

# Policy on and procedures relating to exceptional circumstances for Post-Experience Programmes in Henley Business School (from January 2022)

For the purposes of the process described in this document:

- the term 'Director of Academic Tutoring' refers to the School Director of Academic Tutoring and the Programme Director of Academic Tutoring
- References to 'School' should be taken to mean 'programme area' and references to School Director of Academic Tutoring also include the relevant Programme Director of Academic Tutoring.
- where reference is made to services provided by RUSU, this includes equivalent services at international branch campuses.
- **references to 'days' mean working days** and, for the purposes of this policy, a working day is a day which is not a Saturday, Sunday, UK public holiday or University closure day. See Annex 4 'Note on holidays and closure days' for further information.

*Research students should seek advice from the Graduate School on the exceptional circumstances process.*

*'Exceptional circumstances' were previously known as 'extenuating circumstances', and this term may still appear in some related policies. Where it appears, it should be understood as 'exceptional circumstances'.*

## Introduction

1. This policy refers to programmes under the Post-Experience governance framework in Henley Business School, including the MBA, Degree Apprenticeships and the Army Higher Education Pathway (AHEP). The current portfolio of programmes that this policy pertains to can be found here:

[www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/exceptionalcircumstances-HBS-PEP-program-list.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/exceptionalcircumstances-HBS-PEP-program-list.pdf)

2. Exceptional circumstances are defined, under the terms of this policy, as circumstances which are outside the control of the student and negatively affect academic performance.
3. The University is concerned to ensure that assessment is fair, and that results and awards fairly reflect a student's achievement of the programme's learning outcomes. Where students have been affected by exceptional circumstances, we may grant extensions to deadlines, further attempts at the assessment without penalty, and other provisions in order to ensure that they have a fair opportunity to demonstrate their achievement.
4. The purpose of this document is to outline the appropriate policy and procedures that staff and students should follow when students experience circumstances which have negatively impacted on their performance. The policy is designed to do four things:
  - a. ensure that students are appropriately supported by their Schools when exceptional circumstances are brought to the attention of Schools in a timely manner;
  - b. ensure that all students are treated fairly and equitably in the light of exceptional circumstances, and, in particular, that:
    - they have a fair opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of relevant learning outcomes, and
    - their achievement is fairly recognised;
  - c. outline the responsibilities of students in informing the University of circumstances which are affecting their performance; and
  - d. protect the academic integrity of programmes for all students.
5. This policy should be read alongside:
  - [Policy on and procedures for students returning to or repeating study](#)
  - [Policy and procedures for suspensions](#)
  - [Policy on and procedures relating to student academic engagement and fitness to study](#)
  - [Disability information](#)
6. In order to maintain the standards of scholarship, personal integrity and communal life essential to the existence and good name of the University, students are expected to take responsibility for organising their academic work, their personal lives and their participation in the University community in line with the University's [Regulations for Student Conduct](#).

Further information on the expectations of students' participation in the University community can be found in the [Reading Student Charter](#) and the [Statement of Learner Responsibilities](#).
7. Students are required to submit assignments by specified deadlines. Work which is

submitted late, without an agreed extension, will be penalised in accordance with the University's [Policy on late submission of coursework](#).

8. The University has services in place which can support and advise students who are dealing with difficulties, whether or not they qualify as exceptional circumstances under the terms of this policy (see sections 27-29 below).
9. The procedures relating to exceptional circumstances assign principal responsibility for decision-making to:
  - a. Directors of Academic Tutoring for decisions in respect of coursework (subject to limits), examinations (subject to limits) and absence from classes where participation contributes to assessment. The Director of Academic Tutoring may appoint a deputy in case of absence;
  - b. the University Standing Committee on Special Cases (USCSC) for decisions in respect of examinations and eligibility for remedies not within the power of Directors of Academic Tutoring.
10. Information provided in an *Exceptional Circumstances* form will normally be held confidentially and will only be shared with those who need to see it. In following the procedures outlined in this document, staff should at all times ensure that they observe strictly the appropriate level of confidentiality.

## What is meant by “exceptional circumstances”?

11. An exceptional circumstance, under the terms of this policy, is a circumstance outside the control of the student which negatively affects their academic performance. Students must describe the impact which their circumstances have had on their studies.
12. The University considers the following to be exceptional circumstances:
  - a) The death or serious illness of a close family member or friend
  - b) Significant personal or family crisis directly affecting the student
  - c) Serious short-term illness or injury that is impacting a student's ability to study
  - d) Worsening of an ongoing illness, or a worsening of a disability--including mental health conditions-- beyond the fluctuation of the condition recognised by DAS and accommodated within the agreed reasonable adjustments
  - e) 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](#). See section 42 on the consideration of these cases.
  - f) Pregnancy, where there is morning sickness or where there are complications relating to the pregnancy which medical evidence can substantiate or a period of three weeks immediately preceding the due date;
  - g) Statutory parental leave (more information can be found in the [Students with Parental Responsibilities Policy](#));

