Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment

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For forms and student guidance related to exceptional circumstances, contact department administrators or Student Support Services.
23. Exceptional Circumstances

23.1 Preface and Principles

If a student’s performance in, or completion of, summative assessment has been seriously impaired by medical or other unforeseen exceptional adverse circumstances, then this may be taken into account under this policy. No allowance can be made, within this process, for circumstances affecting attendance or other work during the module, except where the assessment itself is closely linked with the attendance. Departments can approve authorised leave for students whose circumstances are affecting them for up to 28 days. In these cases, the student is expected to catch up on the missed material in time for the assessments unless the timing of the circumstances coincides with the assessment itself. For more 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. Disability Services) in order to have relevant adjustments made, and/or to develop coping strategies which will see them not only through their study but into later life. Where necessary, students with conditions or circumstances which cannot be resolved or accommodated within a programme of study may need to consider temporary leave of absence from the programme of study in order to allow them to reengage when they are better able to benefit from the programme.

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.

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27 Because this policy applies only to assessment of taught material, it is unlikely to apply to most research degree programmes. It does, however, apply to any taught modules, including those which are included in primarily research-based programmes.

28 The definition of a disability is a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on a person’s ability to do normal daily activities. Long term is defined as lasting one year or more or likely to last one year or more. ‘Normal daily activities’ includes mobility, manual dexterity, lifting, hearing, eyesight, speech, memory, and the ability to concentrate, learn or understand. It includes, but is not limited to, physical and cognitive impairments and long-standing or recurrent mental ill-health.
The aim of the exceptional circumstances process is to ensure that fairness and academic standards are maintained for all our students who endeavour to manage the challenges inherent in academic study. It is imperative that only exceptional circumstances are accepted.

The University offers a range of student support services and opportunities to enable students to manage the challenges and demands\(^{29}\) of academic study. The various support services are accessible to all students and do not require referral. 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. It is an expectation of the University that students will access the relevant services if they require them, sometimes signposted by their college, their supervisor or other members of the academic community.

The usual outcome of a successful exceptional circumstances claim is that the student would be given an extension to a submission deadline or a new opportunity to take the assessment, as if for the first time, at the next available opportunity. In the latter case, the mark from the new assessment replaces any mark already obtained from the original impaired assessment, irrespective of which is higher. Please note, there is no provision for adjusting a student’s assessment mark or (other than in some specific situations) degree class.\(^{30}\)

\(^{29}\) These may include financial, emotional, mental health or disability related issues or may result from difficulties in terms of housing, visa application or other difficulties that are not unusual for some students.

\(^{30}\) See section 23.8.
### 23.2 What qualifies as exceptional circumstances?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circumstances</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional Medical Circumstances</td>
<td>E.g. hospitalisation, or incapacitation through injury, illness, or mental health crisis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close bereavement</td>
<td>The following relatives are accepted as ‘close’: partner, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, and grandchild. Housemates or very close friends may also be considered as ‘close’, though evidence of the relationship may be required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim of a serious crime</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabilities for which reasonable adjustments are not yet in place and where the delay is not due to the student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional and unforeseeable transport difficulties</td>
<td>E.g. major transport incidents, cancelled flights. This does not include every-day issues e.g. traffic congestion, missed buses or trains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews for work-placements or for employment which cannot be changed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal proceedings requiring attendance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional Personal Circumstances</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Please note* that the ECA Committee is empowered to make recommendations to Special Cases Committee in relation to Exceptional circumstances which it wishes to accept but which are not covered above. It cannot approve such claims unilaterally.

**The following never qualify as exceptional circumstances:**

1. Loss of work not backed up or printing problems
2. Accidental submission of an incorrect document (e.g. an assignment from another module or an incomplete earlier draft of the assignment)
3. In the event of electronic submission, the following will not be accepted as exceptional circumstances:
a. the student submits the wrong file type or a corrupted file;
b. the student begins their upload after the deadline has passed;
c. a claim of technical issues on behalf of the University with no proof of an error message/system failure on either the VLE or the University network.

