Exceptional Circumstances Procedure

(Previously known as Personal Mitigating Circumstances or PMC Procedure)

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Author: Quality Standards Manager

Quality Management Office

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EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES (EC) PROCEDURE

SUMMARY

If you have experienced a situation which has affected your ability to submit work on time or at all, you can apply for an EC (exceptional circumstance) request. An accepted EC request can either remove the late penalty on your pass mark or provide you with a replacement attempt at the next available opportunity.

Please review the EC FAQs.

Step 1 Valid reason

Check the link above to see if your reason is a valid EC request.

Check you are in time to submit – EC requests must be submitted within **10 working days** from the assessment submission/exam date.

Step 2 Type of EC Request

Late submission: Removes the late submission penalty on work submitted within the late submission period i.e. 7 calendar days after the deadline date.

Deferred assessment attempt EC: Allows a replacement attempt at the next reassessment opportunity.

Step 3: EC with or without evidence

You can only submit one EC request without evidence per **trimester**. Evidence based ECs need to be submitted with documentation relevant to your situation at the time of the assessment. Refer to the link above for examples of accepted evidence.

Step 4: Submit

Submit your EC request in the portal: https://sss.salford.ac.uk
Sign in with your username and password
You can upload a max of 6 pieces of evidence per request.
ECs are normally processed within 3 working days - but can take longer.
If you have queries about your EC request, contact your Faculty.

1. What is the purpose of this Procedure?

This document sets out the University's regulations governing exceptional circumstances (ECs) and the procedure for submission and consideration of ECs.

2. Who does the Procedure apply to?

This procedure applies to students registered on University of Salford undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes, including students at partner institutions (with the exception of students at the British University of Bahrain where a separate Procedure operates). It applies to all assessment formally submitted for credit (i.e. summative assessments). It does not apply to practice for success assessments, which have a development purpose, and are designed to help you learn more effectively through feedback on your performance, providing comments on how it can be improved.

This procedure does not apply to postgraduate research students who are advised to consult the Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Programmes for information regarding ECs.

3. What are Exceptional Circumstances (ECs)?

ECs are exceptional circumstances such as medical or personal issues which have seriously affected your ability to complete an assessment, **over which you have no control, and which could not have been predicted. Regulatory Bodies may refer to exceptional circumstances as 'special considerations'.**

You can ask the University to consider EC requests for the following reasons:

- **Removal of a late submission penalty for submission in the late submission period**.
  The late submission period is defined as seven days after the submission date for the assessment and work submitted in this period will be capped at the pass mark. .An accepted EC request will result in removal of a late submission penalty. This only applies to first submission attempts. Marks for resit and retake attempts are automatically capped at the pass mark in line with the Academic Regulations.
  The University does not have a process where a student can request an extension to an assessment deadline, instead the late submission period is in place.

  Please be aware that if you submit work in the late submission period, you may not receive feedback until 15 working days from the date you submitted your assessment.

- **To defer an assessment to a later time** which, if accepted, would offer you a replacement assessment attempt at the next available assessment opportunity. This means that
  - if your EC request relates to your first attempt at an assessment, if accepted, you have a replacement attempt for an uncapped mark;
  - if your EC request relates to your second or reassessment attempt, if accepted, you will have a replacement attempted and your assessment mark will be capped at the pass mark;

- if your EC request relates to third or retake attempt, if accepted you will have a replacement third and final attempt and your module mark will be capped at the pass mark.