- h) Witnessing or involvement in a traumatic incident;
- i) Severe financial difficulties impacting a student's ability to study;
- j) Applicable only where the student is not able to access a campus of the University: unforeseen problems with network facilities, personal computers or printers. Faults associated with the VLE, Turnitin or University maintained network facilities preventing online assessment submission will be managed in line with policy outlined in the Online Submission Protocols;
- k) Court attendance, jury service, other public duty or obligation;
- l) Competing in sport, or participation in other activity, at national or international level;
- m) Job interviews related to the student's career (only in respect of examinations, in-class tests, presentations and other assessments which take place at a specified time).

This list is not exhaustive and other circumstances are considered appropriate provided the circumstances meet the definition above (section 12).

## What are **not** considered "exceptional circumstances"

13. The following circumstances are normally **not** considered "exceptional" under the terms of this policy:
- a. Any circumstances for which appropriate adjustments have already been made by the University and where there is no evidence of a worsening of the condition which requires further consideration;
  - b. Assessment-related stress which is not diagnosed as an illness or documented in the Individual Learning Plan provided by Disability Advisory Services;
  - c. An illness occurring after an examination/in-class test or the deadline for submission of coursework;
  - d. A minor illness such as a cough or cold;
  - e. Pregnancy in the absence of complications and in the absence of conditions specified in section 12(f);
  - f. Assessments and examinations scheduled within a short period;
  - g. Poor working practice such as:
    - Failure to back up electronic documents regularly and securely;
    - Failure on the part of the student to acquaint themselves with the times, dates, and places where assessments were to be submitted or examinations to be sat;
    - Poor time management;
  - h. Problems with network facilities, personal computers or printers, except in cases where the student is unable to access campus. Faults associated with the VLE,

Turnitin or University maintained network facilities preventing online assessment submission will be managed in line with policy outlined in the Online Submission Protocols;

- i.* Where students are studying on a full-time basis, issues relating to paid employment except in cases of work placements which contribute to the programme of study;
- j.* House moves, renovations or other routine accommodation difficulties;
- k.* Holidays, including attendance at marriages, festivals and like events including religious festivals. For more information, please see the [Code of practice for supporting students relating to religion, belief and teaching and learning](#);
- l.* Circumstances claimed to be unforeseen which a reasonable person would view as foreseeable or preventable.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive.

## What is considered as appropriate evidence?

14. See Annex 1 for information about evidence requirements, which should be read in conjunction with section 31.

### Note on the relaxation of evidence requirements in the context of the pandemic

The following provisions A-D apply until 25 September 2022 (inclusive) only:

- a.* We recognise that there are situations related to COVID-19 where it may be impossible or very difficult to obtain evidence, and we have therefore agreed to relax the requirement for evidence where it cannot be obtained. This is effective until 25 September 2022. You can apply for Exceptional Circumstances in the usual way using the existing form and should continue to provide evidence where at all possible.
- b.* If you are unable to provide evidence, you must clearly explain this along with a description of your circumstances, as well as the impact that your circumstances are having on your assessments. This will help your School to understand how you have been affected when assessing your case, and decide what mitigation is appropriate or if we can provide other support. **Please note, if you do not provide enough explanation of the circumstance or why mitigation is needed, your request may be rejected.**
- c.* For guidance on appropriate forms of evidence (where it can be obtained), see Annex 1 below.
- d.* Where a student has not provided evidence, the person(s)/committee responsible for considering the case is also responsible for determining whether the explanation given for not being able to provide evidence is reasonable and sufficient to justify the adjustments being requested.

## Extension Requests

15. Please consider the need for extension requests carefully. Delaying your assignment submission can compromise preparation for the next module. Falling behind with your studies can be demotivating. You should discuss issues affecting your progress with your Academic Tutor or Apprenticeship Tutor where relevant.

