

Meeting of the Senatus Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)
Online meeting via Teams
Monday 31 July 11-12:30pm

CONVENERS AGENDA

1.	Welcome and Apologies	
2.	Minutes of previous meetings For approval <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 May 2023 (enclosed) • 9 June 2023 (enclosed) • 23 June 2023 (enclosed) 	APRC 22/23 13A CLOSED APRC 22/23 13B APRC 22/23 13C CLOSED
3.	Update on concessions related to industrial action – Verbal update To note	
For approval		
4.	Exceptional Circumstances Policy For approval	APRC 22/23 13D
5.	Student Discipline Committee Membership For approval	APRC 22/23 13E
6.	Any Other Business	

Meeting of the Senatus Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC)**Online meeting via Teams****Friday 9 June, 11-12:30pm****Unconfirmed minute**

<p>Present: Dr Aidan Brown Dr Adam Bunni Professor Jamie Davies Dr Murray Earle Professor Patrick Hadoke (Vice-Convenor) Clair Halliday Dr Jenny Hoy Isabel Lavers Professor Antony Maciocia Sam Maccallum Sarah McAllister Katy McPhail Dr Donna Murray</p> <p>Dr Paul Norris (Convenor) Callum Paterson Rachael Quirk Dr Deborah Shaw Professor Tim Stratford Stephen Warrington</p> <p>In attendance: Olivia Hayes (Minutes)</p> <p>Apologies: Philippa Burrell Professor Jeremy Crang Alexandra Laidlaw Kirsty Woomble Dr Uzma Tufail-Hanif</p>	<p>Elected member of Senate Head of Academic Policy and Regulation Dean of Taught Education (CMVM) Elected member of Senate Director of Postgraduate Research and Early Career Research Experience (CMVM) The Advice Place, Deputy Manager CAHSS EDI lead – substitute member Academic Administration Manager (CMVM) – substitute member Dean of Postgraduate Research (CSE) Vice President Education, Students' Association Head of Student Support Operations, Registry Services Deputy Head of Academic Affairs (CSE) – substitute members Head of Taught Student Development, Institute for Academic Development Dean of Quality Assurance and Curriculum Approval (CAHSS) Academic Engagement Coordinator (Co-opted member) Head of Taught Student Administration & Support (CAHSS) Dean of Students (CMVM) Dean of Learning and Teaching (CSE) Dean of Student Experience (CSE)</p> <p>Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services</p> <p>Head of Academic Administration (CMVM) Dean of Students (CAHSS) Head of Academic Affairs (CSE) Head of PGR Student Office (CAHSS) Elected member of Senate</p>
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1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>The Convener opened the meeting and welcomed Dr Jenny Hoy, Katy McPhail and Isabel Lavers, substitute members attending the meeting on behalf of absent members.</p>
2.	<p>Update on concessions related to industrial action – Verbal update To note</p> <p>The Convener outlined the decision taken on two concessions relating to industrial action which the Committee had been consulted on.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A concession was received from the School of Geosciences, this was approved and advice provided to the School on ensuring the robustness of marks and with an offer of support to aid in resolving the issue moving forward. • A concession was received from the School of Divinity, this was approved. <p>The Convener noted that a concession from the Colleges of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences was expected imminently and this would be handled in the agreed way.</p>
<p>To note and comment</p> <p>Report of comments received by email</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Academic Policy and Regulations Membership and Terms of Reference 2023/24 - APRC 22/23 9R</p> <p>To note</p> <p>The Committee noted the paper and no comments were raised.</p> <p>The current APRC composition would continue until Senate formally approve the membership for 2023/24. The majority of positions on the Committee are ex-officio.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Annual Report of the Senate Standing Committees - APRC 22/23 9S</p> <p>To note and comment</p> <p>The Committee noted the paper.</p> <p>There was limited detail provided on the priorities for the Senate Education Committee. It was requested that further detail be provided on this moving forward.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Annual Review of Effectiveness of Senate Standing Committees - APRC 22/23 9T</p> <p>To note and comment</p> <p>The Committee noted the paper.</p> <p>There is an expectation that EDI matters are considered in preparing a paper for APRC. The Committee are responsible for determining if the consideration of EDI is sufficient for items business brought forward and members can raise objection if they feel that greater consideration of EDI matters is required.</p>
<p>For approval</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Proposed Regulation, Policy and Procedure Changes related to Implementation of Student Support Model - APRC 22/23 10D</p> <p>For approval</p> <p>The Convener, Dr Paul Norris invited the Committee to approve this item and noted that paragraph 12 of the paper has been updated in light of comments raised at the 25 May meeting.</p> <p>The Committee approved the paper as presented and no were objections raised.</p>

7.	<p>Academic Year Dates – 2026/27 - APRC 22/23 10E For approval</p> <p>This item was introduced by Olivia Hayes, Academic Policy Officer, Academic Services. The paper outlines the revised provisional academic year dates 2026/27 for approval.</p> <p>The following points were raised in discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee expressed its discomfort with reducing the revision period to two days from the usual five days. • Weekends should not be included in the revision period. • Curriculum Transformation (CT) is expected to be in place by the 2026/27 and it is unclear what the structure of examinations will look like under CT and the potential impact on the December 2026 diet. • The structure of the Academic Year suggests that Semester 1 has greater importance than Semester 2. The Academic Year structure was last reviewed in 2016 however may require further consideration as part of Curriculum Transformation. • The flexibility of the dates of the Edinburgh Festival and time required to derig following the festival concluding ahead of Welcome Week activities commencing should be considered. • The timing of the 2026/27 February Flexible Learning Week aligns with private school and English school holidays. This does not align with Scottish public school holidays and therefore disproportionately impacts on particular groups of staff. • The current start time of 1pm for examinations is arbitrary and the appropriateness of this start time should be considered. <p>The Committee did not approve the paper and agreed that the following be considered ahead of this returning to a future meeting of APRC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Assessment and Feedback Working Group be asked to consider options for addressing the reduced revision period. • Modelling of the December exam diet based on two exam sittings per day and the number of days to deliver an exam diet with two sittings per day. • A commitment that no new material be delivered in Week 11 and the practical implications of implementing this for the 2026/27 academic year • In the event that fewer days are required to deliver the 2026 December diet, these are removed from the beginning of the diet • A series of concrete proposals be developed to extend the revision period. <p>The Committee requested that updates on this work be provided throughout the next academic year.</p>
8.	<p>Election of APRC Convener and Vice-Convener for 2022/23 - Verbal discussion For approval</p> <p>The Convener, Dr Paul Norris outlined that the Committee are responsible for the election of the APRC Convener and Vice-Convener on an annual basis. The Convener has received two expressions of interest, Professor Patrick Hadoke for Convener and Professor Stephen Warrington for Deputy Convener.</p> <p>The Convener and invited any further nominations from the floor, no further nominations were received and no questions were raised for the nominees.</p> <p>The Committee approved Professor Patrick Hadoke as Convener and Professor Stephen Warrington as Deputy Convener and no objections were raised. They would take up their positions from 1 August 2023.</p>

