

6J - Exceptional Circumstances including Extensions: Policy and Procedure

CONTENTS

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE	1
2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES	2
3. LINKS TO OTHER BU DOCUMENTS	2
4. DEFINITIONS AND PRINCIPLES	2
5. REQUESTS FOR ASSIGNMENT EXTENSION/EXAM POSTPONEMENT	3
6. EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES BOARD CONSIDERATION REQUESTS	5
7. DATA PROTECTION ACT	7
8. REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION	8
9. APPENDICES AND FORMS	8

1. SCOPE AND PURPOSE

- 1.1 This policy and procedure is for Bournemouth University (BU) staff and students of taught programmes of study. It also provides a point of reference for the purposes of identifying exceptional circumstances for those undertaking a research degree.
- 1.2 The University recognises that events may occur during a student's time at BU that adversely impacts their ability to study and complete an assessment, which are beyond their control. This policy and procedure enables students to apply for an extension, postponement or consideration of their circumstances by the Assessment Board. The policy and procedure ensures that any justified individual circumstance is taken into account to allow for fair assessment outcomes for all students.

Students, it is essential you discuss any issues with your Faculty as soon as possible so that the appropriate support mechanisms can be put in place. Waiting until the end of the year before telling anyone will limit the options available to you.

If you do not have valid reasons for why you were not able to alert the University of your circumstances at the time, the University cannot consider your request after your Assessment Board has met. If you are not sure what this means for you, please contact [SUBU Advice](#).

- 1.3 When circumstances impact a student's ability to complete their studies and assessments, there are a number of support options available to help individuals manage their studies during difficult periods. Students should seek support and advice from Academic Advisors or Faculty support teams, the Wellbeing Service or SUBU. There may be other policies such as Support to Study or Fitness to Practice, or an Interruption of Studies, which might be more appropriate for an individual's circumstances. Students should seek advice from their Academic Advisor, Programme Leader, SUBU or the Student Wellbeing Service as the most appropriate course of action for them, given their circumstances.

Help and support

Your wellbeing is important to us and we understand that you may be suffering emotional or personal trauma whilst submitting exceptional circumstances. The University provides support which is freely available to help you through any issues you may be experiencing.

Please contact the Student Wellbeing service (studentwellbeing@bournemouth.ac.uk) or have a look at the information and resources located on the [Health & wellbeing](#) webpages including the [A-Z of Resources](#).

If you need help with submitting your Exceptional Circumstances claim, please contact [SUBU Advice](#).

2. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 **Students:** to seek advice and support when encountering individual circumstances and to submit circumstances, including appropriate evidence using the Exceptional Circumstances forms within published deadlines.
- 2.2 **Programme Leaders:** to consider assignment extension requests and applications for exam postponements in line with BU's policy and procedure.
- 2.3 **Exceptional Circumstance Board:** to consider applications made by individual students for the consideration of circumstances to inform the decisions made at Assessment Boards.
- 2.4 **Assessment Board:** to receive recommendations from the Exceptional Circumstance Board and to consider the outcomes in light of students' individual profiles. To confirm unit marks, level aggregate and/or classification.

3. LINKS TO OTHER BU DOCUMENTS

- 3.1 Other documents with direct relevance to this one are:
 - [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations Undergraduate](#)
 - [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations Postgraduate](#)
 - [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations Foundation Degree](#)
 - [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations Higher National](#)
 - [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations GradCert GradDip](#)
 - [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations Postgraduate Research Degrees](#)
 - [6A - Standard Assessment Regulations Integrated Masters](#)
 - [6K - Assessment Boards: Policy and Procedure](#)
 - [6L - Assessment Board Decision-Making, Including the Implementation of Assessment Regulations: Procedure](#)
 - [11A - Academic Appeals: Policy and Procedure for Taught Awards](#)
 - [11F - Student Complaints: Policy and Procedure](#)
 - [Important Information \(Student-facing Policies and Procedures\)](#)

Policy

4. DEFINITIONS AND PRINCIPLES

Definitions

- 4.1 BU defines **Exceptional Circumstances** as:
 - Short-term, sudden and/or unforeseen events or circumstances which can be proved to have significantly and adversely impacted a student's ability to study or to complete one or more assessment;
 - beyond the control of the student;
 - are **not** already registered with BU's Additional Learning Support (ALS) service.