16. You should submit an *Exceptional Circumstances* (EC) form ideally in advance of the submission date or, failing that, within five days of the due submission date; if this is not possible for good reason (such as severe mental or physical incapacity), you may still submit an Exceptional Circumstances form, with evidence as appropriate, but are required also to provide an explanation of why it has been submitted late. A decision will normally be made within a short period. If the exceptional circumstance (and, where relevant, the reason for late submission) is accepted as valid, the remedy might typically be, for example, an extension.
17. Extension Requests for students on Post-Experience and Degree Apprenticeship programmes except Army Higher Education Programme (AHEP):
- a. A 14-day extension to be reviewed by the designated Programme Administrator. Students are not required to provide supporting documentary evidence (self-certification)
  - b. A 30-day extension to be reviewed by the designated Programme Administrator. Students **must** provide supporting documentary evidence for this request.
  - c. A 90-day extension to be reviewed by the Director of Academic Tutoring. Students **must** provide supporting evidence for this request.
18. In respect of students on Post-Experience and Degree Apprenticeship programmes except Army Higher Education Programme (AHEP), if an extension request has been reviewed and approved by the Director of Academic Tutoring/designated Programme Administrator, further extensions may be sought for the same assignment.
- a. The total extension period must not exceed 90 days from the original due date of the assessment. Students will be required to submit a new extension request with the appropriate evidence if they need more time.
  - b. You are entitled to request that a previously granted extension be upgraded to a longer period, though each request will be based on your original due date (e.g. a previously agreed 14-day extension can be upgraded to a 30-day extension, though the new due date will be 30 days after the original deadline, **not** the extended deadline).
  - c. Additionally, you are only able to request each extension period once per module i.e. a second 30-day extension cannot be added to a previously granted 30-day extension. Extension requests cannot be transferred from module to module. A new extension request must be submitted if required for the next assessment.
19. Extension requests for students on the Army Higher Education Programme (AHEP):
- a. A 60-day extension to be approved by the 1RO (Reporting Officer) and the Director of Academic Tutoring. Students **must** provide supporting evidence for this request, except for Army-related circumstances (see Annex 1).
  - b. A 120-day extension to be approved by the 1RO (Reporting Officer) and the Director of Academic Tutoring. Students **must** provide supporting evidence for this request, except for Army-related circumstances (see Annex 1).

20. Once an extension request has been reviewed and approved by the Director of Academic Tutoring/designated Programme Administrator further extensions may be sought for the same assignment, with the total extension not exceeding 120 days from the original due date of the assessment.

## Deemed Not to Have Sat (DNS)

21. Deemed Not to Have Sat (DNS) for Coursework Assessments for all students on Post-Experience, Degree Apprenticeship programmes and the Army Higher Education Programme (AHEP):

- a. If you believe that your performance has been adversely affected by exceptional circumstances, you can submit an *Exceptional Circumstances* form following the publication of your results (see section 21b below). You can submit this form whether or not you have submitted an assignment.
- b. You must wait until your provisional results have been published by Programme Administration and then submit an *Exceptional Circumstances* form within **five working days** of the notification of your provisional results. Evidence should be submitted; wherever possible, this should be at the same time as the *Exceptional Circumstances* form; if it is not available at that point, you must submit your evidence within ten working days of submission of the *Exceptional Circumstances* form.

22. If you are Deemed Not to have Sat, the mark for the attempt in which you have been Deemed Not to have Sat is **cancelled** (i.e. the mark no longer exists), the assessment for the module is incomplete, your classification or overall result for the Stage is also **cancelled**, and you will not be able to progress or graduate until you have taken the assessment again. The mark achieved in your further attempt will be the mark for the assessment: the original mark cannot be reinstated (and if you do not attend the further attempt, the assessment mark will be zero). You will be notified of the decision through the RISIS portal and an email to your University account as soon as possible following the University Standing Committee on Special Cases (USCSC) at which your request is considered.

23. Students are strongly encouraged to seek advice from their Academic Tutor, Apprenticeship Tutor or Director of Academic Tutoring in Henley Business School before submitting an exceptional circumstances request. This is especially important where a student has fulfilled the requirements for progression or for the award of a degree.

24. Changes in your situation: Normally, once you have submitted an Exceptional Circumstances form and a decision has been made, you will not be able to withdraw the request or decline the Deemed Not to have Sat which has been granted. Exceptionally, however, if your circumstances substantially change and you believe that it is no longer appropriate for you to be Deemed Not to have Sat, you may submit a request for the Deemed Not to have Sat to be revoked. You must submit the request to the Henley School Office, providing a clear

explanation how your circumstances have changed and why a Deemed Not to have Sat is no longer appropriate. The request will be considered by the University Standing Committee on Special Cases, as appropriate

Given the above, it is therefore important that you consider carefully whether you wish to submit a request for Deemed Not to have Sat.

## 25. Deemed Not to Have Sat (DNS) for Examinations

If you believe that your performance has been adversely affected by exceptional circumstances in an examination or if you have missed an examination due to exceptional circumstances, you must normally submit an Exceptional Circumstances form online either before the date of the examination or no later than five working days after the date of the examination. Students who expect to be absent from an examination must also inform the relevant lecturer and programme administrator in advance of the examination, if possible. Evidence should be submitted with the form, but, in any case, must be received within ten working days of the date of the first deadline/examination to which the form relates, unless there is an exceptional reason why the evidence could not be provided within the specified timeframe. This also applies to alternative assessments which are being taken in place of examinations as a reasonable adjustment recommended by Disability Advisory Services or as a result of an exceptional circumstance.