	<p>The Committee extended its gratitude to outgoing Convener, Dr Paul Norris for his chairing and Convenorship of APRC in recent years.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Temporary variation to Undergraduate Degree Programme Regulations s.28 – Optional Study Abroad – ARPC 22/23 10F For approval</p> <p>Dr Adam Bunni, Head of Academic Policy and Regulation, Academic Services introduced the paper. The paper outlines a temporary variation to Undergraduate Degree Programme Regulation 28, which outlines the requirement for students to possess 240 SCQF credits before participating in a period of optional study abroad in Year 3.</p> <p>The following points were raised in discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University has a duty of care to ensure students that study abroad are equipped to study abroad. The student support provided to students whilst abroad is adequate to support any potential implications of missing course results due to the marking and assessment boycott returning as fail grades. • The calibre of students who study abroad is generally high and there is believed to be a low risk associated with approving the proposal. The application process is rigorous and students must have demonstrated a strong commitment to studying abroad, with arrangements, including those incurring financial costs, made some time ago. • There would be a substantial and disproportionate impact on students seeking to undertake an optional study abroad and who are unable to undertake this due to credits missing as a result of the marking and assessment boycott. Many students choose to study at Edinburgh for the opportunities afforded to them by the institution, including study abroad. There is a risk that these students will be penalised for missing credits being treated as fail grades in the absence of ratified marks. • A delay to reaching a decision on this item could have significant financial and visa implications for students studying abroad due to increased travel and visa costs. Some students studying at southern hemisphere institutions will be expected to be in their host country in time for teaching to begin in July. • Any student whose grades are missing and/or returned as fails whilst abroad must be provided with additional support by their School. Student Advisors would provide additional support to students to communicate any fail results and the implications of these and what these mean in the broader context of their programme and further study. <p>The Committee approved the proposal to permit a temporary variation to Undergraduate Degree Regulation 28 and to permit students to take an optional year abroad with a minimum of 180 credits and where the missing credits are the result of industrial action.</p> <p>The draft guidance was shared with the Committee for comment with a tight timeframe for responses. The updated guidance is to be circulated to Schools by the end of the day.</p> <p>Further work is required to establish the approach where students receive a fail grade whilst abroad. The Committee will receive an update on this in due course.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p>

H/02/27/02

APRC 22/23 13 B

	Thanks and best wishes were extended to Sam Maccallum, EUSA VP Education for their service on the Committee in 2022/23.
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Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**31 July 2023****Exceptional Circumstances Policy****Description of paper**

1. This paper follows on from the previous meeting (30 June 2023) the presentation of the work undertaken to review the existing policies on coursework extensions and special circumstances and a new Exceptional Circumstances Policy. This paper presents the final Policy for approval.

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is invited to approve the Exceptional Circumstances Policy.

Background and context

3. The background and context has been outlined in the paper for the previous meetings APRC 30 June 2023, paper APRC 22/23 12 A. The full paper is included as Annex 2 for reference.

Discussion

4. As noted in the previous paper and reflected in the discussion at the meeting of APRC on 30 June, the challenge of making changes to improve the policy, guidance and application of ESC, is considerable. In particular, the difficulty in reaching a clear consensus on a number of matters relating to the policy.
5. Based on all the feedback received over the course of significant engagement with colleagues across the University during 2022/23, the Deputy Secretary, Students and the VP Students have provided a revised Policy for consideration.
6. The intention of the revisions are to achieve a clear purpose, simplification and a better experience for our students. This has meant seeking a position that will work for the majority of our students, not every eventuality. This will result in a way forward that will not have universal agreement but will get us to a position that is an improvement in clarity of purpose and closer to sector benchmarks.
7. The Policy presented at the APRC meeting of the 30 June was the 'almost final version' given the significant feedback taken into account noting that a consensus to encompass all feedback would not be possible.
8. Following the meeting of APRC some amendments have been made, primarily focused on feedback from the Edinburgh University Students' Association. This followed a dedicated meeting with EUSA officers and staff.
9. The final Policy is presented to APRC for approval.

New Exceptional Circumstances Policy (ECs)**Summary of main changes**

10. The new Exceptional Circumstances (EC) Policy has been drafted, the full policy is provided in Appendix 1. This will replace the current Special Circumstances Policy.

11. A revised wording for Regulation 28 will encompass all assessments and the new Policy. Regulation 27 Resit assessment, has been reviewed and 27.12 i) will be reworded.
12. The new Policy broadly follows the final draft provided to the APRC on 30 June. The revisions made since that meeting are presented as tracked changes to show amendments based on feedback received.
13. Key changes to note are:
 - 13.1 Purpose of the Policy.
 - a) The Policy is to address exceptional circumstances and support students where these exceptions occur and they may impact on their ability complete their assessment on time.
 - b) **Separate** to this Policy, for students with a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010 will be expected to engage with the Disability and Learning Support Service) in order to discuss relevant adjustments made to their learning through a schedule of adjustments.
 - c) **Separate** to this Policy, students who have known circumstances or responsibilities that means engagement with studies may be impacted in other ways should speak with their School in the first instance to discuss options.

In response to c) we are aware that the University does not currently have a Policy or guidance in this area and so currently students in this situation should discuss this with their Student Adviser at the appropriate time so that consideration should be given as to how any impact can be mitigated.

To respond urgently to this, the Deputy Secretary, Students, has commissioned a urgent piece of work to be able to provide guidance in response to this 'gap' in support and to contribute to a wider review of provision and support for impacted students.

13.2 Employment

The status of students in employment has been extended to include full-time students.

13.4 Evidence.

For occasions where evidence is required, the revisions to the evidence has been lightened and made more inclusive. We do not regard this as punitive and in line with all other similar policies in the sector. Should there be a concern from a student about evidence, we will consider these on a case by case basis.

13.3 Self certification

Where more than one assessment deadline falls on the same day, one self-certification request can cover all assessment on that day.

13.4 Categories of decision of Boards of Examiners on exceptional circumstances (11.8) to clarify how to approach a course or courses affected by EC when

determining eligibility for award of credit on aggregate, progression, award of degree, classification (including award of merit and distinction for PGT programmes).

14. Changes that remain:

Based on a year of feedback with regards to the Policy, changes remain for the following:

14.1. For all requests made under the Policy, applications should only be made no earlier than 10 calendar days before the assessment deadline. This is to be able to reinforce the exceptional nature of circumstances which is the purpose of the Policy.

14.2 An agreed extension to an assessment deadline will be for three calendar days only, consistent across all Schools. The only exceptions to this are: 1) Dissertations/Final Year projects will be seven days, consistent across all Schools and 2) for assessments where extensions are not possible for agreed pedagogic reasons. The use of calendar days reflects that the system is online and automated (i.e., there is no need for the applicant to consult with member of staff) - by making it working days, you need to not only know the submission deadline and the date of the EC application, you would also need to factor in weekends and public holidays. We apply late penalties by calendar day, which seems to suggest that all days are weighted equally for assessment counting.

14.3. Self-certification of exceptional circumstances

- a) Self-certification can be used for exceptional circumstances requests for assessment extensions only (as current).
- b) A reduction to permitting no more than 3 self-certification requests in one year. If further exceptional circumstances for extension are made, evidence will be required.
- c) Self-certification will only be permitted for one extension for the piece of work. Should a further request be made evidence will be required and referral made to the School for outcome.

All other exceptional circumstances applications must provide evidence. This is to be able to reinforce the exceptional nature of circumstances which is the purpose of the Policy and should cover the majority of students.

14.4 The examples of what is considered an exceptional circumstance continues to be included as a guide for all students.

14.5 The reference to students being able to appeal. This is explicitly covered by the Student Appeal Regulations.

14.5. No changes have been made in the Policy to the Committees in Schools for considering Exceptional Circumstances (other than the name). We will review this during 2023/24 if required, as part of the evaluation of the implementation of this new Policy.

System changes/resource implications

15. There are significant resource implications for Student Systems in making the required changes to the student system. We will work to make most in time for the

next year but some other changes may take longer to be implemented, as such we will enact manual actions. The key points for the committee to note are:

15.1. The service and current system is not able to support extension applications being an outcome of an Exceptional Circumstance application, however we will overcome this by operating with two entry points via coursework extensions and special circumstances supported through our communication and webpages to align with the new policy while system development is undertaken.

15.2 Similarly to enable applications made no more than 10 days in advance, development work is required which will be scheduled but not implemented by September. Therefore this will be included in the Policy and encouraged in communications with students but will not be 'enforced' this coming year.

15.3 The system will support a reduction of the extension period to 3 days from the standard 7 for regular assessments and the extension period for all dissertations and final year projects to 7 days. The majority of courses are labelled dissertation for postgraduate taught level and capstone courses at undergraduate.

15.4. The requirement for evidence after 3 successful self-certified extension applications requires development as the system is not set up for evidence for coursework extensions. What is being explored is whether the coursework extensions route can be disabled for a student once 3 coursework extension applications have been submitted to direct the student to make an exceptional circumstances application, this part of the system does support evidence being uploaded.

