

Exceptional Circumstances Policy and Coursework Extensions Guidance and Operational Proceedings

1. Introduction

This document outlines the policy and proceedings that will be followed for the submission of a claim of Exceptional Circumstances to a Module Board of Examiners.

This policy applies to all awards and all levels offered by the University of Hertfordshire hosted by Global Academic Foundation (UH-GAF).

The proceedings set out in this policy cover the submission and consideration of exceptional circumstances in the case of the non-submission of coursework or absence from an examination. Guidance relating to requests for a short extension, of up to ten (10) working days, to the submission of coursework is also provided.

2. General principles

Coursework Extensions

An extension is permission to hand in a piece of assessed work after the published hand-in date without incurring a penalty. Students are allowed to ask for an extension period of up to ten (10) working days after the submission deadline for coursework, if they have significant circumstances impacting on their ability to complete the work by the deadline. Acceptance is discretionary and can only be agreed by the designated person, see section 3 below.

Students do not have an automatic right to an extension. The extension period may be shorter dependent on the student's needs or due to the practicalities surrounding the assessment or its timing.

Exceptional Circumstances

Students are permitted to make the Module Board of Examiners aware if there are any significant circumstances which have caused them to miss a coursework deadline or to be absent from an examination. UH-GAF will make available to students a list of acceptable Exceptional Circumstances specifying the evidence required, as provided by the University (see [Appendix 1](#)¹).

If a student, despite such circumstances, decides to sit/submit an assessment, UH-GAF will not accept a claim that the student has exceptional circumstances with regards to that assessment. However, the following two circumstances are considered to be exceptions to the above:

- i. where, at the time of sitting or submitting the assessment concerned, the student was not capable of understanding that his or her performance was likely to be affected seriously by ill health and/or its treatment and this view has the written support of a doctor or psychiatric practitioner; or
- ii. where a student suddenly becomes unwell during an examination or in-class test and elects to leave without completing the assessment. In these circumstances, before

¹ The list of acceptable exceptional circumstances must be reviewed each academic year after the publication of the Academic Handbook containing the University Policies and Regulations (UPRs).

leaving the examination room, the student must notify the Invigilator of the Exceptional Circumstances which have necessitated his or her leaving the examination or test.

When an Exceptional Circumstances application is accepted, the Module Board of Examiners will recommend a deferral in the affected assessment(s), which means that submission of coursework or examination will be delayed normally until the referral /deferral period or until the following academic year date and which may involve an alternative piece of coursework.

3. Proceedings for the request of an extension to a coursework submission deadline

Students may ask for an extension of up to five working days by sending an email request to the relevant module leader. Whilst an extension can be requested any time up until the coursework deadline, it is reasonable to expect that it may take up to two working days after receipt of the request to confirm whether or not the request has been accepted. The request must be accompanied by supporting evidence. The module leader then responds to the student via email with their decision, copying in the relevant module tutor(s) if the student's tutor is different from the module leader.

If a student seeks an extension beyond five working days, the student will need to send an email request to the Programme Leader who can agree up to a further five working days. The Programme Leader will communicate their decision to the student via email, copying in the relevant module leader. It may take up to two working days after receipt of the request to confirm whether the request has been accepted.

If a student is unable to submit their work by the end of the extension period, no further extension can be requested and the student should consider submitting an application for the consideration of Exceptional Circumstances instead.

4. Proceedings for the submission and administration of Exceptional Circumstances applications

Students must submit an application for the consideration of exceptional circumstances together with supporting evidence to the email address studentaffairs2@gaf.edu.eg using the form provided by UH-GAF (see [Appendix 2](#)², available via the following link

(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UuSNpORNpee1bKLo1zqBhGmu9d2UuLYN/view?usp=sharing>)

Students are asked to identify the relevant circumstance (s) from the Table of Exceptional Circumstances (Appendix 1). Students can be assured that all statements of Exceptional Circumstances will be treated as confidential and will not be disclosed outside the Assessment Panel and Module Boards. Where circumstances are particularly sensitive, students may request that they are disclosed only to the Chair of the Assessment Panel, the Chair of the Module Board and the External Examiner(s), where applicable.