4. Misreading of the examination timetable

5. English not being a first language

6. Deadlines for work or exams being set close together

**The following are not normally regarded as exceptional**: 

1. Weddings
2. Constraints arising from paid employment (FT students)
3. Holidays
4. Relationship breakdown
5. Moving house
6. Disabilities for which reasonable adjustments have been made
7. Financial difficulties
8. Planned health appointments
9. For an electronic submission of an assessment, a delay of up to 30 minutes between starting and completing the file upload process

**Evidence**

- Each application must be accompanied by satisfactory supporting evidence, normally from an independent and relevantly-qualified third party professional. 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.

- The evidence needs to indicate the period of disruption, including the duration of the impact. A doctor, for example, may be willing to report a retrospective account given to them by the student after the event, but in itself this does not carry weight as evidence if the doctor simply notes that a student reports the impact.

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31 The acceptance of these circumstances as exceptional will require evidence not only that they occurred, but of the unforeseeable and unavoidable nature of the circumstance, and of the impact on the student’s assessment.

32 Part-time students may apply for Exceptional Circumstances on the grounds of ‘exceptional circumstances arising from employment’, but the student would need to show evidence of an unusual and unpredictable level of impact of work. The fact of a part-time student’s employment is not, in itself, exceptional.

33 Exceptions can be made for divorce or relationship breakdowns of an equivalent scale. Evidence would need to be provided of the duration of the relationship, and the impact on the student.

34 Thus a submission which was started less than 30 minutes before the deadline but which did not complete until after the deadline would not qualify as exceptional, unless there was evidence that a major technical issue had occurred. Students are therefore advised to allow at least 30 minutes for the upload process.
Similarly, the University’s Open Door Team is only able to provide the type of evidence required when a student has used, or is currently using, the services provided by the team to address the circumstances.

In the event that the professional concerned did not see the student at the time of the assessment but believes that their condition would have prevented them from engaging not only with assessment, but also with professional support services, a claim can still be considered. The professional’s evidence in such a case would need to explain the extent to which the circumstances would have prevented engagement with professional services.

Students who are too ill, or suspect themselves to be too contagious, to attend a doctor’s surgery or other support service at the time of their assessments should engage with online services such as Unity Health’s online consultation service, or contact Student Support Services about telephone or email consultations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Circumstance</th>
<th>Examples of evidence that would support a claim</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional Medical Circumstances</td>
<td>A letter from a doctor, nurse or other health professional confirming the exceptional and unforeseen nature of the exceptional circumstance and the impact on the student. Health professionals must be registered with an appropriate accrediting body, and though evidence of such accreditation will not be required in the first instance, it may be requested should the ECA Committee determine that it is necessary. Any submission that notes only that ‘the student reports that...’ is not acceptable, as it is not independent third party evidence of either the circumstances or the impact on the student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close bereavement</td>
<td>A death certificate or confirmation from an independent relevant professional e.g. a solicitor or an undertaker or an order of service from the funeral ceremony. Where not a relative, the ECA Committee should see evidence of closeness of the relationship in the form of a statement from a third party or a tenancy agreement (in the case of a housemate). If the student is severely affected by the death of someone not considered as ‘close’ under this policy, they would need to have evidence from an independent third party of the serious impact on them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim of a serious crime</td>
<td>Documentation from the police indicating that the student has reported a crime; an insurance claim, or medical report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disabilies for which reasonable adjustments are not yet in place and where the delay is not due to the student</td>
<td>A letter from Disability Services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional and unforeseeable transport difficulties</td>
<td>Evidence of a major transportation incident, or a letter from the relevant transport company confirming the nature of the delay. Evidence will also be required that the circumstances described affected the student in question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews for placements or for employment which cannot be changed</td>
<td>Evidence showing that the interview date cannot be rearranged.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal proceedings requiring attendance</td>
<td>A letter from a solicitor or a court.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exceptional Personal Circumstances impact on the student’s ability to engage in assessment activities.</td>
<td>A letter from a student support practitioner, counsellor, religious leader, or other professional third party directly confirming that, in their professional opinion, the circumstances have had a serious impact on the student’s ability to engage in assessment activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reasons for non-acceptance of exceptional circumstances**