15.5 For changes related to school level activity, including reporting application outcomes to support Exceptional Circumstance Committees and reporting courses with more than 10% of the cohort having extensions, these changes can be implemented through our current stream of reporting enhancements. We would then update the APT reports. This may remove the disparity in school practice by adding additional individual data for boards. We would update the school dashboard for access to individual course reports.

16. There will be resource implications for the Extensions and Special Circumstances Service and systems team. This may require some additional temporary resource to support the existing service, the requirements for this are to be considered by the Academic Registrar and met from within existing budgets.

17 The resource implications for staff in Schools will be modest and should be offset by the benefits provided by the new policy.

Risk management

Risks of retaining the status quo

17. As previously outlined over the last two years, APRC, Colleges and Schools have raised significant concerns regarding the feasibility of maintaining the University's current approach to coursework extensions and special circumstances.

There is significant dissatisfaction across the University community and this presents a risk to staff wellbeing and the student experience if a revised policy is not approved.

19. The new Exceptional Circumstances policy intends to address some of the challenges experienced with existing policies, in particular, application of policy, volume, and a consistent student experience.
20. There is anecdotal evidence that Schools will consider taking individual action to address the challenges that the existing policy presents, for example, by not allowing coursework extensions in courses where previously an extension would be available. Implementing this policy must remove local arrangements so we are being consistent for all students.

Risks relating to the proposed policy

21. As presented in section 15, some elements of the system to support the revised process may not be in place by the beginning of the 23/24 session, and may therefore require workarounds within the EC service to support.
22. There are risks that the reduction in permitted period for short extensions and the restriction on the number of self-certified extensions along with the narrower definition of exceptional circumstances is perceived by students as a less generous approach than what has been in place previously, this will need to be communicated to dispel this concern. This risk must be balanced against concerns around the existing policy and that it does not adequately equip students with skills required to succeed in the workplace, such as management of deadlines and juggling the normal stressors of academic study. This has been subject to detailed discussion over the last year, including student groups and with sector benchmarking so the new policy is in line with this.
23. There is a risk that staff will not be sufficiently aware of the new policy to provide appropriate advice to students on how it will be applied. This may lead to students being given incorrect advice based on the existing policy. This risk can be mitigated by a comprehensive communications plan and the response to requests that the current policy is not fit for purpose.

Equality & diversity

24. This is a mandatory policy which applies to undergraduate and postgraduate taught students and any taught components undertaken by research students. Schools are required to comply with any new policy implemented for 2023/24. An EQIA is presented as Appendix 3.
25. The new policy intends to address equality and diversity concerns that existing policies present, this includes but is not limited to an inconsistent student experience and drawn out assessment and marking periods.
26. The proposed policy maintains the existing position that the University's approach to supporting students with disclosed disabilities is through Schedules of Adjustments provided by Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS).

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

27. A communications plan will be prepared for the launch of the new policy and service, which will include:

- Email communication to students;
- Email communication and briefing sessions for staff in Schools;
- Additional, small-group training sessions for staff in Schools on request;

28. APRC will be asked to review the implementation of the new policy at agreed junctures during the 23/24 session. It is anticipated further refinement will be required.

Author

*Lucy Evans
Deputy Secretary, Students
19 July 2023*

Presenter

*Colm Harmon
VP Education
Lucy Evans
Deputy Secretary, Students*

Freedom of Information: Open

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee**30 June 2023****Exceptional Circumstances Policy****Description of paper**

1. This paper outlines the work undertaken to review the existing policies on coursework extensions and special circumstances and presents a new Exceptional Circumstances Policy for discussion ahead of approving this at a future meeting of APRC.

Action requested / recommendation

2. The Committee is invited to discuss the Exceptional Circumstances Policy ahead of approving this at a future meeting.

Background and context

3. Late submission of coursework is currently allowed for as Regulation 28 in the Taught Assessment Regulations.
4. The University has a Special Circumstances Policy. The purpose of this Policy is to “respond in an equitable and consistent way to requests from students for exceptional circumstances to be taken into consideration for course, progression and award decisions made by Boards of Examiners”.
5. In September 2022, the Deputy Secretary, Students, set up a review of ESC. This was as a result of significant dissatisfaction conveyed across student, academic and professional services staff communities. The feedback conveyed to the Deputy Secretary Students soon after taking up the role included concerns with policy and its application in systems and processes noting complexity, high volume, inconsistencies and confusing communication, especially related to disability adjustments and anecdotal evidence suggesting that students are using the extension service to ‘manage’ their workload.
6. The Senate Sub-Committee, APRC, members had received concerns with the ESC Policy and sought to undertake a review. The creation of a Task Group was approved by APRC in May 2022 with the aim of a report by March 2023.
7. Also in June 2022, a service review of ESC was concluded. This review included a number of data and reporting improvements to the system and ways of working.
8. As a result of these challenges across ESC policy and the service, there was a demonstrable need to spend time with Schools and with the EC service team in Registry Services to understand their experiences with implementation in practice and the end to end process, to listen to suggestions for improvements and build trust and partnership working.

Discussion

9. The Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee meeting on 23 March 2023, received a paper: Update from the Coursework Extension and Special Circumstances Task Group & ESC Review.
10. The paper outlined for the Committee the findings and positions reached by the Coursework Extension and Special Circumstances Task Group on the policy, a

summary of the findings of the ESC Reviews: discussions with Schools 2022/23 and of the service in 2022.

11. As noted by colleagues at the meeting and reflected in the position outlined in the paper, the challenge of making changes to improve the policy, guidance and application of ESC, is considerable. In particular, the difficulty in reaching a clear consensus on a number of matters relating to the policy and therefore they remain unresolved.
12. For us to have the best chance of achieving improvements, the Deputy Secretary, Students, agreed to work with the VP Students, plus engagement with Colleges and Schools to bring together all the work so far and provide a final report for review and approval, with a projected completion in May 2023.
13. We have been progressing this work with the intention of achieving a clear purpose, simplification and a better experience for our students. This has meant seeking a position that will work for the majority of our students, not every eventuality. This will result in a way forward that will not have universal agreement but we get us to a position that is an improvement in clarify of purpose and closer to sector benchmarks.
14. A final draft was shared with Heads of Schools, discussed in a meeting with all Heads with support and welcome, with some further feedback provided after the meeting. The final Policy is presented to APRC for approval.

New Exceptional Circumstances Policy (ECs)

Summary of main changes

15. A new Exceptional Circumstances (EC) Policy has been drafted, the full policy is provided in Appendix 1. This will replace the current Special Circumstances Policy.
16. A revised wording for Regulation 28 will encompass all assessments and the new Policy. Regulation 27 Resit assessment, has been reviewed and 27.12 i) will be reworded.
17. The new Policy will take an 'exceptional' approach (i.e. serious and unusual) relative to the normal daily challenges that academic study presents, and unpredictable in that the student could not reasonably have been expected either to avoid them, or to allow for them in planning the assessment work or preparation.
18. The new Student Support Model afford us the opportunity to apply this Policy appropriately for students that really need help identified through SA (and others) work with students groups, data analysis and targeted referrals. The supportive nature of this approach will be outlined and reinforced in guidance, communication.
19. All requests for exceptional circumstances are deemed valid or not by the EC service team. These decisions are final and not subject to revision but may be discussed on a case by case basis, if required.
20. The outcomes of an exceptional circumstances request can have the following outcomes:

- a) One extension to deadline of assessment submission
 - b) Deferral to the next assessment period
 - c) Late penalty removal
 - d) Alternative assessment
 - e) Award credit on aggregate (Honours and PGT)
 - f) Disregard missing/unreliable component mark and derive overall mark from completed work
 - g) Disregard missing/unreliable course result when calculating degree classification
 - h) Additional extensions to deadline beyond a)
21. We have not changed where the decision sits i.e. the decision of the outcome of an exceptional circumstances request will be the EC service team for a) and a School Exceptional Circumstances Committee for b) to h). The EC service team will alert Schools if requests for extension on one assessment exceed 10% of total cohort.
22. The definitions of what is and what is not considered an exceptional circumstance will be refined to follow sector norms.
23. Any consideration of long-term or chronic physical or mental health conditions should be made through liaison with the Disability and Learning Support Service, this is a separate arrangement to the Exceptional Circumstances Policy. All disability adjustments are set and agreed by DLSS and Schools informed, ideally as close to the start of the academic year as possible. Should there be any exceptional issues whereby this cannot be accommodated, the School will discuss with DLSS and the student. This Policy should only be used should the student be awaiting a diagnosis and need immediate arrangements made in the interim, supported by DLSS.
24. The current list of evidence has been reviewed and rewritten and the grading of weighting of evidence removed, to be in line with the sector.
25. For all requests made under the EC Policy, applications should only be made no earlier than 10 calendar days before the assessment deadline.
26. An agreed extension to an assessment deadline will be for three calendar days only, consistent across all Schools. The only exceptions to this is: 1) Dissertations/Final Year projects will be seven days, consistent across all Schools and 2) for assessments where extensions are not possible for agreed pedagogic reasons. These should be minimal and communicated fully to students at the start of the course. If an extension of three calendar days is not sufficient to cover the circumstances, an evidenced claim should be submitted.
27. As current, all exceptional circumstances relevant for an extension to the deadline will be considered and agreed by the EC service team (former ESC team). Schools will be informed of this as agreed decision. Escalations of cases of concern will continue to be flagged to School teams for follow up. [

28. As current, all cases not relevant for an extension, the validity of the exceptional circumstances is confirmed by the EC service team and referred to the School for decision on the outcome (see 18. b-h).
29. Self-certification of exceptional circumstances
- a) Self-certification can be used for exceptional circumstances requests for assessment extensions only (as current).
 - b) A reduction to permitting no more than 3 self-certification requests in one year. If further exceptional circumstances for extension are made, evidence will be required. One request covers a single piece of assessment only.
 - c) Self-certification will only be permitted for one extension for the piece of work. Should a further request be made evidence will be required and referral made to the School for outcome.
30. All other exceptional circumstances applications must provide evidence.
31. As current all exceptional circumstances, other than initial extensions, deemed valid by the EC service team, will be referred to the School for decision on the appropriate academic outcome (see 6. b-h). The type or severity of the circumstance is not part of the decision-making to ensure decisions are consistent, unbiased and in the best interests of the student as determined by the Exceptional Circumstances Committee.
32. The information provided to Schools will include details of the exceptional circumstance as required to be able to make the decision.
33. To add an exceptions to this Policy – whereby we would accept early requests for EC to cover where an exceptional event is scheduled to take place e.g. medical procedure, jury service, court proceedings, that would reasonably be expected to result in more than one day's absence on the date of the assessment deadline and cannot be rescheduled. Absences of more than a week would not be relevant for this policy and would need to be discussed with a student's Student Adviser
34. No changes have been made in the Policy to the Committees in Schools for considering Exceptional Circumstances (other than the name). We will review this during 2023/24 if required, as part of the evaluation of the implementation of this new Policy.

Resource implications

35. There are significant resource implications for Student Systems in making the required changes to the student system. We will work to make most in time for the next year but some other changes may take longer to be implemented, as such we will enact manual actions.

Implementation may therefore initially require manual workarounds which would have resource implications for staff within the EC service.

36. There will be resource implications for the Extensions and Special Circumstances Service (ESC) to undertake a rebranding of the service. Work will be required to update external and internal documentation, and especially to ensure staff and students understand the change from having separate processes for coursework extensions and Special Circumstances to having a single, unified process. This may require some additional temporary resource to support the existing service, the requirements for this are to be considered by the Academic Registrar and met from within existing budgets.
37. The resource implications for staff in Schools will be modest and should be offset by the benefits provided by the new policy. Initially, Schools will require to be provided with updated information for students about the EC process to replace existing content in course and programme handbooks regarding the current processes. Relevant staff will require briefing about the changes to the approach to policy. The operation of Exceptional Circumstances Committees will almost entirely mirror the operation of existing Special Circumstances Committees, so should not require significant adjustment from staff in Schools.

Risk management

Risks of retaining the status quo

38. Over the last two years, APRC, Colleges and Schools have raised significant concerns regarding the feasibility of maintaining the University's current approach to coursework extensions and special circumstances. There is significant dissatisfaction across the University community and this presents a risk to staff wellbeing and the student experience if a revised policy is not approved.
39. The new Exceptional Circumstances policy intends to address some of the challenges experienced with existing policies, as noted in paragraph 5, in particular, application of policy, volume, and a consistent student experience.
40. There is anecdotal evidence that Schools will consider taking individual action to address the challenges that the existing policy presents, for example, by not allowing coursework extensions in courses where previously an extension would be available. Implementing this policy must remove local arrangements so we are being consistent for all students.

Risks relating to the proposed policy

41. Some elements of the system to support the revised process may not be in place by the beginning of the 23/24 session, and may therefore require workarounds within the EC service to support (see section 35). Student Systems are working on solutions to prioritise required changes according to the urgency of particular elements of the proposed policy.
42. There are risks that the reduction in permitted period for short extensions and the restriction on the number of self-certified extensions along with the narrower definition of exceptional circumstances is perceived by students as a less generous approach than what has been in place previously, this will need to be

communicated to dispel this concern. This risk must be balanced against concerns around the existing policy and that it does not adequately equip students with skills required to succeed in the workplace, such as management of deadlines and juggling the normal stressors of academic study. This has been subject to detailed discussion over the last year, including student groups and with sector benchmarking so the new policy is in line with this.

43. There is a risk that staff will not be sufficiently aware of the new policy to provide appropriate advice to students on how it will be applied. This may lead to students being given incorrect advice based on the existing policy. This risk can be mitigated by a comprehensive communications plan and the response to requests that the current policy is not fit for purpose.

Equality & diversity

44. This is a mandatory policy which applies to undergraduate and postgraduate taught students and any taught components undertaken by research students. Schools are required to comply with any new policy implemented for 2023/24.
45. The new policy intends to address equality and diversity concerns that existing policies present, this includes but is not limited to an inconsistent student experience and drawn out assessment and marking periods.
46. The proposed policy maintains the existing position that the University's approach to supporting students with disclosed disabilities is through Schedules of Adjustments provided by Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS).

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

47. A communications plan will be prepared for the launch of the new policy and service, which will include:
- Email communication to students;
 - Email communication and briefing sessions for staff in Schools;
 - Additional, small-group training sessions for staff in Schools on request;
48. APRC will be asked to review data regarding the implementation of the new policy towards the end of the 23/24 session. It is anticipated further refinement will be required.

Author

*Lucy Evans
Deputy Secretary, Students
20 June 2023*

Presenter

*Colm Harmon
VP Education
Lucy Evans
Deputy Secretary, Students*

Freedom of Information: Open



Exceptional Circumstances Policy

Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure fair and consistent response to student experiencing unexpected short-term circumstances which are exceptional for the individual student, beyond that student's control, and which could reasonably be expected to have had an adverse impact on the student's ability to complete the assessment on time.

Overview

This policy outlines the principles of exceptional circumstances, sets out the circumstances which would be considered exceptional circumstances, the process for requesting consideration of exceptional circumstances and the certification or evidence required to support applications. The policy outlines requirements for Exceptional Circumstances Committees, the process for the consideration of applications, possible outcomes and process for notifying students of the outcome and maintaining records.

Scope: Mandatory Policy

The policy applies to undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, and to the taught components undertaken by research postgraduate students.