Generally, these circumstances are of a personal nature, related to family/domestic concerns or medical or financial issues. A list of what would normally be considered an Exceptional Circumstance and what would not be considered under the Exceptional Circumstances Policy is included in appendix 2.

- 4.2 Circumstances that are of a longer duration than the assessment period, or that continue to impact the student's studies into the next academic year, may require consideration under a different policy such as Support to Study or Fitness to Practice. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to consider an Interruption of Study to enable the student to recover fully before returning to studies. Longer-term health problems or disabilities should be managed through the ALS team. Chronic conditions will not be accepted as a valid Exceptional Circumstance unless there has been a short-term, unforeseen flare-up.
- 4.3 When submitting an application for Exceptional Circumstances students should take into account the following principles:
- Providing evidence of how the circumstance(s) has **significantly and adversely impacted assessment deadlines or assessment performance** is a fundamental aspect of this policy. Without evidence that can demonstrate impact, it is unlikely a claim for Exceptional Circumstances will be accepted. For example, a note from the GP stating a student 'attended an appointment' may not be considered to demonstrate impact on assessment.
 - Exceptional Circumstances Boards will consider the nature and type of the evidence, and will be **weighting the evidence** provided.
 - Time management and taking responsibility for one's own welfare are important skills which students are expected to develop during their time at BU. Minor illness and disruptions may occur in everyone's life from time to time and are unlikely to be viewed as 'exceptional'. Equally, Exceptional Circumstances claims will not be considered if deadlines and timescales are not adhered to, without valid reason and accompanying evidence.

Consideration of Exceptional Circumstances

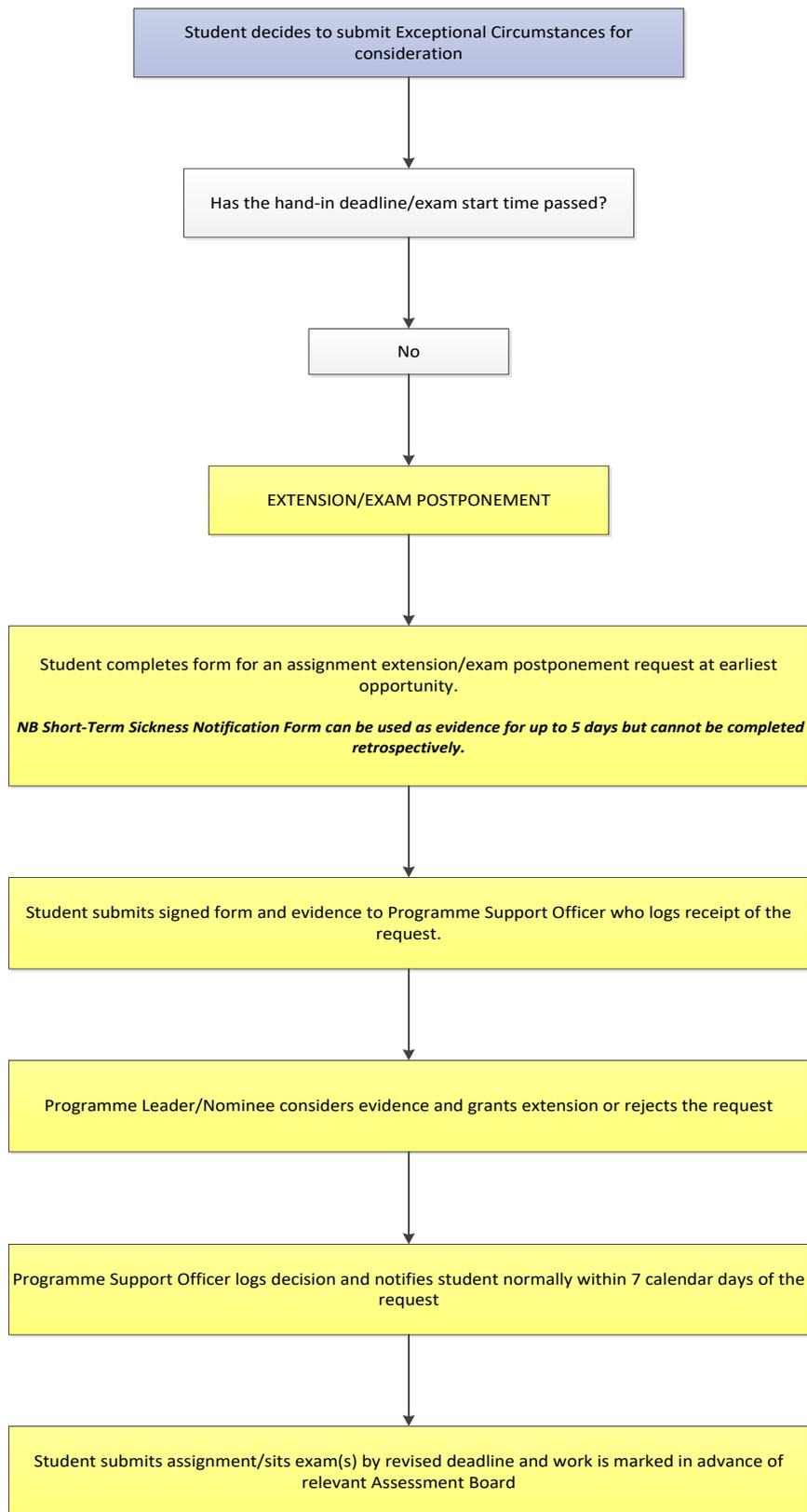
- 4.4 All Faculties manage Exceptional Circumstances in line with BU's requirements (see *6K – Assessment Boards: Policy and Procedure*). A student may request that their circumstances are taken into consideration in one (or both) of the following two ways:
- I. consideration of assignment extension/exam postponement requests by the Programme Leader (or nominee). This method should be utilised where possible (see section 5 below);
 - II. consideration of circumstances by an Exceptional Circumstance Board where extension/postponement was not possible for valid reasons (see section 6 below).

