

Exceptional Circumstances - Student Guidance

As a student you are expected to manage and plan for your own circumstances, workload and time pressures but we know that there will be times when illness or other personal matters (such as family issues or bereavement) might make things difficult and could put you at a disadvantage. This might have a negative impact on your ability to study or your assessment performance. It is important that you talk to us about what you are going through.

For academic year 2021/22 - Specific guidance relating to Covid-19

If you or a member of your household has a suspected or positive case of Covid-19 which results in you needing to self-isolate we request that you continue to engage with your studies online where you are well enough to do so. Please refer to the latest [government guidance](#) on circumstances in which you might be required to self-isolate.

If you become unwell with Covid-19, or if you are caring for someone in your household who has been diagnosed with the virus, or you have another reason related to the Covid-19 situation (e.g. unexpected IT issues due to working from home) which is impacting on your ability to study or complete an assessment, you will need to submit a request for your circumstances to be considered on the standard form (extension or Board consideration request form).

If your circumstance is Covid-19 related, you will need to submit evidence of a positive Covid-19 test result.

You can self-certify for illness for up to 5 days without any evidence requirement – please see the Extension or Board consideration request form.

What is an 'Exceptional Circumstance'?

The list below gives you an idea of the sorts of things we hear about from students that fit within the Policy definition of 'Exceptional Circumstances'.

- An illness (including mental health) that impacted your ability to attend an exam or meet an assessment deadline or adversely affected your performance in an assessment
- Family illness
- Pregnancy-related illness
- Unforeseen travel disruption normally causing delays of over an hour, for example, road traffic accident
- Acute personal difficulties/Domestic Disruption
- Jury Service

You can find more information, including examples of the sorts of evidence we would expect you to give us when you submit the form in [appendix one](#) of the Policy.

Seeking advice – do I have exceptional circumstances?

You can speak to your Academic Advisor or any member of the Programme team or you may want to talk to another member of staff such as Programme Support Officers. You also have access to the Advice team at [SUBU](#) who will be able to give you some help with who to speak to and why.

If the situation you are in does not fit within the definition of 'Exceptional Circumstances' as outlined in the Policy there may be other support or processes that are more suitable to your situation, including Support to Study, Additional Learning Support or SUBU Advice and Guidance.

Completing the exceptional circumstances request form

When you have discussed your situation you may be advised to complete a form - this asks you to describe what impact the situation has had on your studies. Here you need to describe:

- what has happened, and why you feel this has put you at a disadvantage;
- what did it change in terms of how you usually study and undertake assessment;
- what did it mean in relation to the time you usually take.

Please remember that incomplete forms won't normally be considered so you need to make sure you fill in all sections. You may be asked to resubmit if the form is considered to be too vague or incomplete.

We know that completing this might be hard for you if you are already in a difficult situation, but your honest account will help us make the right decision for you. If you require alternative formats of any documentation related to Exceptional Circumstance due to a disability, please contact Additional Learning Support (ALS) at als@bournemouth.ac.uk.

Providing evidence of exceptional circumstances

As explained above you will normally also need to give us some evidence to confirm what has happened. It is important to provide this at the same time because forms submitted without evidence will usually be returned without consideration. Please read the information specific to Covid-19 circumstances at the top of this guidance.

If you have a valid reason for not being able to provide supporting evidence at the time of your request, you must include details of this on the exceptional circumstance form. Your Programme Leader (for extension/postponement requests) or the Exceptional Circumstances Board (for Board consideration requests) will decide if additional time to gather evidence will be permitted. Any extension, exam postponement or Assessment Board consideration of circumstances on this basis would be provisional upon receipt of this evidence.

You may self-certificate (for illness up to 5 days) by using the standard extension request form. Requests will be monitored and if you are suspected of misuse of the self-certification process, you may be referred for further pastoral or academic support, or in serious cases may be referred to – '11K – Student Disciplinary Procedure'.

Deadline for submitting exceptional circumstances request

You need to ensure that you know what the deadline is for submission of a request for each of your assessments as these will differ in relation to your hand-in dates. We recommend that all students keep themselves aware of these dates as you never know when you may get ill.

It is really important that you request an extension or request for Board Consideration of Exceptional Circumstances as soon as you become aware of the issue. If this is completely unavoidable you should make sure that you speak to somebody about it.

Requests for consideration of Exceptional Circumstances which are not submitted by the deadline(s) will not normally be accepted unless there is a valid reason (for example, if you were a patient in hospital at the time of the deadline).

Consideration of exceptional circumstances request

Every case will be considered based on a set of criteria and also based on your individual situation, including any previous requests. This will include the information you provide in your form and the evidence (where required) but it will also take into account the nature of the assessment, your general assessment workload and also any impact it may have had on your broader study. The timescale for consideration and resulting outcome will depend on your situation and your submission, however, we will normally aim to respond to extension/exam postponement requests within 7 days.

Students who submit multiple exceptional circumstances requests over a sustained period may be referred to the [Support to Study procedure](#). This is because submitting many such requests could be an indication of wider challenges or issues affecting a student, and for which the exceptional circumstances procedure may not be the most appropriate means of support.

Students who have ongoing diagnosed medical issues, relating to both physical and mental health conditions, should approach Additional Learning Support to ascertain whether reasonable adjustments could be considered, applicable to their individual situation. Students would be required to provide evidence for reasonable adjustments to be considered.

Outcome of exceptional circumstances request

The possible outcomes of your request are:

- An **extension for the submission** of your work. Where an extension is deemed appropriate you will be informed of your extended submission date prior to the original submission date. (Please note, however, that if you request an extension near to the original deadline this may not be possible).
- A **postponement of your exam** (usually the next opportunity to sit the exam will be during the August resit period)
- **Referral of your request to the Exceptional Circumstance Board**- the Board will decide if they think your circumstances should be taken into account by the Assessment Board.
- Additionally, having reviewed your request it may be decided that you may need some additional support with your study and other avenues of support will be discussed with you.
- In some cases, requests will be **rejected**. If your request is not accepted, we will explain the reason and let you know if you need to do anything.

Please be aware that regardless of any exceptional circumstances you will still need to complete and pass all the required work for your programme.

When you receive the outcome for either your extension or your request for Board Consideration it will also explain what you need to do next. We recommend you talk to your Academic Advisor, Unit Leader, Programme Leader or Programme Support Officer if you are unsure what you need to do.

Appealing a decision

If you have a valid reason for not being able to submit your request for Board Consideration by the deadline (for example if you were hospitalised) or if you wish to appeal the Assessment Board's decision on your exceptional circumstances, you will need to appeal the decision of the assessment board under the Academic Appeals procedure. We recommend you speak to [SUBU Advice](#) if you find yourself in this situation as they will be able to offer independent, expert advice about this process