The following examples are indicative but not exhaustive.

i. The student has not submitted the claim within seven days of the assessment, and has not provided or evidenced good reason for failing to do so.

ii. The full information required by the exceptional circumstances form is incomplete.

iii. No independent documentary evidence has been supplied to support the request (letters from family, fellow students or academic supervisors are not normally sufficient on their own but may be submitted in addition to independent third party evidence).
iv. The timing of the circumstances cited would not have adversely affected the assessment(s).

v. The nature of the circumstances cited is not over and above the normal difficulties experienced in life.

vi. Sufficient adjustment has already been made for the same circumstances; the evidence has already been used to support adjustment for the same assessment and no new evidence has been provided.

vii. The circumstances in question relate to a disability for which reasonable adjustments have been made but which the student has not engaged with to a reasonable extent. For example where mentoring or specialist tuition is provided and agreed but for which the student decides not to attend.

viii. The claim is submitted after the assessment marks have been ratified by the Board of Examiners. Claims submitted after ratification cannot be considered by an ECA Committee. Such claims must be considered as formal University appeals.

23.3 Applications for ECA Committee consideration

A student who wishes exceptional circumstances to be considered must apply to the ECA Committee associated with their Board of Studies, by submitting the completed University claim form and by providing the required evidence.

An application for an extension to a submission deadline should normally be received at least two working days before that deadline, to allow time for consideration in advance of the deadline. For an application of any kind to be considered at all it must be received one calendar week after that assessment itself.

In the event that a student submits a claim more than seven days after the affected assessment, and/or misses the advertised departmental deadline for the submission of any claims, but submits an evidenced claim before the ratification of the marks by the Board of Examiners, the claim can still be considered, but the ECA Committee must apply the additional test of whether the student had ‘good reason’ for not submitting the claim in good time prior to considering the claim itself. If the student cannot provide independent evidence of a ‘good reason’ that they could not have claimed in good time, the claim must be rejected regardless of the strength of the claim.
Outcomes available in response to Exceptional Circumstances

The following outcomes are available in response to an accepted ECA claim. The assessment may or may not have been taken/failed outright.

i. The opportunity to take or submit the assessment ‘as if for the first time’, during the August resit week (for undergraduates), or at another appropriate time. If the assessment is set for a time other than resit week, the ECA Committee would be expected to take into account the additional workload for the student and the need to advise the student accordingly.

ii. An extension to the deadline for an assessment. In the case of finalists, permission to complete the assessment after the end of the programme will result in a postponement of graduation, and requires permission from the Special Cases Committee. All programme extensions must be approved by SCC. The deadline for extensions for non-finalists beyond the end date of the summer term in other years should not be later than the end of August. If an extension beyond the end of August is necessary, a leave of absence will be required.

iii. The opportunity to take ‘as if for the first time’ a different form of assessment than the original assessment. (Alternative assessments cannot be an assessment in a format that the student has never before encountered). This will usually be for practical reasons, e.g. so that the assessment can take place in time for the next stage of the programme. Unlike resit attempts, students granted sits as if for the first time need not be given a set notice period prior to the new assessment attempt (5 weeks for UG, 3 weeks for PGT), as it is not necessarily expected that the student will require additional preparation time in order to improve their results. Students should, however, be given a reasonable amount of time to complete the assessment task at hand.

iv. Additional work to complete the original learning outcomes of the module, e.g. where practical work has been only partially completed.

v. Recommendations to Special Cases Committee for the award of a taught aegrotat degree where the conditions of the policy on aegrotat degrees are met.

vi. If a single module mark is created from a number of marks from assessments testing the same learning outcomes, the following rule may apply. The ECA Committee can, in order to produce a module mark, recommend to the Board of Studies waiving no more than 20% of the overall module mark. This is permitted only where the learning outcomes for the module have been measured by the remaining assessments for that module.