## Students with Disabilities

26. Students with disabilities or specific learning difficulties should register with the Disability Advisory Service (DAS), which will advise on reasonable adjustments in the light of your disability. The reasonable adjustment will take account of any normal fluctuation in your condition (for example, by making provision for a limited-period extension for submission of coursework for some assignment types).
27. In consequence, you should not need to make an exceptional circumstances request in respect of your condition and its normal fluctuation. In the event that your condition worsens beyond the range of its normal fluctuation, you should contact the Disability Advisory Service and may submit an EC request.

## Support services available to students

28. The University offers support and guidance for students who are facing difficult circumstances, whether or not they qualify as an 'exceptional circumstance' under this policy. Support is available from your Academic Tutor and from support services including:
  - Student Welfare team
  - Counselling and Wellbeing Service
  - Disability Advisory Service
  - University Study Advisers

- Student Financial Support
- International Student Advisory Service
- International Study and Language Institute
- Chaplaincy
- RUSU Advice Service.

Staff should, as appropriate, encourage students to consult relevant support services and/or a medical practitioner.

29. For a list of services and advice centres, refer to the [Essentials website](#). Information on support available from the RUSU Advice Service is available [here](#).
30. For details of the entitlement of suspended students to access support services, please refer to the [Policy on and procedures for suspensions](#).

## How and when to submit an *Exceptional Circumstances* form, and what happens next

31. To request consideration of exceptional circumstances, you must complete the *Exceptional Circumstances* form on the RISIS Student Portal.
32. Details of acceptable evidence can be found in *Annex 1 - Further information on evidence required to support exceptional circumstances*. Evidence should be submitted with the form, but, in any case, must be received within the timeframes specified in the sections below on 'How and when you submit your *Exceptional Circumstances* form' for the different categories of assessment unless there is an exceptional reason why the evidence could not be provided within the specified timeframe. Students are responsible for ensuring that evidence is submitted by the deadline. **Please also refer to the note on the relaxation of evidence requirements in paragraph 14A-D above, which applies until 25 September 2022 (inclusive).**
33. If, due to the nature of your circumstances or another concern, you do not wish your circumstances to be disclosed to the Director of Academic Tutoring in your School, you should submit an *Exceptional Circumstances* form in accordance with the normal procedure, but should state clearly at the top of the section called 'Nature of Exceptional Circumstances' on the *Exceptional Circumstances* form that you wish a decision be taken at University level without the details of your case being shared with the Director of Academic Tutoring or other academic staff within your School or Department. The relevant Programme Administrator in HBS will inform your Director of Academic Tutoring that an *Exceptional Circumstances* form has been submitted and will also inform the Director of Academic Tutoring of the decision but will not disclose any details about the circumstances to the School. Information included in the *Exceptional Circumstances* form will be made available to the University Special Cases Sub-Committee and will remain confidential.

### Late submission of *Exceptional Circumstances* forms

34. Forms submitted after the relevant deadline will not normally be considered. If, however, you were not able to submit the form due to physical or mental incapacity, hospitalisation or equivalent serious circumstances outside your control, then a statement which details the reason for the lateness must be submitted in the *Exceptional Circumstances* form. Statements must be substantiated with evidence and will follow the normal requirements for relevant evidence.
35. A student who has graduated is normally deemed to have accepted the result.

Advice on completing an *Exceptional Circumstances* form

36. If you need advice on completing your exceptional circumstances form, please contact one of the following: the relevant Programme Administrator in HBS; the Advice Service at RUSU; the Director of Academic Tutoring or your Academic Tutor

## If you have had exceptional circumstances which have had an impact throughout the year and have not been addressed through other allowances

37. It is expected that a student experiencing ongoing problems during the year will have submitted exceptional circumstances requests as necessary through the year and will have benefited from the relevant permitted outcomes. In such a case, there is not normally an opportunity to request further consideration of exceptional circumstances.
38. Where a student has experienced severe problems which have prevented them from engaging with their programme, they should discuss their situation with their Director of Academic Tutoring, who may advise the student to submit an EC request to repeat the appropriate module.

## Exceptional further consideration: new evidence or changes in your situation

39. *New evidence:* Normally, the decision on an exceptional circumstances request by the Director of Academic Tutoring or the USCSC is final, subject to the right of appeal. Exceptionally, however, if you have new evidence which you were not able to submit by the original deadline, you may submit this to the Henley School Office which should normally be within 10 days of notification of the decision, together with an explanation as to why the evidence could not be submitted by the original deadline. The decision will be reviewed in the light of the new evidence by the Director of Academic Tutoring or the USCSC, as appropriate. Where new evidence is submitted late and a different outcome is agreed, the University cannot guarantee that the normal timeline for the further assessment will apply, which may mean that you are not able to take an examination in the next relevant examination period; in some cases, a different assessment method may be used.
40. *Changes in your situation:* Normally, once you have submitted an *Exceptional Circumstances* form and a decision has been made, you will not be able to withdraw the request or decline

the Deemed Not to have Sat which has been granted. Exceptionally, however, if your circumstances substantially change and you believe that it is no longer appropriate for you to be Deemed Not to have Sat, you may submit a request for the Deemed Not to have Sat to be revoked. You must submit the request to the Henley School Office, providing a clear explanation how your circumstances have changed and why a Deemed Not to have Sat is no longer appropriate. The request will be considered by the University Standing Committee on Special Cases, as appropriate.

