



Exceptional Personal Circumstances Policy

1. Scope and Purpose

- 1.1 This document sets out the policy under which you may request that exceptional personal circumstances which are affecting your learning and assessment are taken into consideration.
- 1.2 The policy applies to all current students on AECC University College awards. Chiropractic students on Bournemouth University (BU) awards should refer to the Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedures for First qualification Degrees, including Assignment Extension and exam postponement, available on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Students on part-time MSc courses leading to BU awards should refer to BU 6J Mitigating Circumstances including Extensions policy and procedures.
- 1.3 The policy applies to applications for **individual circumstances** to be considered and taken into account in relation to the assessment of taught courses of study. It does not cover instances where whole groups of students are affected by circumstances, for example staff participation in industrial action, problems affecting University College wide infrastructure or IT systems, or severe adverse weather. Any issue of this nature should be brought to the attention of the Programme Leader for consideration by the Assessment Board as appropriate.
- 1.4 There are two ways in which the University College can take exceptional personal circumstances into consideration:
 - (i) Assignment Extension/Exam Postponement; and
 - (ii) Assessment Board consideration.In both cases you will be required to provide appropriate supporting evidence (see section 4).
- 1.5 Normally you will be expected to seek an extension or postponement as the first response to exceptional personal circumstances, unless this is not possible for valid reasons.
- 1.6 It is your responsibility to ensure that, where exceptional personal circumstances apply, you submit an application for consideration in accordance with this policy, by the specified deadlines. Failure to do so on the basis that you were unaware of the policy or deadlines will not be accepted as grounds for subsequent appeal.
- 1.7 The University College aims to ensure that support is offered to all students with exceptional personal circumstances.
- 1.8 In line with our Dignity, Diversity and Equality Policy, where a student or staff member working with this policy has specific protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, we will make reasonable adjustments to this procedure where it is reasonable to do.
- 1.9 If you require this document in a different format, please contact Registry.
- 1.10 The Exceptional Personal Circumstances Policy is an internal procedure and is not a legal process.

2. Introduction, context and definitions

- 2.1 You are responsible for managing your own learning (including assessment), and this includes managing illness and/or difficult personal circumstances. However there may be instances when these situations are serious and unforeseen. In such situations you are encouraged to use the provisions of this policy. However if such circumstances are likely to have long-term effects then you may wish to consider taking a break from your studies, and should discuss this with your personal tutor or the Programmes Office in the first instance. It is important that you keep your personal tutor, and/or the Programmes Office fully informed of any such difficulties at the time at which they occur, because it may be possible for you to be signposted to sources of advice and support which will make an exceptional personal circumstances claim unnecessary.
- 2.2 The University College defines exceptional personal circumstances as circumstances which:

- are outside your foresight and/or control
- are serious and have significantly and adversely impacted your ability to study or to complete one or more assessment
- **are not** already registered with the University College's Additional Learning Support service¹
- are supported by independently verified medical or other appropriate documentary evidence that clearly demonstrates the impact of the circumstances on the relevant assessment(s)

2.3 The following is a non-exhaustive list of what the University College would regard as circumstances that could have affected your performance and which could not have been remedied in advance of the assessments:

- Bereavement - the death of a close relative/person of significance to you
- Unforeseen carer problems (of a serious but short-term nature)
- Short-term illness or accident of self or a close relative/person of significance to you
- Pregnancy-related illness or child birth, but not pregnancy itself
- Significant adverse personal/family circumstances
- Significant financial problems, e.g. bankruptcy

2.4 The following are examples of what will NOT normally be considered as exceptional personal circumstances:

- IT problems, eg loss of data or printer difficulties, which could be avoided through appropriate preparation and keeping adequate copies of work
- Transport problems (unpredictable and exceptional transport delays on the day of an assessment may, in some circumstances be considered a valid circumstance for non-attendance; however, routine delays to trains or buses will not)
- Misreading or being unaware of published assessment timetable/submission dates
- Not understanding or being unaware of regulations, policies and procedures
- Personal events such as moving house, holidays, expeditions
- Timetabling of coursework/examinations
- Demands of paid employment (for full-time students for whom academic study should be regarded as their priority)
- Minor illnesses such as coughs and colds, headaches, upset stomachs
- General financial issues
- Medical circumstances outside the relevant assessment period or the preparation period
- Chronic conditions will not be accepted unless there has been a short-term, unforeseen flare-up.
- Examination stress (it is expected that you will develop the ability to deal with this).

