

# 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](#)<sup>1</sup>).

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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).

- 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 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 Personal 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 complete and submit the application form which is available via their programme site on CANVAS or available via: [Exceptional Circumstances Form](#)

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 receive automated notification and will acknowledge receipt of a Exceptional Circumstances application to the student within **three** working days. A system of recording receipts for 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 UH-GAF, 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 Extenuating Circumstances 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) – 27 <sup>th</sup> March 2024	August 2023 August 2026
Signed on behalf of UH-GAF Academic Board	Prof Vincent Emery
Date	25/03/2024

## Appendix 1: Exceptional Circumstances Evidence Table – 2023/2024

(Reviewed 04.10.2023 Due for annual review August 2024)

Reason Code	Type of EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES reported	Examples and evidence required
<b>1</b>	<b>Serious/Urgent physical or mental health condition at the time of assessment</b>	Broken Limb Influenza “flu” Clinical depression <i>You can self-certificate (see Appendix 2) for an urgent medical condition provided that it meets the criteria detailed in the form</i> <i>For illnesses not covered by self-certification you will need to provide medical evidence</i> N.B. This is not for disabilities that are already recognised as these are covered in Section 2
<b>2a</b> <b>2b</b>	<b>Disability including mental health disabilities.</b> You were unable to take the assessment for reasons directly related to your disability / mental health. An agreed adjustment as described in a Study Needs Agreement (SNA) was not implemented.	You need to provide evidence of the <b>impact</b> of a disability or mental health condition at the time of assessment as the diagnosis alone is not valid grounds for Exceptional Circumstances. If you have an SNA related to a chronic condition, you should approach Wellbeing for guidance on how to submit a request. <i>You can self-certificate (see Appendix 2) for an exacerbation of issues caused by your disability or chronic condition provided that it meets the criteria detailed in the form</i>
<b>3a</b> <b>3b</b>	<b>Death and Bereavement</b> Death of a significant relative or of a close friend close to the assessment date. Attendance at a funeral at the time of the assessment.	You should try to obtain documentary evidence of the death and explain the relationship if that is not immediately clear as we recognise that families are all different. <i>If this is impossible you may self-certificate (see Appendix 2).</i> <i>An Order of Service for the funeral or statement from a religious/humanist officiant is sufficient.</i> <i>If your Personal Tutor has been aware of this situation, you may ask for a statement of support from them.</i>
<b>4</b>	<b>Serious personal/domestic problem (not medical)</b>	Separation from spouse/partner, a victim of crime, eviction or housing crisis within the semester, loss of formal sponsorship. <i>You may provide evidence from a Police Report, Housing Officer report or similar relevant to the situation. This must relate to the current assessment period.</i> <i>If your Personal Tutor has been aware of this situation, you may ask for a statement of support from them. Students with a WASS Adviser may request a statement of support from the Adviser.</i> <i>If you are formally sponsored by an individual or organisation and funding is unexpectedly withdrawn, you should provide evidence from that person or organisation.</i>

5	Exceptional Transport problem	A serious or out of the ordinary rail delay or road traffic accident, snow causing serious or out of the ordinary delays to traffic <b>on the day you were due to travel to the exam or assessment.</b> <i>You should provide evidence from police, traffic or weather reports or your transport ticket.</i>
6	Serious illness in the family	<i>You can self-certificate (see Appendix 2) for this to explain the situation and/or the impact that this has had on your ability to submit/sit the assessment.</i> <i>For situations not covered by self-certification you will need to provide medical evidence.</i>
7	Commitment outside of the student's control	Emergencies, including an unexpected loss of childcare or other carer support <b>on the day of an assessment.</b> <i>You should provide a statement from the Nursery or childcare provider</i>
8	Work commitments	For students registered as a part-time student or studying on a degree apprenticeship programme only. <i>You should provide evidence from your employer that explains how your work commitments impacted on your ability to sit or submit your assessment</i>
9	Religious reasons	Where activity is proscribed or limited due to religious requirements. <i>You should provide evidence from your religious leader that explains the circumstances.</i>
10	Holidays	You can apply for Exceptional Circumstances only if a holiday was booked before acceptance onto a UH-GAF course.
11	Re-instatement following barring of access to StudyNet	This only applies if a student has not already been withdrawn
12a	<b>Computer Problems</b> For online or SDL students: Failure of own computer or software – leading to loss of time to complete coursework, loss of files/data/work.  For on-campus students, failure of own computer can only be considered where students did not have access to on-campus facilities	For online students: screencap showing failure that must show time and date.  For on-campus students, failure of own computer can only be considered where students did not have access to on-campus facilities
12b	Failure of UH/partner supplied equipment, infrastructure or software.	Evidence of communications from UH/Partner confirming failure of equipment, infrastructure or software
12c	For students unable to access and/or submit an assignment (not related to debt): Failure or restricted operation of equipment, infrastructure (could be ISP or power failure, or failure of 3rd party online assessment	Evidence of failure or lack of access (e.g., communications with 3rd party, public status reports etc). Any screenshots or screengrabs must show time and date. An upload error resulting from incorrect file type or size is not grounds for exceptional circumstances. Students are expected to prepare files that adhere to Canvas size restrictions and any file restrictions set by the tutor.

	system/invigilation) or other software affecting ability to upload coursework.	
12d	For students who have started an online test (including practice quiz) but not able to complete: Technical or other difficulties that prevent completion once a quiz, online test or exam has been started	Evidence of technical or other difficulties. Any screenshots or screengrabs must show time and date. Students must complete the exceptional circumstances request and submit it, via Student Portal, by midnight on the day following the quiz/test/exam.

### Unacceptable Situations to Support Exceptional Circumstances

The following are NOT acceptable situations to support a claim of exceptional circumstances, and students should seek the advice of academic staff at UH-GAF:

1. Minor or ongoing medical conditions such as a cold or asthma unless the symptoms are so bad on the days of a test/examination that the student is too unwell to attend. In this case, section 1 would apply and appropriate evidence would be required.
2. Death of a relative or friend outside the semester or attendance at a funeral at a different time from the assessment.
3. Misunderstanding of the examination timetable.
4. Oversleeping and missing exam or assessment submission.
5. Financial reasons.
6. Routine or minor transport problem: predictable or partly predictable transport problems such as traffic jams, late train or bus etc, planned transport strikes.
7. Complaints about UH-GAF staff which impact upon assessments (e.g. supervision).
8. Technical difficulties were reported outside the time period indicated above in 12(d).
9. Holidays, house moves or other events that were planned or could reasonably have been expected.
10. Computer or printer failure where the student should have backed up their work.

11. Uploading work onto the wrong site or uploading incorrect work onto the correct site.
12. Normal exam or assessment stress.