41. The decision will be communicated by the Henley School Office.
42. This process relates **only to new evidence** and **changes in your circumstances**. If you have concerns about the decision on other grounds, you should refer to the section on Appeals (see sections 46-58 below).

## Decisions following diagnosis of disability during a student's programme of study

43. In cases where a student has been diagnosed with a disability during their programme of study, the Director of Academic Tutoring, in consultation with Disability Advisory Services (DAS), is responsible for applying the policy on retrospective consideration of disability, which can be found at <https://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/student/exa-RetroAllowance.aspx>. The Director of Academic Tutoring will refer to the USCSC complex cases and those requiring the exercise of powers which are assigned to USCSC.
44. In the event that a student submits an exceptional circumstances request due to a worsening of a condition disclosed to DAS, confirmation from a member of DAS staff may be accepted as an alternative to new medical evidence.

## Academic Misconduct

45. Where a conflict arises between an allowance for an exceptional circumstance and a penalty imposed for academic misconduct, the penalty for academic misconduct takes precedence.

## Appeals – Exceptional Circumstances Appeal Board

46. The Exceptional Circumstances (EC) Appeal Board will consider appeals of decisions made under the exceptional circumstances procedure by the Director of Academic Tutoring or the University Standing Committee on Special Cases (USCSC), except in the circumstance specified in section 47 below.
47. Where, following the notification of an overall result for a Final, Stage or Part Examination, a student wishes to appeal against their overall result on a *combination* of (a) permissible grounds for an appeal to the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results *and* (b) permissible grounds for an appeal against a decision taken under the exceptional circumstances procedures, the appeal will be considered under the procedures of the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results.

48. The permissible grounds for an appeal are against a decision taken under the exceptional circumstances procedures:
- a. The procedures for considering an exceptional circumstances request were not properly followed;
  - b. The decision reached, or the outcome, was unreasonable;
  - c. The request was not properly considered, for example, relevant information included by the student was overlooked;
  - d. The student was not given reasons for the decision of the Director of Academic Tutoring or USCSC;
  - e. There is new material evidence which the student, for good reason, was unable to submit earlier in the process. In order to appeal on this ground you must already have followed the procedure indicated in sections 39-42;
  - f. There was a reasonable perception of bias during the consideration of, and/or decision on, the request.
49. If the student chooses to appeal a decision that has been agreed by the Director of Academic Tutoring or by the USCSC, he or she must complete the form 'Appeal of an exceptional circumstances decision' (available [here](#)), setting out clearly the grounds for appeal, providing reasons and details of supporting evidence. The completed form must be e-mailed to the Student Appeals and Academic Misconduct Officer ([ecfappeals@reading.ac.uk](mailto:ecfappeals@reading.ac.uk)) within five working days of the date on which notification of the decision of the Director of Academic Tutoring or USCSC was issued.
50. The EC Appeal Board will not re-investigate or re-hear the case. Rather, it will consider the case as submitted with reference to the grounds for appeal given in section 48.
51. The Board will have the power to:
- Confirm the decision which has been made
- OR
- Alter the decision which has been made, and determine such outcomes as, acting reasonably, it considers appropriate without referring the matter back to the USCSC or the Director of Academic Tutoring.
52. Appeals shall be considered by a panel of the Board.
53. Panels of the Board will comprise: one Teaching and Learning Dean, one 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 an exceptional circumstances case. An appropriate member of the Support Centres may be invited by the Chair to attend consideration of a case to advise the panel on matters of fact.
54. On receipt of the appeal statement, the Secretary will normally request a written response to the student's statement of appeal from, as appropriate, the Director of Academic Tutoring

or the chair of the USCSC meeting at which the case was considered, except where the appeal relates only to an administrative error, the late submission of a case, and/or late submission of evidence, in which case a written response is not required.

55. The panel will receive a copy of the appeal file in advance of the meeting. This will 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 as described in section 54 above;
  - a copy of all documents considered by the Director of Academic Tutoring or the USCSC;
  - a copy of the procedures that have been applied;
  - any other relevant documents pertinent to the appeal
56. The panel will normally meet, either in person or via conference call or equivalent, to consider the case and the written documentation. In special circumstances, it may be deemed necessary to consider the case via email. Where this is proposed the student will be notified in advance, including being provided with the reasons for this, and will have the opportunity to provide written responses and submissions.
57. The outcome of the appeal will normally be issued to the student within five working days of the appeal decision being made. The Secretary will send the outcome letter and any relevant documentation to the student via their university email account.
58. The appeal to the EC Appeal Board normally concludes the University's procedures, and where appropriate will 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.