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35 See Section 23.9.
Where the various elements of a module are intended to test different learning outcomes, such waiving of marks is not permissible. This procedure may be followed for up to a maximum of 40 credits per stage, provided that the learning outcomes for the module(s) have been achieved.

vii. A revised submission (referral) of work already submitted may be permitted if the department has included this in the assessment section of the module specification, or if UTC has agreed that the module or component is non-reassessable.

viii. If an ECA claim is accepted on assessments at the end of a stage, but the student has met the necessary progression requirements using the affected attempts, the ECA Committee may allow a student to sit the assessments as if for the first time at the next available opportunity whilst pursuing the next stage. This is permitted in a maximum of 40 credits in a given stage. In this case only, the student will retain the better of the affected mark and the ‘sit as if for the first time’ mark for the sake of progression and award.

The following are never permitted:

- substitution of marks;
- changing of marks;
- repeating tuition from a previous stage once the next stage has been commenced.

The following is only permitted with the approval of Special Cases Committee:

- waiving or pro-rating of marks beyond that permitted above.

**Sits ‘as if for the first time’**

When a student is offered the opportunity for a sit ‘as if for the first time’, the student is permitted to decline that opportunity, and in such cases the original affected mark will stand. Students will not be able to choose between marks gained at the first and second attempt, and the original mark will become void when the second attempt takes place. Failure to attend or submit ‘as if for the first time’ will be treated as declining the opportunity to do so. Students will be made aware of their original mark, if available, at the time of being offered a ‘sit as if for the first time’ as an outcome of submission of exceptional circumstances. Departments should set a date at the end of the stage by which students must inform them of their decision to accept or decline the sit(s) ‘as if for the first time’. This will be a different deadline for finalists in order to allow award results to be processed in time for graduation. In order to make an informed decision about which sits ‘as if for the first time’ to take, the student should have access to all of their marks for the stage.
23.4 Composition of the Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment (ECA) Committee

i. Exceptional Circumstances claims must be considered by an Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment (ECA) Committee which must be a sub-committee of the Board of Studies. This includes consideration of exceptional circumstances arising during an assessment. There is to be one ECA Committee for each Board of Studies covering all programmes within the remit of that Board of Studies. Combined programmes will be covered by the Board of Studies of the Department in which the Programme Leader is based.

ii. Single-subject membership of ECA Committee

A single-subject ECA Committee must consist of five members of academic staff selected by, but not including, the Chair of the Board of Studies in consultation with the Head of Department. The quorum for meetings of the ECA Committee is three, and an ECA Committee meeting must not take place unless it is quorate. The term of office for members of the ECA Committee should normally be three years (renewable).

iii. Combined-subject membership of ECA Committee

It is not necessary for Programme Leaders of combined programmes to be on an ECAC or to be routinely consulted. They should be consulted/involved as required.

iv. Chair and administrator of ECA Committee

The Chair of the Board of Studies /Chair of the Combined Board of Studies in consultation with the Head(s) of Department should appoint a fixed Chair of the ECA Committee from its members. ECA Committee meetings should be serviced by an administrator, and all decisions must be recorded.

v. Students are not permitted to attend the ECA Committee meetings.

vi. Conflict of interest

In cases where a formal complaint has been lodged against a member of the ECA Committee by a student making a claim of Exceptional circumstances, or there is an evidenced conflict of interests for a member of the ECA Committee, that member should exclude themselves from consideration of the relevant case(s). If, as a result of such exclusions, the ECA Committee has insufficient members to conduct its business, then the Chair of the ECA Committee may propose to the Standing Committee on Assessment that alternative members should be co-opted.

vii. Meetings may take place either in person or virtually (via email, or other suitable medium), but in either case, quoracy must be adhered to and adequate records kept of the decisions.
23.5 Guidance for ECA Committees

ECA Committees will be guided, in their decisions, by the principles outlined in sections A and B above. If Exceptional circumstances are identified, one of the remedies in section C will be applied.