Exceptional Circumstances Boards operate a policy of objectivity and impartiality; all details are treated confidentially and only discussed at the Circumstance Board by those members of BU listed in its Terms of Reference.

Procedure

5. REQUESTS FOR ASSIGNMENT EXTENSION/EXAM POSTPONEMENT

- 5.1 The diagram below gives an overview of the extension/postponement process:



Forms and evidence

- 5.2 To submit a claim for an extension request / exam postponement students must complete the Exceptional Circumstances Form for an Assignment Extension/Exam Postponement and submit the signed form to the Programme Support Officer either in person or via post/e-mail with appropriate supporting evidence.

- 5.3 The completed form and supporting evidence should normally be submitted as far in advance of the assignment deadline or the start time of the exam as possible for consideration by the Programme Leader.

Provision of late evidence

- 5.4 Evidence should be provided with the Exceptional Circumstances Form. In some cases this may not be possible and an extension/postponement may be granted provisionally subject to subsequent receipt of satisfactory evidence. A valid reason for the late submission of evidence must accompany the submission.

Circumstances arising on the day of the assignment deadline/exam

- 5.5 Where the circumstance have arisen on the actual day of the assignment deadline or exam, making it impossible for the student to submit the assignment or attend the examination, the student must inform the Programme Support Officer immediately by e-mail or phone and complete the Exceptional Circumstances Form for an Assignment Extension/Exam Postponement and provide appropriate supporting evidence within 7 calendar days of the hand-in deadline/date of the exam in order to be considered for an assignment extension/exam postponement.

Short-term sickness

- 5.6 The University recognises that there are some instances where it is not possible or appropriate to obtain a Doctor's note/medical certificate. For illnesses of up to 5 days students can submit a short-term sickness certification that can be used for an extension/exam postponement request.
- 5.7 **Short-term sickness notification is not permitted retrospectively.** Therefore, if the circumstance arises on the actual day of the assignment hand-in or exam, the Faculty must be contacted before the assignment deadline/start of the exam or no later than an hour before the assessment deadline (e.g. by 4pm if the submission deadline/exam is at 5pm) in order to follow this procedure.

