Self-certification update for students - limited to 3 assessments per academic year

Students need to be aware of the change to the Self-certification of Assessments in the Exceptional Circumstances policy for the 2022/23 Academic year. This note has been updated in February 2023.

This will affect any assessments after 26th September, 2022:

- **Self-certification will be limited to 3 assessments per academic year** - this will be automatically limited in the central e:Vision system.
- **Self-certification will still result in either a deferral or a 4 calendar day extension** for assessments where self-certification is permitted - this has not changed.
- **Students are still able to submit claims with evidence to the Exceptional Circumstances Committees** - for example if 4 days extension isn’t sufficient or if a student has self-certified for 3 assessments already.
- **NEW FROM FEBRUARY 2023**: Students who submit a self-certification for an assessment due on a particular date may use the exceptional circumstances process to seek a 4-day extension for all other assessments due on the same date. The evidence to support this claim is the email confirmation of the self-certification. Such claims must be received on the same day as the submission deadline and, ideally, before that deadline.
- **Self-certification should not be used by students for occasional extensions which are covered by their SSPs** but should rather apply in the usual way for an SSP through the ECA committee students with SSPs may, however, use self-certification for circumstances not detailed in their SSP, for example if they have a short illness at the time of an assessment.
- **SCA will work over Summer with YUSU/GSA and Disability Services** to improve awareness about usage of self-certification, exceptional circumstances and SSPs.

**Rationale for self-certification**: In September, 2021 SCA approved the implementation of self-certification in relation to assessments. This was in order to address the significant increase in ECA claims as a result of the Pandemic and was also recommended by the Office for the Independent Adjudicator (see section 49-54 of this document). Self-certification was an adjustment from the policy in the previous academic year, during the height of the Covid pandemic, in which any EC claim could be made without evidence. As an adjustment from that policy unlimited uses of short-term (4-day) self-certification was put in place. At the time of doing so, SCA decided not to limit the number of uses of self-certification out of concern about the ongoing impacts of the pandemic.

**SCA discussions of the policy and rationale for change**: It should be noted that student representatives on SCA were opposed to the limitation of the policy and that they particularly emphasised issues around mental health of students. This issue was debated fully by SCA but the Committee felt that although there are ongoing challenges arising out of Covid and that there may be some beneficial consequences to unlimited self-certification, unlimited use during 2021/22 had significant and negative impacts on the marking of student work, the processes for determining their progression or graduation. It was also not in line with the OIA’s guidance for limited use of self-certification to deal with “sudden but minor illness that do not require medical attention” which may also be used in “non-health related circumstances”. There were also significant concerns raised about threats to students using the policy to gain an unfair advantage and the adverse impact of unlimited use of self-certification on the well-being of students due to significant
numbers of students claiming short extensions instead of seeking support (many departments reported over 50% of students self-certifying assessments). It was agreed that limited opportunities for self-certification combined with ongoing availability evidenced-based claims through the ECA Committee and SSPs provides students with excellent support to deal with the range of circumstances students are likely to face.

Next steps:
The discussion of Self-certification has highlighted several issues which SCA is keen to address:
- Impact of shift to online learning and assessments during the pandemic
- **Multiple assessment deadlines due on the same day** - working with departments on clearly communicating assessment deadlines to students to help planning and identify times were students may be overwhelmed - Guidance on managing multiple assessment deadlines will be explored.
- Reconciling inclusive and robust assessment methods and particularly having regard to student mental health. SCA would like to work with YUSU/GSA and other bodies in the university as part of a wider review of effective assessment practice.