The Student Affairs Office (SAO) will acknowledge receipt of a Exceptional Circumstances application to the student within **three** working days. A system of recording receipts for

² The form used for making a claim to exceptional circumstances must be reviewed each academic year after the publication of the Academic Handbook containing the University Policies and Regulations (UPRs).

Exceptional Circumstances applications, supporting evidence, and the outcome from the Assessment panel will be maintained by the SAO using an Excel spreadsheet.

The SAO will forward details of Exceptional Circumstances applications together with recommended outcomes to the University's Collaborative Partnerships Unit (CPU), prior to any meeting of the Module Board of Examiners. CPU will then submit this to the Chair of the Module Board of Examiners.

Students are informed that submissions should be no later than **ten** working days before the meeting of the Module Board of Examiners, but where the relevant assessment is within **twelve** working days of the Module Board of Examiners, any exceptional circumstances must be notified no later than **two** working days after the assessment.

5. Consideration of Exceptional Circumstances applications

Exceptional Circumstances are considered by an Exceptional Circumstances Assessment Panel at GAF hosting UH, which operates on the authority of the Module Boards of Examiners.

The Clerk will provide the panel with a list of cases to consider and access to documentation relating to the applications and any accompanying evidence provided. If a student has expressed specifically that the documentation is only disclosed to the Chair of the Panel or the Chair of the Module Board, the Clerk will facilitate this 'in-confidence' request.

The meetings of the Panel will be minuted and the Clerk will maintain a record of decisions made and will identify any actions required, as appropriate. The minutes, which provide the recommendations to Module Board of Examiners, and other records will remain confidential, accessible only by the Chair of the Panel, the Chair and Clerk to the relevant Module Board(s) and the Module External Examiner(s).

The Panel is chaired by the Chair of a Module Board of Examiners or nominee and the membership consists of the Programme Leaders, and a EC Administrator (Clerk).

UH-GAF will convene a meeting of the Assessment Panel within **five** working days of the deadline for submission of EC claims.

The Panel's decision on the validity of the application will be based entirely upon consideration of the student's application and supporting evidence. In order to reach a decision that a student's performance has been affected by the Exceptional Circumstances, the Panel will consider each application individually and all students will be treated fairly and equitably.

The Panel must be satisfied that the circumstances fall within the guidelines on Exceptional Circumstances set out in this policy and will take into account the following when considering the claim:

- a) Is there independent third party evidence to support the case being made?
- b) Does the period affected by the claim correspond with the date of the assessment?
- c) Were the circumstances beyond the control of the student?
- d) Could the circumstances have been reasonably accommodated by the student?
- e) Has the student provided a clear supporting statement detailing the nature, severity and impact of the circumstances?

Where a claim of Exceptional Circumstances is submitted by a student, the following principles will be adhered to by the Assessment Panels and Module Boards of Examiners:

Where a student has proven Exceptional Circumstances, the University does not award grades based on what the student may have achieved had the circumstances not existed/occurred. Instead, the University may give the student more time or repeated opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities; and

UH-GAF and the University will treat information about a student's Exceptional Circumstances with sensitivity and respect, regardless of the level of perceived severity, and

UH-GAF and the University will treat a student's reported circumstances with as much confidentiality as is practically possible.

The Module Board of Examiners retains the responsibility for the final decision, but it is expected that recommendations of the Exceptional Circumstances Assessment Panel will normally be accepted.

6. Communication of Exceptional Circumstances decision to the student

The School Administrators within UH-GAF will ensure that any queries from the student are answered fully and that they receive current and timely advice and guidance appropriate to their circumstances.

Students will be informed whether or not their application for Exceptional Circumstances has been accepted by the Module Board of Examiners by the Student Affairs Office. This will be reflected in their module results which will appear on their student record once they have been confirmed and published by the Module Board of Examiners. Full guidance about what these results mean will be available to the student through links within their student portal and will be supplemented by the details in the e-mail responses from the Student Affairs Office and communications from the Module Board of Examiners, as required.

7. Annual Monitoring and Reporting

At the end of each academic year the number, nature and outcomes of claims to Exceptional Circumstances will be analysed with particular attention to claims lodged by students with protected characteristics, and any actions resulting from this will be agreed by the UH-GAF Academic Board and any actions will be implemented at the start of the following academic year and monitored in the same manner.