The following will apply in relation to ECA claims:

i. Where assessments are affected by exceptional circumstances the normal time-scale for completion of the programme should be adhered to as far as possible.

ii. Exceptional circumstances must be considered and any action decided and applied before the end of the stage of the programme during which they occur.

iii. Consideration of exceptional circumstances should take place at least termly where any claims have been made. As far as possible, approval of arrangements to alter the deadline for completion of module assessment (whether coursework submission or formal examination) must be made in advance of the deadline.

iv. Exceptional circumstances claims submitted against open assessments at least 72 hours prior to the original deadline must be considered in time for the student to make the original deadline in the event that their claim is denied. Students submitting extension requests should be advised to work to the original deadline unless/until they have received notification of the acceptance of their claim.

v. External Examiners must not be involved in the exceptional circumstances procedure.

vi. The usual means of compensating for exceptional circumstances affecting an assessment should be either an extension on the original assessment or the opportunity to take the assessment ‘as if for the first time’, including where assessments are taken in the final year. It is expected that most re-assessments and attempts ‘as if for the first time’ will be taken or will have a hand-in date during the resit week in August. Marking of assessments will be completed by the end of August each year.

vii. Where a student is taking an assessment ‘as if for the first time’ the new mark will stand. The original mark cannot be used except with the approval of Special Cases Committee on a case-by-case basis. Such approval is expected to be very exceptional. For example, this may be considered where the ‘sit as if for the first time’ is, in itself, affected by accepted exceptional circumstances, and the original attempt, but not the ‘sit as if for the first time’, meets the progression requirements.

viii. Where the sit ‘as if for the first time’ is itself separately damaged for a continuing student with no more than 40 credits of affected modules, and the marks in the affected modules would otherwise allow progression to the following stage, the student can be allowed to progress to the following stage. The ‘sit as if for the first time’ can be completed in the subsequent year, and the student’s ‘best attempt’ will be used.

ix. Consideration of exceptional circumstances must always take place prior to consideration of the assessment result by the Board of Examiners/Board of Studies.
x. If the ECA committee has been notified of exceptional circumstances at the appropriate time but the evidence has not been supplied, it may make a provisional decision if the following conditions are met:

a. The student has stated the nature of the evidence;
b. The student has stated why it is not currently available and the ECA Committee accepts the reason(s);
c. The student has stated when the evidence will be available;
d. The student is informed that if the evidence submitted does not meet the required standard, the provisional decision will be rescinded.
e. The student is advised that they may complete the assessment at the standard time in order to ensure that they are not unduly penalised in the event that their claim is not ultimately upheld.

Example: A student has an accident close to the time of assessment and medical evidence has been requested but not supplied by the doctor in time for ECA Committee consideration.

A deadline for appropriate evidence in such cases should be set at no more than 3 weeks after the submission of the original claim. In the event that the evidence is not provided by this date, the provisional acceptance must be rescinded.

xi. When an ECA claim is submitted after the ratification of the assessment marks in question, and when the conditions relating to evidence are not met, the ECA claim cannot be accepted, and the student must follow the procedure for academic appeals through Special Cases Committee if they wish to have their circumstances considered.

xii. Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment and Academic Misconduct Policy

Circumstances which might be acceptable as exceptional under this policy will not normally be acceptable as a defence against the award of penalties in relation to academic misconduct. For the treatment of exceptional circumstances with respect to academic misconduct, please refer to the Academic Misconduct Policy.

Example: The death of a close relative is an exceptional circumstance under this policy, since the death adversely affected the student’s performance on the assessment for which that mark was awarded. But this death will not waive any requirement of capping of marks for having committed academic misconduct on an assessment. A student in this situation will be entitled to sit the assessment as if for the first time, but the cap will apply to the further attempt.

xiii. Exceptional Circumstances Policy and Equality
The Policy should be applied in accordance with the University’s equality policies, which are located at www.york.ac.uk/admin/eq/policies/index.htm

23.6 Procedure for the consideration of exceptional circumstances

i. **Deadlines for submission of exceptional circumstances**

The deadline for exceptional circumstances claims will be seven days after the affected assessment. Any claim submitted late without good reason should not be considered, and the student should be informed of their right to appeal to the Special Cases Committee within 28 days.

When students are incapacitated they must complete the University’s Exceptional Circumstances Claim Form within a week of the normal deadline for completion of the assessment, though they may be accepted later where the claim form is accompanied by compelling evidence detailing good reasons for late submission. Claims of exceptional circumstances must not be considered at the ECA Committee level without completion of the form and provision of supporting evidence. Third party applications for consideration of exceptional circumstances should not be accepted unless it can be shown that the student lacks capacity.