4. What types of circumstances are considered through this Procedure?

Examples of acceptable EC requests are listed below (this is not an exhaustive list):

a) Serious short-term illness or injury;

b) Death or significant illness of a close family member or friend;

c) Unexpected caring responsibilities;

d) Worsening of an ongoing illness or disability, including mental health conditions;

e) An emergency or crisis that prevents you from attending an exam or accessing an online assessment;

f) An accommodation crisis such as eviction or a home becoming uninhabitable;

g) A crime which has had a substantial impact on you;

h) Challenges associated with pregnancy and transition to parenthood;

i) Impact of Religious Observance that ***could not be anticipated*** (e.g. mourning/funeral plans, or being unwell due to fasting);

j) Witnessing or experiencing a traumatic incident;

k) Being called for jury service;

l) Unanticipated military service deployment;

m) A shortcoming or failure in the support arrangements for disabled students.

n) Unavoidable technical issues affecting your submission;

o) Standing as a candidate in Students' Union elections (at the time of elections only);

p) Unexpected and unprecedented circumstances in workload (as a result of paid employment) which had not been planned e.g. pandemics and riots.

5. What circumstances cannot be considered through this Procedure?

The following examples would not normally be considered as acceptable EC requests (this is not an exhaustive list):

a) circumstances over which you have some control (e.g. going on holiday);

b) circumstances to which all or most students are subject to (e.g. coursework deadlines or exam stress);

c) circumstances where individual arrangements have already been put in place (e.g. through a Reasonable Adjustment Plan or Carer Support Plan);

d) circumstances arising from poor time management or personal organisation (e.g. failure to plan for foreseeable last-minute emergencies such as computer crashes, printing problems, work not backed up, misreading/lack of awareness of examination timetables or submission deadlines);

e) travel problems arising from minor delays or in cases where normal traffic congestion has not been taken into account;

f) minor ailments of a short-term nature such as colds, headaches, stomach upsets, except where the ailment prevented attendance at, or occurred during, an exam or similar scheduled assessment;

g) being subject to Procedures such as Academic Misconduct, Student Misconduct or Fitness to Practise;

h) technical issues affecting assessment submission where you have not followed appropriate procedures for example formally reporting the matter to DIT

6. What do I need to know about 'Fit to Sit'?

By attending an assessment or submitting a piece of coursework, you are declaring that you are fit and well enough to take assessments, so you are deemed to be 'fit to sit or submit'. As such, you cannot submit EC requests on the basis that your standard of performance in the assessment has been affected by ECs.

In situations where illness occurs during a scheduled assessment such as an exam or presentation, consideration will be given to EC requests. These must be reported at the time to the invigilator or examiner. You can submit EC requests to request deferral of your assessment date to the next opportunity the assessment is offered.

Exceptionally, where you are unable to determine if you were fit to sit/submit an assessment and have done so, you can submit an EC request to ask that the assessment attempt be deferred. This would normally be limited to situations where you were so unwell or so severely affected by your circumstances that you were unable to recognise or determine your own ill health, and medical documentation would need to be provided to confirm this. Any mark previously achieved for the original assessment shall be rendered void and shall not contribute to the final outcome. The mark awarded for the replacement attempt shall stand, irrespective of whether it is higher or lower than the original mark

7. What if I have ongoing ECs?

This Procedure must not be used to mitigate against ongoing illnesses or circumstances. You should seek support or consider options including a Reasonable Adjustment Plan, a Carer Support Plan or an interruption in study/break in learning.

If your circumstances relate to harassment, you are advised to report these circumstances to Report It.

8. How do I make an EC request?

To make an EC request, you should complete the online form available at: https://sss.salford.ac.uk.

You will be asked to:

a) state if your request is a supported by evidence or not;
b) explain the circumstances which have affected you and the impact of these;
c) explain the period of time you have been affected;
d) state which assessments have been affected;

e) state if your request relates to late submission of your assessment or if you request relates to deferment of your assessment;
f) provide evidence (where appropriate) – see Appendix 1.

We would recommend that you submit your EC request close to the point of your assessment so you know whether or not you will be able to submit.

Your request may be submitted in advance of the assessment date if you know you will be unable to attend an assessment or submit an assessment, and if relevant evidence is available, for example, you have a hospital appointment or treatment scheduled on the date of a timed assessment.

If you are a student on a level 7 apprenticeship programme and undertaking your final stage project/dissertation, please see section 19.