Date of Issue	Review Date
Version 1 – September 2020 Version 2 (this version) - October 2023	August 2021 August 2024
Signed on behalf of UH-GAF Academic Board	Prof Vincent Emery
Date	11/01/2024

APPENDIX 1: Table of exceptional circumstances and actions (without evidence)

	Main types of exceptional circumstance (SAC) reported	Evidence required	Action
1	<p>Medical (serious – not a recognised disability). Examples: broken limb, problem with eyesight, influenza, vomiting or migraine <u>at time of assessment</u>, infectious condition.</p> <p>Notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Influenza ('flu') does not refer to the common cold or conditions with similar symptoms. Some conditions <u>may</u> be able to be accommodated by separate arrangements (e.g., the use of an amanuensis for those with broken arms) if they are reported before the cut-off date for adjustments published on StudyNet. Pregnancy is not an illness but students may experience pregnancy related-related symptoms which will be considered with appropriate medical evidence. If the birth of a child prevents a student from sitting an examination /submitting an assessment evidence of the birth will be acceptable. 	<p>Medical certificate (or there is evidence from the invigilator's log). Only medical certificates dated within 7 working days of the assessment will be accepted.</p>	<p>Deferral.</p> <p>Notes: If, however, the student has acceptable exceptional circumstances which prevent him/her from sitting the deferral until the same time in the following academic session, the Programme Board has discretion to offer Final Compensatory Credit with or without penalty (for a total of thirty credits) subject to the limitations set out in UPR AS14 D.4.1.</p>
2	<p>Disability and Mental health If you were unable to sit/submit an assessment for reasons related to your disability your SAC will be considered with appropriate evidence. A diagnosis of a disability / mental health condition alone is not valid grounds for a SAC.</p> <p>2(a) An agreed adjustment as described in an SNA was not implemented.</p> <p>2(b) A late request (after the published deadline) for a disability related adjustment – you can choose to take the assessment OR not take the assessment and submit a SAC.</p>	<p>2(a) Confirmation in writing that the agreed adjustment was not implemented.</p> <p>2(b) If submitting a SAC, confirmation in writing from Student Wellbeing that the circumstances are valid.</p>	<p>2(a) Deferral</p> <p>2(b), 2(c) and 2(d) As circumstance 1; the Module Board will consider the seriousness of the condition and the extent of the student's control</p>

	Main types of exceptional circumstance (SAC) reported	Evidence required	Action
	<p>2(c) You were unable to take the assessment for reasons directly related to your disability/ mental health.</p> <p>2(d) You sat the assessment but your mental state at the time of sitting meant that you did not realise you were unfit to do so, for example, due to a psychosis or post traumatic response to a recent incident.</p>	<p>2(c) Confirmation in writing from Student Wellbeing that the SAC is valid or letter from a medical practitioner to confirm you were unable to sit / submit.</p> <p>2(d) Completed and signed "SAC Medical Practitioner form" (Form MP2) is the only acceptable evidence.</p>	
3	<p>Death and Bereavement</p> <p>3(a) Death of an immediate relative or of a close Friend.</p> <p>3(b) Attendance at a funeral at the time of the assessment.</p> <p>3(c) Death of a relative or friend outside the semester or attendance at a funeral at a different time from the assessment.</p>	<p>3(a) or 3(b) Death certificate or letter from a religious leader or doctor, additional information (location of funeral).</p> <p>Not applicable</p>	<p>The Module Board will consider the timing and impact of the death in relation to the assessment, the closeness of the student to the relative /friend and the responsibilities of the student. The Module Board will also have regard to cultural differences around periods of mourning and the arrangements for funeral ceremonies.</p> <p>Not an acceptable SAC</p>
4	Serious illness in family (particularly where the student has duty of care).	Medical certificate (for student or the family member) evidence of carer responsibilities from a professional. Only medical certificates dated within 7 working days of the assessment will be accepted.	Deferral (in appropriate circumstances). The Module Board will consider the timing of the illness, the closeness of the relationship, the impact on the student and the responsibilities of the student.
5	Commitment outside of the student's control (e.g. emergencies, including unexpected loss of childcare or other carer support) on the day of an assessment.	As appropriate (e.g. letter from employer or nursery, letter in support of a carer).	Deferral (in appropriate circumstances). The Module Board will consider the seriousness of the event and the extent of the student's control.
6	Work commitments (for students registered as being a part-	A letter from employer	Deferral.