Exceptional circumstances claims submitted during the period of an open assessment with appropriate evidence should be considered before the deadline for the assessment. In such a case, the Chair and one other member may make a decision.

ii. **Timing of meetings**

The (Combined) ECA Committee must consider all outstanding cases at the conclusion of each Common Assessment Period, and more frequently when required. The meeting must be held in sufficient time to allow its recommendations to be input into the student record system (SITS), that is, at least three working days prior to any relevant Board of Examiners meeting in order that these recommendations may appear on the relevant reports.

iii. **Confidentiality**

Consideration of exceptional circumstances cannot be anonymous but should, however, remain confidential i.e. shared with relevant members of the committee on a need to know basis. Students cannot share information pertaining to exceptional circumstances but demand that it not be shared in consideration. Discussions and decisions should not normally be disclosed outside the ECA Committee and the recording of decisions. Students should be encouraged to discuss their circumstances with their supervisor, but circumstances should not be disclosed by the ECA Committee. It should be noted, however, that in cases where a student makes an appeal against a decision of the ECA Committee, the documentation may need to be seen by the Chair of the Board of Studies for comment if requested by the Special Cases Committee in its investigation of an appeal. In addition, the Chair of Board of Studies may need to see the documentation if a recommendation needs to be made to the Special Cases Committee (for example, for a programme extension).
iv. Where the student is offered an attempt ‘as if for the first time’, the options which will be available if that attempt is failed must be explained to the student before the attempt takes place. Where a student fails an assessment taken ‘as if for the first time’ during the August resit week, or where the assessment is itself affected by exceptional circumstances, a leave of absence or suspension of enrolment may be needed to accommodate any further assessment (or re-assessment).

v. The student must be informed in writing of the decision within three working days of a decision being made, including explicit reference to their right to appeal to Special Cases Committee within 28 days of the formal notification if they are dissatisfied with the decision. Notification from a University email address to the student’s University email address is acceptable.

vi. When the procedure has been completed, the Exceptional Circumstances Claim Form and supporting evidence should be retained on the student’s departmental file in a sealed envelope or in a password protected electronic file. This should state that the information contained can only be accessed by a member of the ECA Committee or the Chair of the Board of Studies in the event that Special Cases Committee, or a member of the University investigating a complaint, request their comment as part of an appeal/complaint being investigated, or if the Board of Studies is required to make a recommendation to Special Cases Committee on behalf of the ECA Committee.

vii. The student record system (SITS) should be updated with all decisions as soon as possible and, in any case, within a week of each formal meeting.

viii. Where exceptional circumstances are claimed against a module delivered outside of a student’s home department(s), students may be offered extensions or sits as if for the first time at the next available opportunity. Any additional or alternative assessments can only be offered with the agreement of the host department, and where pedagogic and practical concerns make them practicable.

ix. Any requests for consideration of exceptional circumstances which fall outside this procedure should be submitted to Special Cases Committee for consideration.

23.7 Students with Disabilities

Students with physical or mental impairments that have a substantial and long-term negative impact on their ability to study should seek support and reasonable adjustments to assessment through Disability Services. Support and reasonable adjustments, including variable adjustments such as extensions for fluctuating conditions, should be approved as part of a Student Support Plan, 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, so long as the delay in the implementation of the adjustments was not caused by the student. 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. The ECA Committee would need to consider
whether the student had the experience or time to manage the situation. 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. 36

23.8 Adjustment of Undergraduate degree outcomes in light of exceptional circumstances

Adjustment of undergraduate degree outcomes (e.g. raising of degree class) is never allowed as a response to circumstances that can be dealt with through the normal ECA procedures. Only the outcomes in section C above can be applied, and these will only apply to individual assessments.

However, in rare cases a recommendation for a higher class of degree can be made to Special Cases Committee where it has not been possible for exceptiona circumstances to be submitted and considered before the end of the stage of the programme during which they occurred. The award of a higher class of degree would only be recommended following full and formal consideration of the individual circumstances of any such case.