Contact Officer

Olivia Hayes

Academic Policy Officer

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Document control

Dates	Approved: DD.MM.YY	Starts: DD.MM.YY	Equality impact assessment: DD.MM.YY	Amendments: DD.MM.YY	Next Review: YYYY/YYYY
Approving authority	Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee				
Consultation undertaken	State bodies/officers/constituencies				
Section responsible for policy maintenance & review	Academic Services				
Related policies, procedures, guidelines & regulations	Taught Assessment Regulations, Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/policies-regulations/regulations/assessment Guidance on policy, principle and operation of Boards of Examiners: www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/academic-services/staff/assessment/boards-examiners Degree Regulations & Programmes of Study: www.drps.ed.ac.uk/				
UK Quality Code	Expectations are covered in the UK Quality Code Advice and Guidance on "Assessment"				
Policies superseded by this policy	Special Circumstances Policy				
Alternative format	If you require this document in an alternative format please email Academic.Services@ed.ac.uk				
Keywords	Exceptional Circumstances, Exceptional Circumstances Committee, Extension, Special Circumstances, Special Circumstances Committee, Board of Examiners				



Exceptional Circumstances Policy

1. Principles

The purpose of this policy is to ensure fair and consistent response to students experiencing unexpected short-term circumstances which are exceptional for the individual student, beyond that student's control, and which could reasonably be expected to have had an adverse impact on the student's ability to complete the assessment on time.

For ~~students with a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010, long-standing conditions and circumstances~~ the student will be expected to have ~~made full use of the appropriate support services provided by the University (e.g. engaged with the Disability and Learning Support Service)~~ in order to ~~have discuss~~ relevant adjustments made, and/or to develop coping strategies which will see them through their study; such arrangements are separate to this Policy.

~~Students who do not have a disability but have known responsibilities that means engagement with studies may be impacted in other ways should speak with their School in the first instance to discuss options.~~

Students who regularly apply for exceptional circumstances will be ~~reached proactively contacted out to ferro offer~~ further support.

Circumstances acceptable under this policy must be exceptional (i.e. serious and unusual) relative to the normal daily challenges that academic study presents, and unpredictable in that the student could not reasonably have been expected either to avoid them, or to allow for them in planning the assessment work or preparation. For example, it is recognised that the assessment process itself can cause students to be more anxious or stressed than at other times of the academic year, and this should be considered to be one of the normal challenges that academic study presents. Except in a very small number of cases, where the impact is serious and incapacitating, this would not be considered as a valid exceptional circumstance.

In the case of some professionally accredited programmes this Policy will extend to exceptional reasons for absence from compulsory class e.g. practical, tutorial and clinical rotations in CMVM. These will be specifically identified by the School. Exceptional Circumstances are designed for emergencies and short-term ~~circumstances~~. If a student's' ~~circumstances are not sudden, unexpected and beyond their control covered by this policy~~, the University has a wide range of other options to help students to manage the challenges and demands of academic study. It is therefore important that students understand that using support is not a sign of weakness, rather it is a feature of academic success for some students to access the support services in order to identify and develop successful strategies. Approval of any exceptional circumstance request is not automatic. The request decision and the type of circumstances are at the discretion of the University.

2. What would we consider an exceptional circumstance?

- i. Bereavement through the death of a close relative, ~~partner or close personal friend or significant other that, in employment, would lead an employer to grant compassionate leave;~~



Exceptional Circumstances Policy

- ii. For oneself or a close relative (such as parent, child or spouse/partner) or a person who is dependent upon the student for their care:
 - Serious short-term illness, [including mental health illness](#), or accident of a nature that, in employment, would lead an employer to agree to absence on sick leave
 - A long-term chronic health problem suddenly worsening
 - A flare-up of a chronic health problem.
- iii. Victim of a ~~serious~~ crime [whose impact upon a student is serious](#).
- iv. Disabilities for which reasonable adjustments are not yet in place and where the delay is not due to the student
- v. Exceptional personal circumstances e.g. events that result in a serious impact on a student's ability to engage with academic work during the assessment period in question; [this includes unexpected changes to caring responsibilities](#).
- vi. For ~~part time and online learning~~ students in employment, an [exceptional and significant increase/change in their workload due to circumstances beyond their control, or being required by their employer to work through periods normally available for study and/or assessment; their employment commitment, where this is beyond their control](#).
- vii. Other exceptional circumstances that have or will have in the future, affected the student's ability to meet a deadline or to attend an event. Such circumstances will be considered on a case by case basis and may include participation in international sporting events, jury service and military service.

3. What would not be considered extenuating circumstances?

- i. A long-term or chronic health condition (including mental ill-health or similar ill-health) which has not worsened recently or for which the University has already made a reasonable adjustment;
- ii. A minor short-term illness or injury (e.g. a common cold), which would not reasonably have had a significant adverse impact on the student's ability to complete the assessment on time;
- iii. Circumstances which were foreseeable or preventable;
- iv. Holidays, including getting married, attendance at weddings, festivals and like events;
- v. Loss of work not backed up, computer or printing problems
- vi. Poor working practices such as:
 - a. Accidental submission of an incorrect document, wrong file type or a corrupted file;
 - b. claim of technical issues on behalf of the University with no proof of an error message/ system failure on either Learn or the University network;
 - c. poor time management
 - d. [misunderstanding](#) of the examination timetable or instructions on assessment deadlines



Exceptional Circumstances Policy

- vii. Deadlines for work or exams being set close together

4. Requesting consideration of exceptional circumstances

It is the responsibility of students to submit their application for consideration of exceptional circumstances to the Exceptional Circumstances (EC) service using the online system no earlier than 10 days before and no later than the date of the assessment published by the School.

The exception to acceptance of requests earlier than 10 days prior to the assessment is where an exceptional event is scheduled to take place e.g. medical procedure, jury service, court proceedings, that would reasonably be expected to result in more than one day's absence and cannot be rescheduled. Absences of more than a week would not be relevant for this policy and would need to be discussed with a student's Student Adviser.

Late applications

The EC service will only consider accepting submissions after the ~~is~~ deadline where students provide evidence of exceptional reasons for having been unable to submit on time. No late applications will be considered after the deadline for the relevant Semester published on the EC web pages.

In their application, students should describe the circumstances, state when the circumstances affected them, and all assessments and courses affected. Students should ensure that they provide sufficient documentary evidence.

It is advised that students consult their Student Adviser, Cohort Lead, or Student Support Team when completing the application. [The EUSA Advice Place are available for support.](#)

In their application, students are able to indicate whether they would wish to undertake a further attempt at assessment, if their application were accepted. The student's preference is not guaranteed to be offered, even where their application is accepted, but Boards of Examiners will consider students' preferences (where provided) where they are deemed relevant to the Board's decision regarding outcome.

5. Confidentiality

The University will treat the information provided by students as confidential in line with the University's Data Protection Policy, and will only share it with staff who have a legitimate need to access the information in order to consider the student's case or to provide students with support.

6. Students with Disabilities

The University supports students with long-term or chronic health conditions, including mental ill-health, if a student is deemed to be disabled as defined by the Equality Act 2010, by putting in place a [Schedule of Adjustments](#) 'Learning Profile' to provide reasonable adjustments to study and assessment support arrangements.



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Students are responsible for contacting the Disability and Learning Support Services to discuss the adjustments and support that they need.

Support and reasonable adjustments, including variable adjustments such as extensions for fluctuating conditions, should be approved as part of an agreed plan with DLSS, and should not be accommodated using the Exceptional Circumstances Policy.

Students with disabilities can claim exceptional circumstances where adjustments have not been made in time for an assessment, for certain reasons that we understand through consultation with the student and DLSS. Consideration of disability as an exceptional circumstance may also be appropriate where evidence is provided that an abnormal or unforeseeable temporary change or increase in severity of the disability has occurred.

Students with disabilities are, of course, also able to use the Exceptional Circumstances procedure when they encounter circumstances other than their disability which meet the criteria of the policy and go beyond their disabilities.

7. Students with responsibilities or other requirements

The University recognises that there are a number of students whereby their personal circumstances and routine responsibilities means that they may have difficulties engaging with their studies and assessments on occasion. This Policy is not appropriate for students in such cases as it relates to exceptions only as outlined in Section 1.

8. What are the possible outcomes of applying for Exceptional Circumstances?

A valid exceptional circumstances request can have the following outcomes:

- a) One extension to deadline of assessment submission
- b) ~~Deferral~~ A further assessment attempt as first sit at the next assessment available opportunity period
- c) Late penalty removal
- d) Alternative assessment
- e) Award credit on aggregate (Honours and PGT)
- f) Disregard missing/unreliable component mark and derive overall mark from completed work
- g) Disregard missing/unreliable course result when calculating degree classification
- h) Additional extensions to assessment deadline beyond a)

The validity of all exceptional circumstances requests will be determined by the University's EC service team,

The decision of the outcome of an exceptional circumstances request will be the EC service team for a) and a School Exceptional Circumstances Committee for b) to h).