2.5 If you have a declared disability for which additional learning support arrangements have been formally put in place the provisions of this Policy will not be applicable. However, this Policy can be applied if you have evidence, that:

- (i) any circumstances affected you over and above the special arrangements already made during assessments
- (ii) the arrangements did not fully compensate for your condition, or
- (iii) there was a sudden or unexpected deterioration of the known condition for which the adjustments already in place were not sufficient to compensate
- (iv) you have received a late diagnosis of a disability or other requirement for additional learning support, and it is evidenced that your performance in specific assessments within the current year or level has been affected.

3. **The importance of timely disclosure**

3.1 It is essential that you disclose circumstances which you believe are affecting your performance at the time such circumstances occur, and no later than the published deadlines for doing so. Late disclosure on the basis that you felt unable to or embarrassed to, or did not feel comfortable in, disclosing, will not be accepted as valid grounds for a subsequent appeal. You should seek advice from the Students' Union if you need support in disclosing specific circumstances.

3.2 There is provision within this policy if you wish to submit material confidentially (see para 6.3.3).

3.3 Should you feel at the time of an assessment that particular circumstances did not affect you, but

¹ In the transition from BU to AECC awards this includes circumstances previously registered with BU ALS
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subsequently change your mind once you have received your assessment results this will **not** be accepted as grounds for late submission of exceptional personal circumstances, or for appeal.

4. Evidence

- 4.1 Evidence submitted to support exceptional personal circumstances claims must be independent third-party evidence. The evidence must include dates which are relevant to the assessment(s) for the claim and must clearly demonstrate the impact the circumstances had on the relevant assessment(s).
- 4.2 Evidence may include:
- medical certificate to cover the period of illness which is affecting the assessment.
 - death certificate or other evidence (such as order of service for a funeral)
 - letter from an independent third party professional (eg dentist, police officer, counsellor).
 - (for assignment extension/assessment postponement) a short-term sickness notification form, for sickness of up to five days' duration (but see para 7.2.6).
- 4.3 Appointment letters alone are not sufficient evidence. You are responsible for meeting the costs of supplying evidence.
- 4.4 All supporting evidence must be submitted in English. If translation is required, the translation must be prepared by a registered translator, and include a statement of confirmation from the translator/translation company that it is an accurate translation of the original document, together with the translator/translation company's contact details. The translation should be made by a person registered with an official organisation such as the Chartered Institute of Linguists or the Institute of Translation & Interpreting. A translator who is employed by a recognised translation company, the latter being a member of the Association of Translation Companies, is also acceptable. It is your responsibility to meet any costs associated with the translation and/or provision of other evidence.
- 4.5 The Exceptional Personal Circumstances Panel must be able to confirm your statement by looking at the evidence and so you must ensure that you submit sufficient relevant evidence in support of your claim. The Panel cannot make follow up enquiries to clarify or obtain further supporting evidence. If sufficient evidence is not presented (unless you have clearly specified that you are in the process of securing the necessary evidence) your claim will be rejected.

5. False or overstated claims

- 5.1 False or overstated claims of exceptional personal circumstances will be considered seriously and may be regarded as an offence under the student disciplinary procedure.

6. Arrangements for consideration of exceptional personal circumstances

- 6.1 There are two ways in which the University College can take exceptional personal circumstances into consideration:

6.2 Assignment Extension and/or Exam Postponement

- 6.2.1 As soon as you believe that you may have exceptional personal circumstances for which you wish to seek an extension to an assignment deadline, or wish to delay sitting an examination you must complete a Coursework Extension/Exam Postponement Request Form (available from the relevant Programmes Office and via the VLE) and submit it to the Programmes Office together with all supporting evidence. You should detail the circumstances and explain why the circumstances will prevent you from meeting the deadline or sitting the examination. The form must be submitted before the date on which the submission is due or when the examination is due to be taken.
- 6.2.2 The Framework/Programme Leader will consider assignment extension requests and decide whether the circumstances are valid. If agreed, an extension will be granted. All extensions approved for coursework hand-ins must have a specific hand-in date which is set to reflect the nature of the exceptional personal circumstance. You may request a further extension to the hand-in deadline if you submit further evidence of continuing/new circumstances for consideration before the original extension deadline has passed.
- 6.2.3 The Framework/Programme Leader will consider exam postponement requests and decide whether the circumstances are valid. Postponed examinations will normally be sat at the

next diet of assessment for that examination.