9. Do I need evidence to support my EC request?

You are encouraged, wherever possible, to submit an EC request which is supported by appropriate evidence; however, the University recognises that it may not always be possible for you to obtain evidence to support every situation.

In the following circumstances, you can submit an EC request **without evidence**:

- you have experienced a period of short-term acute illness or condition;
- you have had unexpected caring responsibilities (see section 7);
- you have been affected by a bereavement;
- you have experienced a traumatic incident; other circumstances which you are unable to provide evidence of - you must explain why you are unable to provide evidence.

You are permitted **one** accepted EC request each trimester without evidence. Each academic year has three trimesters, and for some programmes, one of the trimesters may be used for reassessment purposes.

Late notification of ECs through the Academic Appeals Procedure must always be supported by evidence.

If you are a disabled student with a fluctuating condition which may have an ongoing impact, and the University is aware of your condition, we do not expect you to provide medical evidence each time you submit an EC request. Submitting an EC request on the basis of previously documented evidence with respect to a registered disability will not be treated as a request without evidence.

Appendix 1 provides examples of evidence which could be used to support your request. Appendix 2 provides guidance about medical evidence. All evidence should be submitted in English or in the original language with a translation provided. The University **cannot** obtain evidence on your behalf.

If you are providing evidence to support circumstances relating to another person, you will need to seek their permission to use their evidence and confirm that you have done so on the EC request form.

If concerns arise regarding the authenticity of evidence provided to support an EC request, the University reserves the right to check the authenticity of such evidence with the identified originating source. Action may be taken through the Student Misconduct Procedure or Fitness to Practice Procedure if evidence submitted to support an EC request is found to be fraudulent.

Third party evidence should be presented on headed paper and signed/stamped, or from an appropriate email address and should be dated.

10. What is the timescale to submit an EC request?

The final deadline to submit your EC request is 10 working days after the assessment or submission date.

11. What if I have a disability or Reasonable Adjustment Plan (RAP)?

If you have a Reasonable Adjustment Plan which permits an extended deadline to submit, you do not need to submit an EC request to use your extended deadline. Once your extended deadline has passed, you will be able to use the late submission period. You may wish to consider submitting an EC request for 'late submission' if you have an appropriate reason to do so.

EC requests should not be submitted for matters already covered by a Reasonable Adjustment Plan which offers reasonable adjustments for disabled students, or where other individual arrangements have been made. If you have a Reasonable Adjustment Plan but experience additional issues, or when the circumstances covered by the Reasonable Adjustment Plan are exacerbated, then you may submit an EC request. If such circumstances are likely to be ongoing, you should seek a review of their Reasonable Adjustment Plan through the Disability Inclusion Support.

Occasionally a disability may not be diagnosed until some, or all, of your assessments have been completed, or it is too late to put in place appropriate reasonable adjustments required to avoid disadvantage. In such circumstances, you may use the EC process, even if you have submitted or taken assessments. You **cannot** ask for a further assessment attempt for assessments completed in a previous academic year.

12. What happens if I experience technical issues during submission?

If a technical issue with a University system arises which affects your ability to submit your assessment on time or affects your submission, you should raise a case through the DIT service portal explaining the issue you are experiencing. They will help you resolve your issue but also provide evidence to support any EC request you may submit. EC requests will only be accepted where there is evidence enough time was left to successfully submit on time and that all possible steps were taken to submit successfully.

13. Where can I get independent advice and support about this Procedure?

Independent advice about the EC process and EC requests is available from the Students' Union Advice Centre.

14. What if I can't submit an EC request?

There may be occasions when you are unable to submit an EC request due to incapacity. In this case you may nominate another person to make arrangements for a request to be submitted on your behalf. You or your confirmed nominee should contact your Faculty Office.

15. What are the implications if I submit an EC request?

If you are in the final year of your studies, be aware that if you are unable to submit an assessment (and you submit an EC request to defer your assessment), this may result in a delay to your graduation. This is because it may not be possible to offer a further assessment opportunity prior to graduation.