## Monitoring

59. The Chairs of the USCSCs, Chairs of the Director of Academic Tutoring Community of Practice, Director of Teaching and Learning Operations and Advice, and a Head of a Support Centre will annually undertake a review of the operation of the exceptional circumstances process over the previous year, which will include consideration of a statistical report, produced by Student Services. A brief report of their findings will be considered by the Sub-Committee for the Delivery and Enhancement of Learning and Teaching.
60. As part of an External Examiner's broad oversight of the assessment process and its fairness, an External Examiner may, on request and on a confidential basis, have sight of exceptional circumstances forms and/or be provided with a brief synopsis of selected cases, and offer

comment on the University's procedures and decision-making in respect of exceptional circumstances cases.

See Code of Practice on the External Examining of Taught Programmes, section 11, for further information.

# Annex 1: Further information on evidence required to support exceptional circumstances

Please also refer to the note on the relaxation of evidence requirements in paragraph 14A-D above, which applies until 25 September 2022 (inclusive).

1. With the exception of EC requests made under the self-certification arrangement (see section 17a), EC requests should be accompanied by evidence (with an English translation if the evidence is in another language). Where the original document is in another language, then the student may provide a certified translation into English (at their own expense). Alternatively, the student can submit the original document, with their own translation into English, on the understanding that the University will then get it checked.
2. The nature of the evidence required includes, but is not limited to:
  - a) For bereavement, a signed and dated letter from a minister of religion, medical practitioner, solicitor, or a relative or friend, or an announcement in a newspaper, or an order of service, or a death certificate;
  - b) For illness, a signed and dated letter from a medical professional practitioner (e.g. GP, clinical specialist, registered professional in psychiatric practice, or nurse practitioner) that states the dates when the illness affected the student and how, without breaching confidence, the circumstances affected or are likely to affect the student's ability to prepare for an assessment, submit or attend for an assessment or recognise and deal with their circumstances;
  - c) For a student awaiting a diagnosis of an illness or condition, a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner that states the dates when the student attended for treatment, when tests were undertaken, and when a diagnosis is expected;
  - d) For accident or injury, a copy of an accident report provided by a police officer or confirmation from an appropriate professional. In all cases where a letter is provided it must state the dates when the accident or injury occurred, how the student was affected, the position and qualification(s) of the person providing the letter and their contact details;

- e) For significant adverse personal or family circumstances encountered by a student, a signed and dated letter from one or more of the following: a medical practitioner, a social worker (stating their position with respect to the student), a registered psychological therapist, a registered professional in psychiatric practice, an officer of the law, a minister of religion, or a relative or friend. The letter must provide information on the time when the circumstances occurred, whether they are continuing and an opinion on the severity and effect the circumstances are having on the student;
- f) For students who are competing in sport, or participate in other activity, at the national or international level, a letter must be provided from the supporting sports/organising body indicating the dates when the student is required for training, competitions and/or attendance;
- g) For students who are attending a job interview, a copy of the invitation to interview;
- h) For part-time and distance learning students in full-time employment only, who have experienced an increase in their workload due to circumstances beyond their control, or have been required by their employer or a client to work through normal periods available for study and/or assessment:
  - i. Where they are in employment, a signed and dated letter from their employer, or their employer's authorised representative, stating that the student has been required by them to undertake work in the interests of the employer and that this was in time that had previously been agreed would be available to the student to study, prepare for assessment or take an assessment if appropriate;
  - ii. Where they are self-employed, evidence from their client or the client's authorised representative stating that they have required the student to undertake unforeseen work that was necessary in the interests of the client's business, together with the dates and times when the student had been required to attend the client or undertake the previously unforeseen work;
- i) For military service, the individual's call-up papers (translated where necessary) together with evidence to show that the service cannot be deferred. Please note this does not apply to students on the Army Higher Education Pathway;
- j) For students on the Army Higher Education Pathway where their exceptional circumstances are Army related and confidential, a supporting statement from the 1RO

This list is not exhaustive and other evidence may be relevant in particular circumstances.

3. A list of circumstances which the University does not consider exceptional circumstances is given in section 13 (above).

## Annex 2: Possible outcomes of EC requests for specific assessment types

In addition to the outcomes set out in the table below, other possible outcomes are:

- (a) You may be required to submit evidence by a specified deadline, which will normally be 10 working days from the request for submission of further evidence;
- (b) Your request may be rejected on the grounds of insufficient evidence;
- (c) Your request may be rejected on the grounds that the request is made due to an insubstantial event and is not “exceptional” as defined in section 13 above.