Example: A student is diagnosed with a disability which is of an on-going nature, e.g. dyslexia, during their third year. Adjustments are made for that academic year, an improvement in academic performance is noted and the student’s final mark is borderline. Assessments in previous stages (when no adjustments were made) are therefore likely to have been affected by the disability.

All such recommendations will be considered by the Special Cases Committee, and must be received by Wednesday of week 10 of Summer Term in order to allow them to be considered before the Summer Senate and graduation.

In the event that such a recommendation is accepted by the Special Cases Committee, the following ratios will be applied to the credit weighted stage averages in order to determine whether the student reaches the required average for the higher degree classification:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Type</th>
<th>2nd Stage Affected</th>
<th>3rd Stage Affected</th>
<th>4th Stage Affected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>1:3</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Masters</td>
<td>1:3:3</td>
<td>4:3:8</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2:3:8</td>
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Please note: any exceptional circumstances which affected the final year of study must be addressed using the provisions in the other sections of this policy, including extensions and sits as if for the first time.

36 Where students have disabilities which are unpredictable or variable in nature, and where there is evidence that extensions may be required on some work, disability services can recommend that these be dealt with outside of the exceptional circumstances policy. But in these cases, the recommendation must be included in the Student’s Student Support Plan, and be approved by the department (who must assure the Standing Committee on Assessment that such extensions are in keeping with the learning outcomes of the programme) (See: Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback, Section 4.3.2).
The consideration of such a case does not require that the student be in a ‘borderline’ area before the alternate weighting is applied, although departments would not normally be expected to make a recommendation to Special Cases Committee where the application of the ratio would make no difference to the student’s degree classification. Should the recommendation be approved, the award mark which is shown on the student transcript will remain the traditional 2:3 or 2:3:3 ratio. Only the degree classification will change.

23.9 Policy on Aegrotat Degrees

In the event that a student is rendered, or can be reasonably judged to have become, permanently unable to complete their studies as the result of documented medical, personal or compassionate circumstances, the Board of Examiners may propose that a student be awarded an aegrotat award.

i. Any aegrotat proposal should be for the next exit point after the student’s most recent progression. In order to support such a proposal, the Board of Examiners must present evidence that the student is likely to have met any programme level learning outcomes, and to show that the student was achieving at the appropriate level for the award in question. In order to be considered, the student will normally have been enrolled for more than half of the teaching or research period between the exit award for which the student is already eligible and the progression or award point for the level of award being proposed.

ii. For research degree and the ISM stage of Taught Postgraduate degrees, the Boards of Examiners must present a statement from the supervisor indicating the scope of the project, and evidence that the student was likely to achieve the standard of research appropriate for the award. The proposal must also be supported by at least one piece of written work which indicates that the student is capable of producing work at the appropriate level (potentially produced during the taught portion of the degree). Where appropriate, the supervisor’s report should point the external examiner and the Special Cases Committee to the salient points of the written submission.

iii. Successful completion of a confirmation of study examination for a research student is not necessarily an indication that such a student should be considered for an aegrotat PhD rather than an MPhil, but rather any proposal for an aegrotat research degree should be based on the extent and quality of the research completed (whilst making allowances for its incomplete nature), and measured against the standards of the award in question without the benefit of a viva.

iv. The recommendation of an aegrotat award of the MPhil should be made if the examiners are of the view that the available sections of the thesis are of good presentation and style and with the supervisor’s report shows evidence of the student’s proficiency in the methods and techniques of research, demonstrating and adequate knowledge and discussion of the literature in a specific field of study. It must show initiative, independence of thought and must be a distinct contribution to scholarship.
v. The recommendation of an aegrotat award of the PhD degree should be made if the examiners are of the view that the available sections of the thesis are of good presentation and style and, with the supervisor’s report, show evidence of being a significant contribution to knowledge and of the student’s capacity to pursue further research without supervision. The thesis must contain a significant amount of material worthy of publication.

vi. Aegrotat awards will not be classified. They will make reference to the subject studied, though non-aegrotat award at the same level may not.

vii. All proposals for aegrotat awards must have the approval of an external examiner before being put to the Special Cases Committee. This includes research degrees, where an external examiner may need to be appointed through the normal processes.