Director of Academic Tutoring may exempt a student from coursework/in-class tests contributing no more than 10% of the module. In
granting an exemption, the School Director of Academic Tutoring should have regard to the extent to which the student is able to fulfil the learning outcomes of relevant modules on the basis of the remaining assessment and may wish to consult Module Convenors and Programme Director. The School Director of Academic Tutoring does not have the authority to reconsider the mark achieved even if circumstances have affected performance.

Where an exempted piece of work is one of a number of assessments for a module, by default the module mark will be calculated through the proportional redistribution of weighting across all other pieces of assessment for the module. In exceptional cases the School Director of Academic Tutoring may make a case to the USCSC for an alternative model for the calculation of the module mark (e.g. the School may specify the redistribution of weightings). Examples of exceptional cases may include instances where a student’s personal circumstances would render a mode of assessment unfeasible or inappropriate; where the standard redistribution would not assign an appropriate relative weight to specific learning outcomes; or where there may be implications for accreditation requirements.

The USCSC may exempt a student from one or more elements of the module assessment, provided that a mark can be determined from the remaining assessment elements of the module, which, taken together, represent a fair assessment of the module learning outcomes.

(c) **Retrospective consideration of disability**

In cases where a student has been diagnosed with a disability during their programme of study, the School Director of Academic Tutoring is responsible for applying the policy on retrospective consideration of disability, which can be found at:


An assessment of a student’s disability and recommendations of adjustments to assessment will be required for retrospective consideration of disability.
The School Director of Academic Tutoring will refer to USCSC complex cases and those requiring the exercise of powers which are assigned to USCSC.

10. **CIP and academic misconduct**

In all cases, academic misconduct procedures take precedence over the CIP. A student against whom an allegation of misconduct has been made has the opportunity to raise any extenuating circumstances in the course of the academic misconduct procedures. Where, under the academic misconduct procedures, a student is found not to have committed academic misconduct, any CIP submitted by the student will be considered following the completion of the academic misconduct procedure.

11. **Appeals**

Appeals against the decisions in respect of CIPs will be considered by the Extenuating Circumstances Appeals Board under their emergency provisions. Students wishing to appeal should refer to the Appendix 2 for information on how to make an appeal.

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Appendix 1: Circumstances admissible under the CIP

For the purposes of CIP, the University considers the following to be extenuating circumstances:

a) disruption to their studies arising from Covid-19;
b) bereavement due to the death of a close family member or friend or if a close family member or friend becomes seriously ill or has a serious accident which in employment would lead a reasonable employer to grant compassionate leave;
c) serious short term illness or an accident of a nature that, in employment, would lead a reasonable employer to agree to absence on sick leave;
d) a recurrence or worsening of a long-term physical or mental health condition;
e) health problems of a close family member or friend which involves the student caring at home or substantial time visiting the hospital;
f) court attendance (either as witness, jury member, plaintiff or defendant);
g) a family crisis directly affecting the student;
h) a crime which has had a substantial impact on the student’s ability to undertake their academic work;
i) exceptional and unforeseen financial hardship;
j) statutory parental leave (more information can be found in the Students with Parental Responsibilities Policy www.reading.ac.uk/web/FILES/cqsd/Studentparentalpolicy.pdf);
k) membership of a sports team at the national or international level;
l) job interviews (for examinations only)
m) diagnosis of disability during a student’s programme of study in accordance with the policy on Retrospective allowance in examinations and assessment for students diagnosed with a disability during their programme of study;
n) an unsuitable working environment, including limited access to IT equipment or an adequate internet connection, due to restrictions arising from the Covid-19 emergency.

This list is not exhaustive and other circumstances specifically linked to or resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic will be considered.
Appendix 2 Appealing against a CIP decision

1. The Extenuating Circumstances Appeal Board (ECAB) will consider appeals of decisions made under the CIP.

2. It should be noted that, where an appeal involves a combination of an appeal against a decision made under the CIP procedure and an appeal on other grounds, the appeal would be considered under the procedures of the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results.

3. If the student chooses to appeal a decision that has been agreed under the CIP, he or she must complete the form ‘Appeal of an extenuating circumstances decision’ and e-mail the completed form to the Student Appeals and Academic Misconduct Officer [ecfappeals@reading.ac.uk] within five working days of the date on which notification of the decision/examination result was issued.

4. The Board will have the power to:
   (a) Overturn the decision that has been made
   OR
   (b) Confirm or amend the decision that has been imposed
   OR
   (c) Implement such outcomes as, acting reasonably, it considers appropriate without referring the matter back to the University Standing Committee on Extenuating Circumstances or the designated person specified in the statement of delegations for re-consideration.

5. Appeals shall be considered by a panel of the Board.

6. Panels of the Board will comprise: one Teaching and Learning Dean, one School Director of Academic Tutoring, one RUSU officer and a Secretary (to be appointed by the Head of Governance). Panels of the Board will have a rolling membership (i.e. any post-holder for the designated roles can serve on a panel). The panel shall not include any member who has had any previous involvement in a CIP case to be heard by the panel.

7. On receipt of the appeal statement, the Secretary will request a written response to the student’s statement of appeal from, as appropriate, the School Director of
Academic Tutoring or the chair of the USCSC meeting or the Director of Student Services.

8. The panel shall receive a copy of the appeal file in advance of the meeting. This shall normally contain the following:
   • the student’s appeal statement;
   • any evidence submitted by the student in support of his or her appeal;
   • a written response to the student’s appeal statement;
   • a copy of all documents considered by the School Director of Academic Tutoring or the USCSC;
   • a copy of the procedures that have been applied;
   • other documents may also be included where appropriate

9. Any meetings required under the ECAB procedure will take place via telephone or video conferencing. In special circumstances, it may be deemed necessary to consider the case via email.

10. The outcome of the appeal shall normally be issued to the student within five working days of the appeal decision being made. The Secretary shall send the outcome letter and any relevant documentation to the student via their university email account.

11. The appeal to the EC Appeal Board normally concludes the University’s procedures, and shall normally result in the issue of a Completion of Procedures Letter. If the student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the procedures the student may submit a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) providing that the complaint is eligible under the OIA rules. Students who wish to do so must submit a complaint to the OIA within twelve months of the date of the University’s Completion of Procedures letter.