	Main types of exceptional circumstance (SAC) reported	Evidence required	Action
	time student or studying on a degree apprenticeship programme only)		
7	<p>Transport Problems</p> <p>7(a) Serious transport problem (i.e. exceptional circumstance such as a serious rail delay or road traffic accident, snow causing serious delays to traffic).</p> <p>7(b) Transport problem – routine; (e.g. predictable or partly predictable transport problem (e.g. traffic jams, late train or bus etc), planned strike).</p>	<p>7(a) As appropriate (e.g. copy of ticket, compensation slip from rail company, traffic report).</p> <p>7(b) Not applicable</p>	<p>Deferral (in appropriate circumstances). The Module Board will consider the severity of the transport incident and the extent of the student's control</p> <p>Not an acceptable SAC.</p>
8	Misunderstood examination timetable.	Not applicable.	Not an acceptable SAC.
9	Overslept.	Not applicable.	Not an acceptable SAC.
10	Financial reasons	Not applicable.	Not an acceptable SAC.
11	Religious reasons, where not working is a requirement	Requests must be notified to the University at least two weeks in advance, with appropriate evidence, or by the deadline published by the Examinations Office in the case of examinations.	The University will make reasonable attempts to make adjustments to the assessment timetable. Deferral is an option where work is prescribed on a particular day for a particular faith group. If there is doubt as to whether work is prescribed, then the University will be guided by the advice of the University Chaplain who will consult with appropriate sources. In all cases the University's decision is final. Boards of Examiners should consult the University Chaplaincy for guidance on acceptable religious circumstances (chaplain@herts.ac.uk). A calendar of recognised prescribed days is issued annually.
12	Serious personal problem not medical (e.g. separation from spouse/partner, victim of crime) within the semester.	As appropriate (letter from counsellor, doctor, landlord, crime reference number, etc).	Deferral.

	Main types of exceptional circumstance (SAC) reported	Evidence required	Action
13	Computer problems 13(a) Failure of own computer or software – leading to loss of time to complete coursework or loss of files/data/work. 13 (b) Failure of UH/GAF supplied equipment, infrastructure or software.	13(a) Receipt from repairer, or evidence of legitimate warranty claim, screen shot, etc. 13(b) Written evidence from technical team detailing the nature of the failure and duration.	Deferral possible, but the Module Board will decide on the basis of the timing, duration and impact on completion of the assessment Deferral possible, but the Module Board will decide on the basis of the timing, duration and impact on completion of the assessment.
13	13(c) Failure of 3rd party equipment, infrastructure (could be ISP or power failure, or failure of 3rd party online assessment system/invigilation) or other software.	13(c) Written evidence from provider, screen shots, support from UH technical teams etc.	Deferral possible, but the Module Board will decide on the basis of the timing, duration and impact on completion of the assessment.
14	Re-instatement following barring of access to StudyNet (but only prior to withdrawal of the student for debt by the University)	Quercus record	The Module Board will consider the closeness of the barring of access to StudyNet to the assessment point and the impact of the period of barring on the student's studies. NB. If a student has been withdrawn by the University barring from StudyNet is not an acceptable SAC.
15	Holidays.	Booking information.	Deferral. Only acceptable if the booking is made prior to acceptance of the University of Hertfordshire offer.
16	Complaints about University of Hertfordshire/ GAF staff which impact upon assessments (e.g. supervision).	Various (diary of missed meetings or classes, etc).	Note A complaint is not a exceptional circumstance as such. It is dealt with under the University's complaints procedure as an informal or formal complaint to the School and ultimately actioned by the Module Board if the complaint is upheld.