For students at any point of study, an EC request to defer an assessment attempt may delay your progress onto the next year of your programme. Ask for advice from your Faculty if you have concerns.

16. I am undertaking the final stage of my Master's degree, what do I need to know?

If you are a student on the final stage of a taught Master's programme (non-apprenticeship programmes), you can submit an EC request for the following:

- Late submission of your project/dissertation – if your EC request is accepted this means that any late submission penalties applied will be removed.

- Request for deferred submission of your project/dissertation – if your EC request is accepted this means a new standard submission date will be set as follows:

    - 6 weeks for students on a full time Master's programme (from the original submission date);

    - 12 weeks for students on a part time Master's programme (from the original submission date).

17. I am undertaking the final stage of my Master's degree as an apprentice, what do I need to know?

If you are an apprentice on a taught Master's programme it is important that you discuss your exceptional circumstances with your employer and your Programme Leader prior to submission of an EC request. If you are unable to engage in study for more than four weeks due to your personal circumstances, the University will recommend that you take a Break in Learning (further information is available in the Student Engagement, Interruption and Withdrawal Policy).

Prior to the planned end of the Break in Learning, you will need to meet your Line Manager and Employer Link Tutor to confirm plans for your return.

Apprentices, regardless of whether you are full time or part time, will have six weeks to submit your dissertation after a Break in Learning ends.

Unlike the general EC process, a Programme Leader or a nominated member of the Apprenticeship team, will consider your EC request as they will have expertise in Apprenticeship Rules.

If your EC request is accepted, you will be offered a six-week period from your original submission date to submit your dissertation. This will be on the basis that you demonstrate, through timesheets, that you are still engaged in learning on a weekly basis.

18. How are EC requests reviewed and what is the timescale for review?

EC requests are considered by a member of the programme administration team who may request contextual assessment information from a tutor where needed to reach a decision.

Reviewers determine the validity of each case, taking the following into account:

- has a clear supporting statement detailing the nature, severity and impact of the circumstances been provided?
- could the circumstances have been predicted or avoided?
- did the period affected correspond with the assessment date or timing?
- are the circumstances sufficiently severe to have had a definite impact?
- where evidence is provided, is the request supported by relevant and genuine evidence third party evidence?
- were adjustments in place to support the assessment (e.g. a RAP)?
- were the circumstances particular to an individual student, or did they apply to all students?

EC requests and outcomes are retained electronically in line with the Information Retention Schedule.

Faculties will inform you of the outcome of your EC request via your University of Salford email immediately after consideration, and where possible within three working days of submission of your EC request.

The communication will advise you of the following:

a) the assessments stated on your EC request;

b) the mitigation claimed for each assessment (late submission or deferment);

c) the outcome (accept or reject);

d) a brief rationale to explain the outcome in the cases of a rejected request;

e) the recommended action to be taken by the Module or Programme Assessment Board.

You are encouraged to discuss EC outcomes with your Personal Tutor, Programme Leader or Student Progression Advisor to understand any relevant implications.

19. What action will the Assessment Board take?

EC decisions are reported to the relevant Assessment Board. The Assessment Board is not permitted to change the decision of the reviewers.

You are given the opportunity to demonstrate skills and competence at a time when you are fit and well to do so; consequently, Assessment Boards may not change marks nor set aside marks in order to accommodate ECs.

Where an EC request is accepted for a component of assessment:

a) if the claim is for the late submission of work, then any penalties for late work for that component shall be removed and the module mark or grade shall be calculated in the normal way;

b) if the claim is for the non-submission of work or absence from an assessment then you will be offered a replacement attempt for that component which shall normally take place in the next designated assessment period.

Where an EC request is rejected for an assessment then the mark or grade given, including any penalties for late work, shall stand.