**Groupwork:** The Director of Academic Tutoring will decide the most appropriate outcomes (normally from (a)-(e) below) for the student with the exceptional circumstance and for other students in the group who are impacted as a consequence of their colleague’s exceptional circumstance.

	Relevant assessment	Possible outcomes	When to submit EC form	Who decides outcome?  (USCSC’s powers include those assigned to SDATs or their alternate)	Guidance for students and staff
a	Coursework	Removal of a penalty for late submission;	In-module	SDAT or designated Programme Administrator	A removal of penalty due to late submission to be reviewed by the designated Programme Administrator for ECF submission made up to <b>five working days</b> after the deadline. ECFs submitted after

					<p>this time will be reviewed by the Director of Academic Tutoring. Students are required to provide supporting documentary evidence.</p>
b	Coursework	Provide an extension to the deadline of assessed coursework;	In-module	<p>For extensions within registration for programme: SDAT</p> <p>For extensions beyond registration for programme: USCSC</p>	<p>For students</p> <p>If the period of an extension goes beyond the point at which feedback will be given to other students, an alternative assignment may be set.</p> <p>Where a student has had extensions beyond registration at two University Awarding Boards, any further request will be decided by USCSC and is subject to additional consideration given that protracted extensions may not be in the student's best interest.</p> <p>For staff</p> <p>In the event that a proposed extension would fall beyond the student's normal period of registration for the programme, the SDAT can approve the extension and the registration will be</p>

					<p>extended to the end of that extension period, as long as this extension of registration period does not exceed 90 days (120 days for AHEP students). This may only be done once. In the case of a request for an extension beyond registration, where the registration has already been extended previously in order to accommodate an extension, the SDAT must make a recommendation (with a detailed rationale) to the USCSC.</p>
c	Coursework	Vary the assessment method for a student for coursework	In-module	<p>For assessment contributing no more than 20% of a module: SDAT approval.</p> <p>For assessment contributing &gt;20% of module: SDAT</p>	<p>For staff</p> <p>Directors of Academic Tutoring may wish to consult Module Conveners and/or Programme Director when making this allowance to ensure the student has had the opportunity to demonstrate all learning outcomes;</p> <p>Where an exemption would take the</p>

				<p>declines request or recommends approval to USCSC</p> <p>(Important refer to the Notes for information in the case where a student would have multiple variant assessments across a module or would have a combination of exemptions and variant assessments across the module.</p>	<p>cumulative total of variant assessments amount to more than 10% of the module, the request should be referred to USCSC if the SDAT recommends approval.</p> <p>Where a student asks for an exemption for one piece of coursework and an alternative assessment for another assessment which together represent more than 20% of the module assessment, the request should be referred to USCSC if the SDAT recommends approval.</p> <p>Where the proposed variation is substantial or complex, the Director of Academic Tutoring may wish to consult an External Examiner for the programme before referral to USCSC;</p>
d	Coursework	Exempt a student from coursework	In-module	<p>For assessment(s) contributing no more than 10% of a module: SDAT approval.</p> <p>For assessment(s)</p>	<p>For staff</p> <p>In granting an exemption, the 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</p>

				<p>contributing &gt;10% of module: SDAT declines request or recommends approval to USCSC</p> <p>(Important refer to the Notes for information in the case where a student would have multiple exemptions across a module or would have a combination of exemptions and variant assessments across the module.</p>	<p>basis of the remaining assessment and may wish to consult Module Convenors and Programme Director. It is important to note that the Director of Academic Tutoring does not have the authority to reconsider the mark achieved even if circumstances have affected performance.</p> <p>Where an exemption would take the cumulative total of exemptions amount to more than 10% of the module, the request should be referred to USCSC if the SDAT recommends approval.</p> <p>Where a student asks for an exemption for one piece of coursework and an alternative assessment for another assessment which together represent more than 20% of the module assessment, the request should be referred to USCSC if the SDAT recommends approval.</p> <p>In recommending an exemption, the Director of Academic Tutoring may wish to consult an External Examiner for the programme before referral to</p>
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					<p>USCSC.</p> <p>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 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.</p>
e	Participation in a class	<b>Where participation contributes to assessment:</b>	In-module	SDAT	For staff

		authorise absence from lectures, seminars, workshops and tutorials.			<p>Where absence from a class entails absence from an in-class test, presentation, or other assessment beyond a participation requirement, the provisions related to the other modes of assessment normally take precedence.</p> <p>Consideration should be given to compliance with PSRB accreditation requirements in respect of participation, where applicable.</p>
f	Examinations and Coursework: request in advance not to sit	Deemed Not to have Sat in relevant assessment(s) and thereby in relevant modules.	Before relevant examination period	SDAT>USCSC	<p>For students</p> <p>Once a student has been DNSed in advance for examinations and coursework, they will not have the option to sit those assessments at the sitting for which they have received the DNS.</p>
g	Examinations and Coursework	Deemed Not to have Sat in relevant assessment(s) and thereby in relevant modules	After publication of results	SDAT>USCSC	<p>For students</p> <p>A student who is DNSed is allowed to take the examination or submit their coursework again without an increment in the attempt number. They will sit the examination in the next relevant examination period.</p>