Exceptional Circumstances Policy

8. Self-certification

Students can self-certify for Exceptional Circumstances on a limited number of occasions, within defined criteria.

- a) Students should only submit self-certified requests that meet the criteria set out in Section 2 “What we would consider Exceptional Circumstances”.
- b) Extensions obtained through self-certification will be for three calendar days.
- c) Self-certification can only be used for in-course assessments.
- d) Students can self-certify up to three times within one academic year within an academic session, including students with teaching over the summer (e.g. Taught Postgraduate Masters students). One request can cover more than one assessment where they fall on the same day. ~~covers a single piece of assessment only.~~
- e) Self-certification can only be considered before the assessment deadline takes place. Any claims submitted after the relevant submission deadline, including after the conclusion of an examination must be accompanied by evidence
- f) Students can self-certify only once for each assessment (you cannot self-certify for successive extensions on the same piece of work, for example).
- g) Falsification is a serious offence. If a student submits a fraudulent exceptional circumstances claim or evidence, they will be subject to proceedings under the Code of Student Conduct.

9. Evidence

A student who wishes exceptional circumstances to be considered (for work where self-certification is not permitted) must apply, give their account of the circumstances and submit satisfactory supporting evidence, normally from a ~~an~~ independent and relevantly qualified third party professional, including staff at the University.

The evidence must give direct confirmation of the circumstances, from which it is possible to infer their effect on the student’s ability to engage with work in general, or assessment tasks in particular, made at the time of those circumstances or as soon as possible thereafter.

This should be set out in English and accompanied by certified translations where appropriate. A request can be submitted in anticipation of the receipt of the supporting evidence.

The University understands that it can be distressing to be asked for ‘evidence’ in the case of very sensitive circumstances such as the death of a close relative, harassment, discrimination or sexual assault. We also understand that it can be very difficult to provide evidence of particularly traumatic events such as war or terrorism. If there are compelling reasons for making an exception, the Team will escalate to the Deputy Secretary, Students, who is authorised to use discretion to either suspend the need for formal evidence or accept alternative forms of evidence.

The required evidence is as follows:



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- i. for bereavement:
 - no further evidence required.
- ii. for illness:
 - a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner (GP, [counsellor](#), [therapist](#) or clinical specialist) that states the dates when the illness affected the patient and how the circumstances affected or are likely to affect the student's ability to prepare, submit or attend for an assessment or other event – [should obtaining this be an issue, a student should contact their Student Adviser](#); ~~and~~
 - ~~where the patient is a close relative (such as parent, child or spouse/partner) and the student and the patient do not share a family name, independent evidence of the nature of the relationship of the patient to the student submitting the request. This could be an official document such as a birth certificate or a statement from a person of professional standing who is not related to the student; and~~
 - ~~where the patient is dependent upon the student for their care, independent evidence of the nature of the caring responsibilities;~~
 - where the patient has a chronic condition that is subject to flare-ups or a sudden worsening, a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner (GP or clinical specialist) that states the nature of the condition and how flare-ups or a sudden worsening are likely to affect the student's ability to prepare, submit or attend for an assessment or other event. Once this evidence has been provided on the first occasion there is no need to do so on subsequent occasions, although the student will still need to submit a request [for extenuating circumstances](#) on each occasion
- iii. for a late diagnosis of a disability resulting in the need for reasonable adjustments, confirmation from Disability and Learning Support Service of the diagnosis and the date it was made and details of any delays to the implementation of the required reasonable adjustments;
- iv. for a student awaiting a diagnosis of an illness or condition for themselves or a close relative or dependent other:
 - ~~a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner (GP or clinical specialist) or from DLSS if the student is awaiting a diagnosis that [Disability and Neurodiversity a clinician or DLSS](#) have arranged an assessment for, that states the dates when the student or patient attended for treatment, when tests were undertaken, and when a diagnosis is expected; and~~
 - ~~where the patient is a close relative (such as parent, child or spouse/partner) and the student and the patient do not share a family name, independent evidence of the nature of the relationship of the patient to the student submitting the request. This could be an official~~



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~~document such as a birth certificate or a statement from a person of professional standing who is not related to the student; and~~

- ~~• where the patient is dependent upon the student for their care, independent evidence of the nature of the caring responsibilities;~~

~~vi.v.~~ for accident or injury to the student:

- a copy of an accident report provided by a police officer or other public official, or a signed and dated letter from a medical practitioner (GP or clinical specialist)
- in all cases where a letter is provided it must state the dates when the accident or injury affected the student, the position and qualification(s) of the person providing the letter and their contact details

~~vii.vi.~~ For significant adverse personal or family circumstances being encountered by the student:

- a signed and dated letter from one or more of the following; University staff member e.g. Student Counsellor, Student Adviser, Student Wellbeing Adviser, a medical practitioner (GP or clinical specialist), a social worker (stating their position with respect to the student), an officer of the law, a teacher outside the University, ~~a minister of religion~~
 - the letter they provide must give their position and qualification(s) and their contact details and must provide information on the time when the circumstances occurred and whether they are continuing;

~~viii.vii.~~ for Elite Athletes:

- a letter from their coach/Sports and Exercise detailing the reasons for the request such as participation in international sports events and/or specific training requirements; note, cross check with Elite Athletes arrangements

~~viii.~~ for ~~part-time and online~~ students in employment, 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 periods normally available for study and/or assessment: an exceptional and significant change in their employment commitment, where this is beyond their control.~~

- 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, if relevant, that this was in time that had previously been agreed would be available for the student to study, prepare for assessment or other event, or take an assessment or attend another event
- 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



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- student had been required to meet the client or undertake the previously unforeseen work;
- ix. for military service:
 - the individual's call-up papers (translated where necessary);
 - x. for other exceptional circumstances:
 - official documentation relevant to the event which may include court or legal papers.

Where supporting evidence is provided it will be taken at face value. However, the University reserves the right to make follow-up enquiries to establish the authenticity of the documentation provided. If at any stage of an application the evidence put forward to support the application can be shown to have been dishonestly acquired or is itself dishonest, the application will be dismissed and the evidence submitted to the University's disciplinary procedures as specified in the Student Code of Conduct.

The following are not sufficient grounds for the recognition of extenuating circumstances:

- i. self-certified illness or medical circumstances outside of the agreed arrangements for self-certification (see above)
- ii. Written accounts from the student's family or friends, if they have not directly witnessed the submitted circumstances or their impact upon the student.

10. Exceptional Circumstances Committees (ECCs)

Each School is responsible for having one or more Exceptional Circumstances Committees (ECCs) to consider requests for consideration of exceptional circumstances and report to its Boards of Examiners in relation to students on its courses and taught programmes. Schools may set up one ECC per Board of Examiners or ECCs which cover a number of Boards of Examiners.

To be quorate, an ECC will consist of an academic Convener along with at least two other members of staff, one of whom must be a member of academic staff (and the other of whom can be a member of academic or professional services staff).

Schools can include additional members (from among academic or professional services staff), but should seek to keep the membership as small as is consistent with robust decision-making, in order to avoid providing sensitive information about students to more people than is necessary.

If a Board of Examiners is very small and wishes to operate as its own ECC, this requires College approval. The Board sets up an ECC as a sub-committee of the Board. The Convener of the Board of Examiners may also convene the ECC but this is not a requirement.

ECCs will meet before the relevant Board of Examiners meetings take place. ECCs can also conduct business by correspondence where it is necessary to consider cases submitted after the scheduled ECC meeting, as long as all decisions are confirmed by a quorate membership (see above).