- 6.2.4 You will be notified of the decision, normally within seven days of receipt of the form, and the decision will be recorded on the Coursework Extension/Exam Postponement Request form.
- 6.2.5 If the exceptional personal circumstance arises on the day of the assessment or hand-in deadline, making it impossible for you to attend or submit, you must inform the Programmes Office immediately; then complete a Coursework Extension/Exam Postponement Request Form within full supporting evidence within seven calendar days of the date of the assessment.
- 6.2.6 If you do not attend an examination and do not let the University College know that you have a valid reason for not doing so, and do not subsequently submit a request for Assessment Board consideration of your circumstances, you will be given a mark of 0%.
- 6.2.7 Although the Assessment Board may permit a resit of the exam, the resit mark will be considered as a second attempt resulting in the formal element mark being capped at the pass mark.
- 6.2.8 Late submission of coursework without an approved extension will be handled in accordance with the arrangements set out in the AECC University College assessment regulations.
- 6.2.9 Note that short-term sickness notification (self-certification) forms may not be used for retrospective short-term sickness notification where sickness is notified retrospectively. Independent medical evidence must be provided.
- 6.2.10 Where evidence is not submitted at the time a request is made, an extension/ postponement may be granted provisionally, subject to subsequent receipt of satisfactory evidence. In such case the student must be notified of the consequences should the extension/postponement request subsequently be unsuccessful.

6.3 Assessment Board Consideration

- 6.3.1 If you have been given an extension to coursework or allowed to postpone taking examination(s), allowances have already been made for the circumstances and you do not normally need to take any further action.
- 6.3.2 If you believe your performance in an assessment has been affected by exceptional personal circumstances which, for valid reason, could not be addressed through coursework extension or examination postponement, you should complete an Assessment Board Consideration of Exceptional Personal Circumstances Form (available from the Programmes Office and via the VLE). As well as explaining what the circumstances are, you need to explain how these affected the assessment(s) and why you were unable to seek an extension or postponement. The form must be submitted to the relevant Programmes Office together with appropriate supporting evidence:

no later than 5 working days after the last day of the semester 1 assessment period for circumstances affecting semester 1 assessments (or for part-time MSc students no later than 5 days after an assignment submission or practical assessment date).

or for circumstances affecting semester 2

at least 5 **working days in advance of the date of the exceptional personal Circumstances Panel held in Semester 2.**

These deadlines will be clearly published for students well in advance of the Panel meeting.

You must submit a separate claim for each Semester in which you feel your performance has been affected.

- 6.3.3 All requests for consideration of exceptional personal circumstances are treated confidentially and are reviewed only by those with a specific role in the process. However should you wish to do so you may submit your case and evidence in a sealed envelope, clearly labelled with your name and student number, and 'confidential Exceptional Personal circumstances request'. In such cases the envelope will be opened by the Exceptional Personal Circumstances Panel only in the event that you fail the assessment. Should you pass the examination the envelope will be destroyed.

Exceptional Personal Circumstance Panel

- 6.3.4 Individual cases will be considered by the Exceptional Personal Circumstances Panel only on the basis of the evidence provided. The details of exceptional personal circumstances will not be revealed to the Assessment Board.
- 6.3.5 Information regarding the operation of the Exceptional Personal Circumstance Panel, is set out in Appendix 1. The Assessment Board will decide upon the assessment outcome based on Exceptional Personal Circumstances Panel's decision.

Assessment Board consideration

- 6.3.6 The Assessment Board will consider a valid mitigation claim, as reported by the Exceptional Personal Circumstances Panel, in conjunction with your academic profile and will decide on the appropriate recommendation. For example, the Assessment Board may permit you to resubmit an assessment or resit an examination 'as a first attempt'.
- 6.3.7 Exceptional personal circumstances will be taken into consideration only in the event that you fail the assessment for which such circumstances have been submitted.
- 6.3.8 You are required to complete and pass all units before progressing to the next stage/level of the course. The Assessment Board will not raise the marks received even where it has been agreed that the circumstances are valid.
- 6.3.9 Should your exceptional personal circumstances continue from one academic year to the next, you must re-apply for consideration each year with relevant evidence. However you should note the provisions of paragraph 8.1.

Notification of outcomes

- 6.3.10 You will be informed of the outcome of an application for Assessment Board Consideration of an exceptional personal request through the publication of the Assessment Board results.

7. Appeals

- 7.1 Should you fail to submit an Assessment Board Consideration of Exceptional Personal Circumstances Form before the published deadline for the submission of such circumstances, and consider that you have a valid reason for doing so, you may be entitled to appeal against the decision of the Assessment Board in accordance with the AECC University College *Academic Appeals Policy*. You must provide a valid reason for not submitting the Exceptional Personal Circumstances form **and provide appropriate supporting evidence explaining why you were unable to submit your request in accordance with the published deadlines.**
- 7.2 If you wish to lodge an appeal against the decision of the Assessment Board, you may do so in accordance with the Academic Appeals Policy (available on the VLE).