Failure to submit a request before the deadline /exam start time

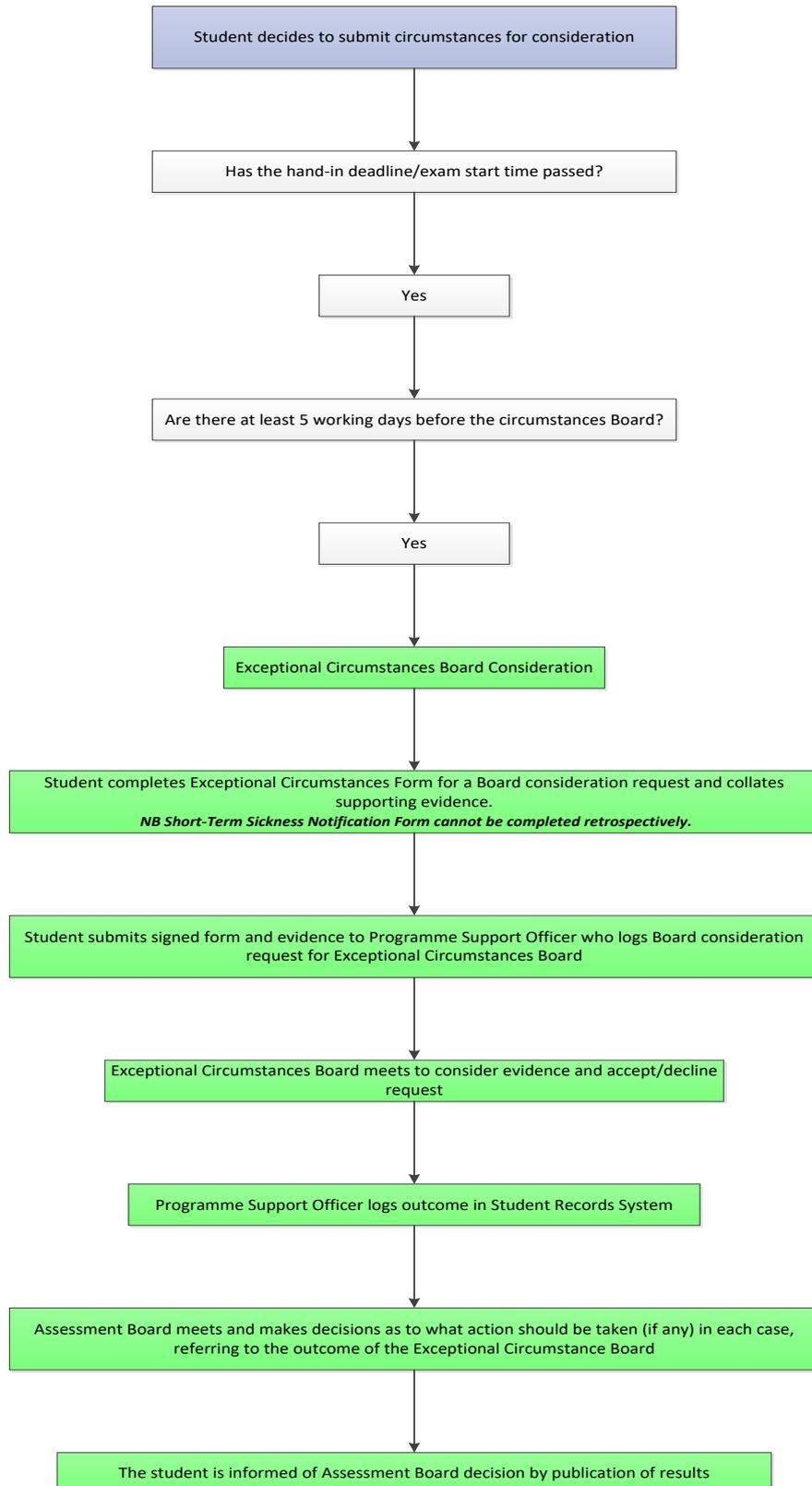
- 5.8 Students who fail to submit the Exceptional Circumstances Form for an Assignment Extension/Exam Postponement before the deadline may still be eligible to apply for Board consideration if they have a valid reason. The student should complete the Exceptional Circumstances Form for Board Consideration along with a valid reason why they missed the deadline.