					<p>When a student is DNSed in a module, the mark for the relevant assessment component is cancelled and the assessment for the module is incomplete.</p> <p>If you request a DNS examinations and/or coursework your original result for that attempt at the examination will be removed and cannot be reinstated.</p> <p>You are strongly advised to obtain evidence in support of your EC at the time of the circumstance to enable a prompt decision on your case following publication of results.</p> <p>Students can only be granted DNS as the overall result for the Part or Stage on two occasions per Part of study.</p> <p>For staff</p> <p>In evaluating a student's circumstances, the panel will not normally consider marks achieved by</p>
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					<p>the student.</p> <p>Students who have requested a DNS as part of the Post-Results process have made the request in full knowledge of their results and are not able to decline a DNS once granted.</p>
<b>Exceptional outcomes not normally available for request by students</b>					
h	Assessment across Part/Year/Stage	Permit the Examiners to vary the weighting of the Parts or Stages in the calculation of the degree classification.		SDAT>USCSC	<p>For staff</p> <p>This would be a highly exceptional measure, where exceptional circumstances have had a severe and pervasive impact across a Part or Stage of the degree.</p> <p>An External Examiner should normally be consulted in advance of referral to USCSC.</p> <p>Having been permitted by USCSC to vary the weighting, the Examiners would apply the provision in the event that there was a disparity in performance between the Parts or Stages of the degree. The Examinations and Graduation Office supports the process and recalculates the result.</p>

i	Assessment across Part/Year/Stage	Award of an Aegrotat degree or other Aegrotat award.		SDAT>USCSC> Programme Examiners>Senate Only requested if discussed with Academic Tutor (and some other relevant staff)	For students and staff An Aegrotat is a degree awarded when a student is unable to complete the assessment for a programme due to illness or other exceptional circumstances, but where there is sufficient evidence, based on assessments completed and their performance, to provide a high level of assurance that they would otherwise have achieved a degree. (It is normally awarded where there is little possibility of their completing the degree within a reasonable period of time). An Aegrotat is not awarded with an Honours classification. For staff The award of an Aegrotat will normally have been discussed by the Teaching and Learning Dean, the School Director of Academic Tutoring and the External Examiner in advance of the USCSC.
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## Annex 3: Membership and responsibilities of USCSC

1. The University Standing Committee on Special Cases has a rolling membership (i.e. any post-holder for the designated roles can serve on a panel). Each meeting shall be attended by:
  - A Teaching and Learning Dean (who may vary from meeting to meeting) (Chair)
  - Two Directors of Academic Tutoring (which, for the avoidance of doubt, includes the Academic Director of Teaching and Learning at branch campuses)
  - A member of Student and Applicant Services nominated by the Director of Student and Applicant Services
  - Director of Administration or the Teaching and Learning Officer for HBS (or delegate with the approval of Chair)
  - Secretary to be appointed by the Director of Student and Applicant Services
2. The Committee shall, in accordance with its procedures, consider exceptional circumstances requests submitted by students which have been appropriately submitted via an Exceptional Circumstances Form (ECF) and within the relevant timescales.
3. A Director of Academic Tutoring on the panel will not contribute to the discussion or decision in respect of cases from their own School or Department.
4. Advice from a professional from the University Medical Practice, Counselling and Wellbeing Service, and the Disability Advisory Services will be available to the panel at its request.
5. The USCSC will normally meet fortnightly during the Autumn and Spring Terms and weekly during the Summer Term, during the resit period and in the week immediately following examination periods.
6. The USCSC has the authority to grant outcomes in respect of exceptional circumstances as indicated in Annex 2.
7. Where the student has requested that a decision be made without the circumstances being disclosed to the Director of Academic Tutoring, the USCSC will determine such cases.

## Annex 4: A Note on Holiday and Closure Days

Students will be subject to the public/national holidays where their programme is registered. In the majority of cases this will be either the University's UK Campuses (Whiteknights, Greenlands and London Road) or the Malaysia Campus.

Students should contact their Programme Director if further clarification is required.

Where a student is studying modules at a partner institution as part of their University of Reading award, such as study abroad programmes or embedded modules studied at the partner, local regulations at the partner will apply for those partner delivered modules.

For UK campuses, the University is normally closed on the 8 Public Holidays for England and Wales (New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, May Bank Holiday, Spring Bank Holiday, Summer Bank Holiday, Christmas Day and Boxing Day). It is also normally closed for a small number of additional days during the year, referred to as 'closure days', usually around the Christmas and Easter public holidays. Further details can be found at:

<http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/staffportal/sp-term-dates.aspx>.