8. Serial or multiple exceptional personal circumstances claims

- 8.1 Should you submit serial or multiple exceptional personal circumstances claims you may be referred into the Fitness to Study: Policy and Procedures, to ensure that you receive the necessary support and to consider whether a postponement of studies may be a more appropriate way to handle your circumstances. Chronic conditions will not be accepted as a valid exceptional personal circumstance unless there has been a short-term, unforeseen flare-up.

9. Confidentiality

- 9.1 Discussion of exceptional personal circumstances is confidential and will take place in the Exceptional Personal Circumstances Panel. The discussions of this Panel are confidential. Exceptionally, external examiners may request evidence concerning how the University College is implementing its own procedures.
- 9.2 You should note that it is not possible for the University College to obtain information about you from a third party (such as a doctor) without your prior explicit consent.
- 9.3 All information collected under the requirements of this policy/procedure will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. For further information please refer to the student privacy notice.

Data used for internal monitoring and reporting to relevant committees will be anonymised.

10. **Advice and support on using this Policy**

- 10.1 Advice and support on using this Policy is available from the Programmes Office, Student Services, and the Students' Union. A Guidelines for Students document is also available on the VLE.

11. **Monitoring and review of consideration of Exceptional Personal circumstances**

- 11.1 The Academic Registrar will prepare an annual review of consideration of Exceptional Personal circumstances across all awards, for the consideration of Academic Development and Quality Committee, with a view to identifying any trends and considering whether there is a need to revise any policy or practices. This report will not refer to individuals by name, see paragraph 9.3.

12. **Key Responsibilities and delegated authority**

- 12.1 Responsibility for the management and implementation of this policy lies with the Academic Registrar.
- 12.2 The Framework/Programme Leader considers and responds to students' requests for assessment extensions and/or examination postponements.
- 12.3 The Exceptional Personal Circumstances Panel considers requests from students for the consideration of exceptional personal circumstances, to inform decisions made at the Assessment Board.
- 12.4 The relevant Assessment Board receives the outcomes of applications for Assessment Board consideration from the Exceptional Personal Circumstance Panel and considers the outcomes in light of students' individual profiles. The details of exceptional personal circumstances will not be revealed to the Assessment Board.
- 12.5 Academic Development and Quality Committee considers the effectiveness of the arrangements for considering exceptional personal circumstances and recommends changes to current policy to Academic Board via the Academic Audit and Policy Committee (AAPC).
- 12.6 Academic Board approves new policies or amendments to existing policies relating to exceptional personal circumstances.
- 12.7 Under this policy and associated procedures any University College role or officeholder or officer of the Student Union may act through her or his appointed nominee.

13. **Links to other AECC University College documents**

- Exceptional Personal Circumstances Policy guidance notes for students
- Coursework Extension/Exam Postponement Request Form/Assessment Board Consideration of Exceptional Personal Circumstances Form
- Student Agreement
- Student Charter
- AECC Assessment Regulations
- Academic Appeals Policy for all students enrolled on Higher Education programmes leading to AECC University College awards
- Student Complaints Policy for all students enrolled on programmes leading to AECC University College awards
- Dignity Diversity and Equality Policy
- Fitness to Study: Policy for all students enrolled on programmes leading to AECC University College awards.

All the above documents are available on the VLE for students and on the Staff Information Portal (SIP) for staff.

Version:	2.0 NB this policy was previously Mitigating Circumstances Policy
Approved by:	Academic Board
Originator/Author	Quality and Enhancement Manager
Policy Owner	Academic Registrar
Reference source	Examples from other institutions used as source material (in particular Bournemouth University, Harper Adam University, University of Kingston, University of Southampton, London Southbank University, London Metropolitan University, London Southbank University)
Date approved	20 March 2019
Effective from	1 September 2019
Review date	Spring 2022
Target	All staff and all students enrolled on courses leading to AECC awards
Policy location	SIP/VLE, public website
Equality analysis	No direct impact. There is provision for reasonable adjustments to be made where required. Monitoring will be undertaken to assess whether there is any differential impact in the handling of cases

Appendix 1

Exceptional Personal Circumstances Panel

Membership

Head of School or nominee (Chair)
Programme/Framework Leader(s)
Academic Registrar

Secretary

Course Administrator(s)

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. To consider whether or not applications for Assessment Board consideration of exceptional personal circumstances are valid under the Exceptional Personal Circumstances Policy.
2. To determine if the student has valid grounds for failing to submit or participate in an assessment based **only** on the evidence provided in their application.
3. The Secretary will record the decision in the Student Record System.
4. The final decision of Exceptional Personal Circumstances Panel members is binding.

MEETS

Twice per academic year (only when applications exist)

Quorum: 100%. Members are able to send a suitable proxy in their place.