APPENDIX 2: Application for consideration of Exceptional Circumstances (SAC) Self Certification Form – 2020/2021

Sometimes situations outside of your control can arise that make it seem difficult to focus on your exams and assessments. If this happens, you may wish to make GAF hosting UH aware of your situation so consideration can be given to making allowances for you. Please inform your

Programme Leader and/or Module Leader of your circumstances as they can provide you with advice and guidance. We care about the wellbeing of our students and in the current circumstances understand the particular challenges and difficult circumstances this may bring during your studies. GAF hosting UH can provide a range of services – please search for information on the support you may need via www.gaf.edu.eg

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING;

This form CANNOT be used as a request for an extension. If you experience circumstances whereby you may need a short amount of extra time to hand in a piece of assessed work, after the hand in-date without penalty, **please ensure you request authorisation from your School.** **Extensions are granted at the discretion of an appropriate member of staff from your School.** Extensions are only granted for **up to** a maximum of 10 working days. Please look at your Module/Programme information to find out to whom you send your request for an extension.

The University continues to operate a **‘fit to sit’ policy** so if you decide to sit/submit an assessment, the University will not normally accept a claim that you have exceptional circumstances with regard to that assessment (See UPR AS14 [UPRs 2020](#) Section C.3.8.3 and C3.8.4). For all assessments submitted online on Canvas **other than timed summative quizzes**, students are indicating they are ‘fit to sit’ by pressing the submit button. However, by way of exception, in the case of a timed summative quiz, students are indicating that they are ‘fit to sit’ by starting the quiz.

This form **CAN** be used to apply for a ‘deferral’ which is permission to delay submission until the ‘referred /deferred period’ (usually longer than 10 days) or until the following academic year. The submission may involve an alternative piece of coursework.

Due to the outbreak of coronavirus, until further notice, you are not required to provide evidence with your application – you can self-certify by completing Section D of this form. You do need to identify the reasons why you have been unable to complete or submit assessments on time and provide an explanation in Section C of this form.

In some modules, because of the nature of the assessment, the module leader will inform you that a whole module group deferral has automatically been made. In these circumstances, you do not need to complete this form and make an individual application.

If you are a student who requires a visa to study, any changes to your studies may have implications so please ensure that you contact the Student Affairs Office for advice (studentaffairs2@gaf.edu.eg).

If you wish to submit an application for SAC, please complete the following details fully and accurately, otherwise we may not be able to process your request. Please refer to the guidance notes provided here. If you are likely to have difficulty completing this form in this format, please contact the **Student Affairs Office** (studentaffairs2@gaf.edu.eg) who can assist you.

Section A - Your Details

Your FULL Name	
Your Student ID Number	
Details of Your Course (Course Name/ Course Code) (e.g. BA (Hons) Mass Communications/ HUGCMCS)	

Section B - Modules and Assessments Affected

1. Module Name	2. Module Code (e.g. 4HSK1234-0206)	3. Name of Assignment	4. Assessment Information (e.g Exam/ Coursework)	5. Assessment Hand in Due Date	6. Assessment submitted/ taken	7. SAC reason Code (1-16) (see guidance note)	8. Assessment Status A - I have not previously attempted this module & submitting for the 1st time B - I have previously received a Deferral for this assessment C – I have previously failed this module and received a referral D - I have previously failed this module and I am taking it again (repeating)	9. State the period to when you would like to defer your assessment to (see guidance) E - To the next deferral period for this module F - Next Academic Year
				Click or tap to enter a date.	Choose an item.			

Section C - Reason for this application

Briefly outline how your circumstances have prevented you from completing the assessment. What is the time frame for this situation?

Section D – Self Certification

By checking this box, I certify that the information I have provided in C above is a true statement:

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Click or tap to enter a date.

What happens next;

Send your completed form as an attachment by email to studentaffairs2@gaf.edu.eg

Please be assured that the information you have provided will be processed under strict confidentiality protocols as per (UPR [IM16-Data-Management-Policy.pdf](#) and [IM08 Data Protection Policy](#))

On receipt of your request, this will be processed by the appropriate team and you will be notified of the recommendation by e-mail however the outcome of your request for SAC consideration will only be a recommendation until confirmed by the Board of Examiners.

See more guidance and advice which is available via www.gaf.edu.eg.