Exceptional Circumstances Policy

10.1 Exceptional Circumstances Committees: expedited decisions

Where the EC service has accepted an application from a student requesting disregarding of late penalties, or an extension to a coursework deadline of more than 3 days (where this will not lead to a deadline beyond the end of the next examination diet), ECCs are able to make expedited decisions (i.e. in advance of the next scheduled meeting of the ECC). The Convener of the ECC (or delegated authority), acting with another member of staff with relevant expertise, has delegated authority on behalf of the Convener of the Board of Examiners to decide to disregard late penalties for submission of assessed coursework (see 11.7.c). Where an ECC is able to make an expedited decision on an application, it will do so within 10 working days of receipt of the application from the EC service.

11. Process for consideration of applications

11.1 Exceptional Circumstances (EC) service

In relation to each request for consideration of exceptional circumstances, taking into account all information available to it, the EC service determines:

- Whether there is sufficient evidence regarding the submitted circumstances and their impact on the student's performance in an assessment;
- Whether the submitted exceptional circumstances were exceptional for the individual student, whether they were beyond the student's control, and whether it is reasonable to conclude that they would have adversely affected the student's performance in an assessment (with reference to Section X);
- During what period the submitted exceptional circumstances were affecting the student's performance.

Based on their assessment, the EC service will determine whether the application is accepted.

Where the EC service does not accept an application, they will inform the student of this, providing an explanation for their decision.

11.2 Assessment extensions

In the case of valid exceptional circumstances requests for extensions, the EC service will confirm the outcome directly to the student.

11.3 All other Exceptional Circumstances

The EC service will forward valid applications for consideration by the relevant Exceptional Circumstances Committee(s) in the School(s) responsible for the course(s) to which the application relates. The decision by the EC service to accept an application is binding on an Exceptional Circumstances Committee (ECC).

11.4 Appeal

Students have the right to appeal a decision by the EC service not to accept an application under the Student Appeal Regulations.



Exceptional Circumstances Policy

11.5 Exceptional Circumstances Committee

On receipt of a valid exceptional circumstances request from the EC service, the ECC will consider all of the information available to it, which may include information regarding the student's performance in the affected assessment(s) (including provisional marks, where available), and their performance in other assessments (as relevant).

The ECC will make a recommendation to the Board of Examiners regarding the appropriate action to take with regard to the affected assessments, courses, or programme.

The ECC can either make a specific recommendation or recommend a range of options to the Board of Examiners. These recommendations are not binding on the Board of Examiners.

The ECC will provide a report of its recommendations to the relevant Board of Examiners through the EC online system.

11.6 Exceptional circumstances: general points about Board of Examiners decisions

In coming to a decision where exceptional circumstances are considered, Boards of Examiners should act in the best academic interest of the student without disadvantage or advantage in relation to their peers.

11.7 Exceptional circumstances: decisions regarding course outcomes

Where a student's exceptional circumstances application has been accepted, the relevant Board of Examiners decides on one or more of the options set out in the table below, taking into account the recommendations of the ECC.

For certain categories of decision, the Board will need to seek approval for the action from the relevant College committee. Where this is necessary, this is indicated below.

Action	College approval required?
a) No action – for example, circumstances already addressed through actions already taken	No
b) No action at course level; flag for consideration in relation to progression or award decision	No
c) Disregard penalties for late submission of coursework; offer an extension of more than 3 days to a deadline for coursework	No
d) Disregard missing component(s) and derive overall mark/grade from completed work (see 11.7.1)	no
e) Disregard unreliable component(s) and derive overall mark from completed work if to the student's benefit	No
f) For pre-Honours courses, if the student has failed the course, allow further re-assessment attempts in line with Taught Assessment Regulation	No



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g) For pre-Honours courses, record the course as a 'null sit', with the option of allowing the student to be examined at a subsequent diet, and / or to submit missing assessment and / or repeat some or all assessments, on a first sit basis	No
h) For Honours and postgraduate taught level courses, record the course as a 'null sit', with the option of requiring the student to be examined at a subsequent diet, and / or to submit missing assessment and / or repeat some or all assessments, on a first sit basis	No - If in current session (August resits count as the current session) Yes – College approval required if in next session
i) In exceptional cases, permit the student to resubmit a revised dissertation for a postgraduate Masters programme	Yes
j) In exceptional cases, permit the student to take specially prepared alternative assessments, including oral assessment	Yes
k) If course result is borderline (within 2 percentage points of the pass mark), award pass	No

11.7.1 Where marks/grades for specific components of assessment are missing or deemed unreliable, a Board of Examiners can only derive an overall mark/grade for the course from the existing assessed work if it is satisfied that there is sufficient evidence of attainment of the Learning Outcomes in other components of the course.

11.7.2 Boards of Examiners cannot adjust marks / grades as a consequence of exceptional circumstances.

11.8 Exceptional circumstances: decisions regarding progression and award

Where a student's exceptional circumstances application has been accepted, the relevant Board of Examiners decides on one or more of the options set out in the table below, taking into account the recommendations of the ECC.

For certain categories of decision, the Board will need to seek approval for the action from the relevant College committee. For very exceptional actions, the relevant College committee would need to seek approval for the action from the Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC).

Action	College or APRC approval required?
a) No further action – for example, adequate action already taken in relation to the outcome of individual course(s)	No
b)) For Honours level year of programme, if the student has satisfied requirements in line with Taught Assessment Regulation 52, award credit on aggregate for relevant courses of that year of the degree programme	No



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c) For postgraduate taught programmes, if the student has satisfied requirements in line with Taught Assessment Regulation 56, award credit on aggregate for relevant courses	
d) Where a mark for a course is missing or deemed unreliable, exclude the affected course(s) from the <u>classification-relevant calculation for the award of credit on aggregate; progression; award of degree; degree classification (including the award of PGT Merit and Distinction)</u>	No
e) Take account of exceptional circumstances for progression, degree classification, award of merit/distinction, and/or award	No
f) Exceptionally, to allow a student to graduate without the required number and / or level of credits for the degree	Yes

For decisions regarding aegrotat degrees and posthumous degrees, see the relevant Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree Regulations.

12. Notifying students of the outcomes of requests for consideration of exceptional circumstances

The EC service will notify students of the decision regarding whether or not their exceptional circumstances application has been accepted using the online system within five working days. The School will notify students of any action taken by the Board of Examiners in relation to their exceptional circumstances application using the online system no later than five working days after the publication of ratified marks as noted in the University Key Dates. The School will also inform the student's Student Adviser of the decision.

13. Reporting and maintaining records on requests for consideration of Exceptional Circumstances

Where the EC service decides not to support the request for consideration of exceptional circumstances, the service will record the reason for this decision in the relevant online system.

The School will minute ECC meetings (including meetings conducted by correspondence), recording all decisions and recommendations in the relevant online system. The ECC will report its decisions and recommendations to the Board of Examiners in as concise a form as is consistent with clarity and the student's interest, where possible maintaining the anonymity of the student.

The ESC service and the School will maintain records in line with Data Protection guidelines.

14. Sources of further guidance

Further guidance for students regarding the exceptional circumstances process is available at: www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/students/assessment/exceptional-circumstances

Edinburgh University Students' Association provides further guidance to students regarding exceptional circumstances, and the Students' Association Advice Place can provide independent advice to students regarding the preparation of their



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requests for consideration of exceptional circumstances.
[www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/academic/exceptional circumstances](http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/adviceplace/academic/exceptional%20circumstances)

In order to support consistency of handling of student requests for consideration of exceptional circumstances, Colleges and Schools must not produce their own supplementary guidance.

Insert latest date approved/amended



Equality Impact Assessment Template

Before carrying out EqIA, you should familiarise yourself with the University's EqIA Policy Statement and Guidance and Checklist Notes, and undertake our online training on Equality and Diversity and EqIA. These, along with further information and resources, are available at www.ed.ac.uk/schools-departments/equality-diversity/impact-assessment

EqIA covers policies, provisions, criteria, functions, practices and activities, including decisions and the delivery of services, but will be referred to as 'policy/practice' hereinafter.

A. Policy/Practice (name or brief description): Exceptional Circumstances Policy

B. Reason for Equality Impact Assessment (Mark **yes** against the applicable reason):

- Proposed new policy/practice
- Proposed change to an existing policy/practice **Yes**
- Undertaking a review of an existing policy/practice
- Other (please state):

Although the policy has a new title, it is substantively an update to the existing Special Circumstances Policy, incorporating aspects of the Taught Assessment Regulations which relate to coursework extensions.