Faculty consideration of the circumstances

- 5.9 The Programme Leader will consider the extension/exam postponement request and make a judgement as to the validity of the claim based on evidence provided.
- The student will be informed within 7 calendar days if the submission has been accepted or declined, and whether a new assessment deadline/exam date has been accepted;
 - Where accepted, the details of the Exceptional Circumstances claim will be recorded for note at the Exceptional Circumstances Board.
- 5.10 Postponed exams will normally be sat in the next available 'resit' exam period.

6. EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES BOARD CONSIDERATION REQUESTS

- 6.1 The diagram below gives an overview of the Exceptional Circumstances Board consideration process:



6.2 The Exceptional Circumstances Board reports directly to the Assessment Board. Student submissions are considered by the Exceptional Circumstances Board when:

- the student was unable to submit an assignment extension or exam postponement request before the assignment deadline/exam start time (and has provided a valid reason for the delay);
- circumstances may have continued to have an impact on their performance in assessments beyond the assignment extension/exam postponement that has been granted;
- the student completed their assessment before becoming fully aware of the impact of the circumstances.

Forms and evidence

- 6.3 To submit a claim for Exceptional Circumstances Board consideration, students must complete the Exceptional Circumstances Form for Assessment Board consideration and submit the signed form to the Programme Support Officer either in person or via post/e-mail together with appropriate supporting evidence at least 5 days before the Exceptional Circumstances Board.
- 6.4 The form should be submitted even if a student believes they may have passed the assessment.

Faculty consideration of the circumstances

- 6.5 The Exceptional Circumstance Board will decide whether the circumstances should be taken into consideration. The Assessment Board will decide upon the assessment outcome for the student.
- 6.6 In cases of a late diagnosis of a disability or learning difference the Assessment Board has the option to allow the student to be assessed as if for the first time for the current academic level only. Normally, retrospective consideration would apply to the period between initial ALS consultation and formal diagnosis where this may have affected student's assessment performance.

Assessment Board decision

- 6.7 The Assessment Board will not raise the marks received even if they agree that the circumstances are valid. The Assessment Board may recommend that a student who has failed a unit be permitted to be re-assessed as outlined in Regulation 13.2 of 6A - *Standard Assessment Regulations*. In exceptional cases, where the student's ability to complete their studies has been affected by very serious circumstances, (such as the terminal illness of the student), the Circumstance Board may recommend implementation of Regulation 13.3 of 6A - *Standard Assessment Regulations* to the Assessment Board subject to ratification by the Chair of Senate.
- 6.8 The student is informed of the outcome of an application for Assessment Board Consideration of Circumstances request through the publication of the Assessment Board results.

Academic Appeal Policy

- 6.9 A student can appeal against the decision of the Assessment Board in accordance with 11A - *Academic Appeals: Policy and Procedure for Taught Awards*. Any circumstances that could have been raised before the meeting of the Circumstance and/or Assessment Board but, without valid reason were not raised will not be considered in the event of an appeal.

General

7. DATA PROTECTION ACT

- 7.1 As required by Data Protection Legislation, BU will not normally disclose personal information to a third party other than with the data subject's explicit permission; except where there is a legal obligation to do so. Likewise, it is not possible for BU to obtain information about a

student from a third party (such as a doctor) without the student's prior written explicit consent.

8. REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

- 8.1 If a student is not satisfied with a decision concerning an extension request, they may address this through the University's complaints process as outlined in *11F - Student Complaints: Policy and Procedure*. If a student wishes to lodge an appeal against the decision of the Assessment Board, they may do so in accordance with *11A - Academic Appeals: Policy and Procedure for Taught Awards*. All appeals must be submitted within 10 working days of the date of publication of results.
- 8.2 Further guidance, advice and information can be obtained from askBU Student Services (telephone 01202 969696 / e-mail askBUstudents@bournemouth.ac.uk) or SUBU Advice (telephone 01202 965779 / e-mail subuadvice@bournemouth.ac.uk).
- 8.3 This policy was reviewed according to the University's [Equality Analysis Procedure](#) in July 2019.

9. APPENDICES AND FORMS

- Appendix 1 [Overview of process](#)
Appendix 2 [A guide to identifying exceptional circumstances for students and staff](#)
[Request for Board Consideration](#)
[Request for Extension or Postponement](#)
[Self-Certification of Short-Term Sickness \(up to 5 days in duration\)](#)