In circumstances where you are permitted a deferred attempt for an assessment (in the current or next academic year) as a result of an accepted EC request, and this decision has been reported to the Assessment Board, the Board may exercise discretion regarding the nature of the assessment and how the learning outcomes may be achieved.

You should also be aware that submitting an EC request will either remove a cap from your mark or offer you a deferred assessment attempt at the next opportunity. You will still need to complete each assessment.

Actions in response to reviewers' decisions are recorded in the Assessment Board minutes.

20. What can I do if my EC request has been rejected?

Where an EC request has been rejected due to insufficient or lack of evidence, within five working days, you may submit further information or evidence to support your case (known as a reappraisal). Details of the process to follow in this situation will be provided to you when you are informed that your EC request has been rejected. A reappraisal request will be considered by a different reviewer.

Following conclusion of the EC process and where an EC request has been rejected, you may subsequently submit an academic appeal against the decision of the Assessment Board when ratified/confirmed assessment results are available.

21. What if I did not submit an EC request?

You are expected to notify the University of any ECs at the time they arise. If you are unable to do so, you may be able to ask for late consideration of ECs through the Academic Appeals Procedure when ratified/confirmed assessment results are available. You will need to establish good reason to explain why all relevant information could not be provided through the EC Procedure. Not knowing about the University's EC Procedure would not be considered good reason for failure to submit an EC request.

The following would be considered as acceptable reasons to explain why an EC request was not submitted in line the EC Procedure:

- You were in hospital or severely ill and unable to submit an EC request (evidence will be required to support this);

22. What do I need to know about my personal data?

You can find more information about how the University will use information you provide through your EC request on the Student Facing Policies and Procedures page..

23. How does the University ensure this EC policy is being used fairly and not being misused?

An annual casework report includes a review of EC requests and approvals by qualification and subject. This is to help ensure we can assess the impact of ECs and identify any possible misuse of EC requests. The report is considered by the Quality and Standards Committee.

24. Related Documentation

- FAQs for Exceptional Circumstances
- Academic Appeals Procedure
- Fitness to Practise Procedure
- Support to Study Procedure
- Student Engagement, Interruptions and Withdrawals Policy

25. Appendices

Appendix 1: Evidence for Exceptional Circumstances

Appendix 2: Guidance for students seeking medical evidence for EC/Academic Appeal Purposes

Appendix 1: EVIDENCE FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

	Letter from Doctor or Counsellor	**Proof of attendance at hospital or similar**	**Letter/ evidence from independent professional**	**Letter from tutor/SPA** (template available on staff hub)	**Debt/ Bank Letter**	**Tenancy agreement**	**Official witness report/ Police report**	**Death certificate/ order of service**	**News/ media report**	**Evidence of travel arrange-ments**	**Letter from religious leader**
Acute short term illness	✓	✓	✓								
Medical Issue	✓	✓	✓								
Bereavement	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓		
Problems at home	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Victim of crime							✓				
Personal Matters	✓	✓	✓	✓							
Impact of Religious Observance											✓
Housing/ Finance issues			✓		✓	✓					
Natural/ Environmental Matters (e.g. extreme weather conditions)									✓	✓	

Appendix 2: Guidance for students seeking medical evidence for EC/Academic Appeal Purposes

If you have an illness or health condition which has affected your assessments and you need to submit personal mitigating circumstances (either for an EC or an Academic Appeal), if you do not meet the criteria for an EC without evidence, it is strongly advised that you obtain a signed and dated letter on headed paper or with an official stamp from a health professional (GP, clinical specialist, registered professional in psychiatric practice, registered nurse/midwife etc.) to support your EC/Appeal.

The evidence should be in English, and you are responsible for ensuring that evidence in other languages is accompanied by a translation.

Healthcare professionals may charge for any letter or medical evidence which they provide, and you are responsible for the payment of these fees. You will not be reimbursed by the University for any costs associated with obtaining medical evidence.

Appointment cards are not sufficient evidence of a health condition, as they will not indicate a medical condition or the period during which you were affected.