C. Person responsible for the policy area or practice:

Name: Lucy Evans

Job title: Deputy Secretary, Students

School/service/unit: Student Experience Services

D. An Impact Assessment should be carried out if any of the following apply to the policy/practice, if it:

- affects primary or high level functions of the University
- is relevant to the promotion of equality (in terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty 'needs' as set out in the Policy and Guidance)?
- It is one which interested parties could reasonably expect the University to have carried out an EqIA?

E. Equality Groups

To which equality groups is the policy/practice relevant and why? (add notes against the following applicable equality group/s)

- Age
- Disability

The policy retains the existing position that the University's approach to making adjustments for the potential impact of disabilities on students' performance in assessment is via the provision of Schedules of Adjustment, rather than through the Special/Exceptional Circumstances process. These are put in place via consultation with the Disability and Learning Support Service. The EC policy does, however, retain the existing provision for concessions where a student with a chronic condition experiences flare-ups or a sudden worsening, or where a student with a disability has experienced a delay in the application of a Schedule of Adjustments.

- race (including ethnicity and nationality)
- religion or belief
- sex

The policy has been revised to retain explicit coverage of situations where a student experiences unexpected changes in caring responsibilities, which impact upon the student's studies. The impact of caring responsibilities is still statistically more likely to be borne by women students, so this provision mitigates the risk of detrimental treatment in this regard. The policy also includes a statement encouraging students to engage proactively with their Schools regarding their routine caring and other responsibilities outside of their studies, in order to try to minimise the likelihood of detrimental impact upon their studies.

- sexual orientation
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- marriage or civil partnership¹

Add notes against the following applicable statements:

- On any available information about the needs of relevant equality groups:
- Any gaps in evidence/insufficient information to properly assess the policy, and how this be will be addressed:
- If application of this policy/practice leads to discrimination (direct or indirect), harassment, victimisation, less favourable treatment for particular equality groups:

As above, there is no reason to anticipate that the revised policy should lead to these impacts.

- If the policy/practice contributes to advancing equality of opportunity²

The policy is designed to promote equality of opportunity by mitigating against the detrimental impact of students' adverse personal circumstances upon their studies. As above, the policy takes account of situations where students from specific groups are more likely than others to experience some circumstances.

- If there is an opportunity in applying this policy/practice to foster good relations:
- If the policy/practice create any barriers for any other groups?

The policy has been revised to make broader provision for students to request concessions where they experience the impact of exceptional changes in their employment commitments.

¹ Note: only the duty to eliminate discrimination applies to marriage and civil partnership. There is no need to have regard to advancing equality or opportunity or fostering good relations in this respect.

² This question does not apply to the protected characteristic of marriage or civil partnership

We are aware that students from lower income backgrounds are more likely to need to pursue paid work alongside their studies, so this provision in the policy mitigates against potential barriers in this regard.

- How the communication of the policy/practice is made accessible to all groups, if relevant?

The roll-out of the revised policy will be communicated via a variety of methods, and care will be taken to ensure that staff in student-facing services in the University are in a position to provide accurate information about the policy to students.

- How equality groups or communities are involved in the development, review and/or monitoring of the policy or practice?

The policy is the responsibility of Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee (APRC). The Students' Association have provided comment on a draft of the policy through their membership of APRC, and have also met with the authors of the revised policy to discuss their feedback on the policy, taking account of the needs of students in protected characteristics groups they represent.

- Any potential or actual impact of applying the policy or practice, with regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and promote good relations:

F. Equality Impact Assessment Outcome

Select one of the four options below to indicate how the development/review of the policy/practice will be progressed and state the rationale for the decision

Option 1: No change required – the assessment is that the policy/practice is/will be robust.

G. Action and Monitoring

1. Specify the actions required for implementing findings of this EqIA and how the policy or practice will be monitored in relation to its equality impact (or note where this is specified above).
We will undertake review and report on these at APRC at agreed junctures during 23/24. This will include data on students applying, reasons for application, etc.
2. When will the policy/practice next be reviewed?
See 1. Full review will be in four years.

H. Publication of EqIA

Can this EqIA be published in full, now? Yes/No

If No – please specify when it may be published or indicate restrictions that apply:

I. Sign-off

EqIA undertaken by (name(s) and job title(s)):

Accepted by (name):

[This will normally be the person responsible for the policy/practice named above. If not, specify job-title/role.]

Date:

Retain a copy of this form for your own records and send a copy to equalitydiversity@ed.ac.uk

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

31 July 2023

Student Discipline Committee 2023/24

Description of paper

1. This paper contains nominations for two new staff members of the Student Discipline Committee (SDC) from 1 August 2023, following the departure of the Convener who has reached the end of his term of office, and to cover a longer-standing staff member vacancy.
2. This paper also nominates current members of the SDC to be appointed to the roles of Convener and Vice Convener.

Action requested / recommendation

3. Approval of the nominations for SDC membership and roles noted in paragraphs 11 – 13.
4. The Committee is also asked to record their thanks to the outgoing Convener Professor Paul du Plessis, whose term of office ends on 31 July 2023. Paul has acted as Convener of the SDC since 2017 and has been an invaluable support to staff and student members of the SDC.

Background and context

5. SDC members are appointed by APRC on behalf of Senate, in accordance with the [Code of Student Conduct](#) (the Code). SDC members' period of office is three years. All members are eligible for re-appointment provided no member serves more than six years.
6. The nominations in paragraph 10 are for new staff members of the Committee. There are also a number of continuing staff members who remain on the Committee.
7. The current Convener comes to the end of their term on 31 July 2023, and the current Vice Convener is nominated to the Convener role. Therefore, a new Vice Convener is also nominated below.
8. The current SDC membership can be found at: www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/staff/discipline/discipline-committee

Discussion

9. Both nominated new staff members are current academic staff members of the University and have been nominated by their respective Colleges.
10. The nominated new staff members are:

Name	College	Current role(s)
Lorna Marson	CMVM	Professor of Transplant Surgery

		College Dean of Admissions and Widening Participation
Arianna Andreangeli	CAHSS	Senior Lecturer in European Law Director for Undergraduate Studies, School of Law

11. The nominated Convener is:

Name	College	Current role(s)
Jenny Hoy	CAHSS	Head of the Centre for Open Learning

Jenny Hoy has been Vice Convener of the SDC since November 2020.

12. The nominated Vice Convener is:

Name	College	Current role(s)
Chris Mowat	CSE	Senior Lecturer in Bioinorganic Chemistry Director of Teaching, School of Chemistry

Chris Mowat has been a member of the SDC since August 2019.

Resource implications

13. Maintenance of SDC membership, induction and training, and support for the SDC are resourced by the Student Conduct Team within Academic Services.

14. Nominees have been provided with information about estimated workload commitments, to inform their conversations on workload management.

Risk management

15. The Student Discipline Committee is a key element of the University student conduct process and supports the University in meeting legislative responsibilities to manage University discipline. Approving these appointments to the SDC enables the Committee to carry out its role under the Code.

Responding to the Climate Emergency & Sustainable Development Goals

16. Not applicable.

Equality & diversity

17. These nominations are restricted to academic staff members in order to comply with the requirements of the Code: the Code requires that the Committee includes a minimum of four members of academic staff, and with the departure of the current Convener, the membership is no longer compliant with this requirement.

18. Nominations were sought from College Offices in CMVM and CAHSS. This was in order maintain relatively balanced representation of Colleges across the Committee.
19. College Offices were provided with information about the role of an SDC member and an indication of the workload involved. Colleges were asked to nominate staff with appropriate experience and skills in rigorous application of procedures, supporting group decision-making to arrive at balanced and evidence-based outcomes, and experience in managing difficult conversations with students.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

20. If the nominations are approved, then the appointed members will be contacted by the Student Conduct Team.
21. The online SDC membership will be updated and contact made with the new members to invite them to relevant training.

Author

Kathryn Nicol, Academic Policy Manager
25 July 2023

Freedom of Information

The paper is open.