Letters from family members, friends and fellow students are unlikely to be considered as valid evidence for an EC due to the fact they are not from a professional or independent third party.

Staff considering your EC/Appeal will look for the following information:

- A brief description (without breaching confidence) of the medical issue and how this has affected your ability to prepare for, submit or attend an assessment. This could include the main effects of the condition and any side effects of medication or treatment.
- The period of time during which you were affected by the medical issue. This is to check that it coincides with relevant assessment dates.
- If you have been affected as the result of a set of circumstances relating to another person (e.g. the illness of a relative), confirmation of the impact this has had on you.
- The university has a ‘fit to sit’ policy which means that if you sit or submit an assessment, you are declaring that you are fit to do so. In very exceptional circumstances, if you have sat or submitted an assessment but are able to show that you were unable to determine if you were fit to do so, the university may be able to consider an EC request or appeal on this basis. In such cases, confirmation from a health professional is needed.
- In the case of academic appeals, if you did not submit an EC request at the time of your assessment, the factors that may have prevented you from doing so.

You should ensure that you read the Exceptional Circumstances or Academic Appeals Procedures for further information.

Document Control Information			
Revision History incl. Authorisation: (most recent first)			
Author	**Summary of changes**	**Version**	**Authorised & Date**
Annette Cooke	Amendment to review process – single reviewer now required for EC requests.	V3.2	Quality and Standards Committee 13 May 2026
Annette Cooke	Clarification added to fit to sit info about where a replacement assessment attempt is offered, this will replace the previous mark obtained	V3.1	Chair's Action on behalf of the Quality and Standards Committee Approved 2.12.25
Annette Cooke	Change of title from PMC to EC Change of non-submission/absence to deferred assessment attempt	V3.0	Quality and Standards Committee Approved 14/5/25
Helen Sharman/ Annette Cooke	(Page 5) New sentence added in paragraph 3 ' In other institutions these may be known as 'special considerations'. (Page 13) New paragraph (23) added 'How does the University ensure this PMC policy is being used fairly and not being misused?' . Information added following July 2024 external review of the University's readiness for an OfS external review of its integrated End-Point Assessments (EPAs) Editorial amendments to change the wording of the timescale for submission of PMC requests, clarification on what is considered a reasonable adjustment and clarification on the permitted frequency for submission of self cert PMCs.	V2.4.1	Chair's Action on behalf of the Quality and Standards Committee Approved 19/09/24
Annette Cooke	Changes to terminology, evidence requirements, opportunities for submitting PMC without evidence.	V2.3	ULTC and subsequent Chair's Action July/Aug 2023
Annette Cooke	Updated to reflect apprentices cannot use the PMC process for work related deadlines	V2.2	Chair's Action ULTC August 2022
Annette Cooke	Inclusion of information for students on PGT programmes (including those on apprenticeship programmes)	V2.1	Chair's Action ULTC December 2021
Annette Cooke	Re-presentation of procedure in FAQ format, expansion of circumstances which can be considered for a self-certification PMC request, inclusion of information about use of data and data of third parties used to support a PMC request.	V2.0	SELTEC May 2021

Document Control Information	
Policy Management and Responsibilities:	
Owner:	This Policy is issued by the Head of Academic Quality, who has the authority to issue and communicate policy on personal mitigating circumstances and has delegated day to day management and communication of the policy to the Quality Standards Manager.
Others with responsibilities (please specify):	All subjects of the Policy will be responsible for engaging with and adhering to this policy.
Author to complete formal assessment with the following advisory teams:	
Equality Analysis (E&D, HR)	Proposed changes will not have a detrimental impact on any specific groups.
Legal implications (LPG)	
Information Governance (LPG)	
Student facing procedures (QMO)	
UKVI Compliance (Student Admin)	
Consultation:	
Staff Trades Unions via HR Students via USSU Relevant external bodies (specify)	SU – Feb/March 2025
Review:	
Review due:	2025/26