

Exceptional Circumstances- Guidance for Students

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Guidance for Students on Exceptional Circumstances

1. We understand that when you are experiencing difficulties that are affecting your work, it can be a very anxious time, particularly if you are unable to submit your work, or attend your live assessment. The University is here to help you and can provide you with assurances about what will happen in these circumstances, and what options are available to you. You may wish to discuss your situation with your personal tutor if you are unsure about what to do and need guidance.

2. **The University expects that you should continue with your studies even if you are experiencing minor ailments. However, exceptional circumstances (ECs) can help you if you are experiencing difficulties at a time an assessment is due or scheduled, and should normally only be used if you are unable to submit or attend a live assessment (for example: an examination, presentation or performance).**
3. **However, you should bear in mind that, regardless of your circumstances, you will still need to complete your assessment at some point, and normally before you can start the next level of your programme. ECs should therefore never be used unless there is a significant issue affecting your ability to complete an assessment as timing of resits is often more difficult (e.g. over the summer).**

4. In addition to ECs, Coursework Extensions are also available. These are both explained later in this policy for you to decide what works best for you.
5. You are responsible for managing your time and assessment workload to ensure you submit your assessments by their deadlines. However, the University recognises this is not always possible due to circumstances beyond your control.
6. If you experience something unexpected that affects your ability to submit your work or attend a live assessment, then you should make the University aware of this as soon as possible. You should do this via [eVision](#) by submitting either a Coursework Extension Request or a claim for ECs. These are explained below for you to decide which is the most appropriate for your circumstances.
7. These options are available to help you in times of difficulty, you should not rely on them for every assessment and they should only be used as a last resort. If you need support with assignment deadlines on more than three occasions in an academic year you may be referred to your Personal Tutor or Student Wellbeing for further support.

This is so that we can be sure you have the right support in place to help you with your studies. It might be that a coursework extension or ECs are not the right support for you in the longer term.

8. Disclosing personal details, or difficulties, may not be something you are used to, indeed it may not be something that is culturally or educationally comfortable for you, however here at Brunel it is considered part of day-to-day life, whether that be talking about mental or physical health. Please make us aware of any difficulties you are facing that relate to your studies, we can't help you if you don't tell us about what is affecting your studies.

Who can apply for a coursework extension and/or ECs

9. This policy applies to all students registered with the University on a taught programme.
10. Please note that separate arrangements are in place for students studying abroad or post-graduate researchers. Those with long-term health conditions should already be receiving support through the appropriate support services.
11. If you are experiencing difficulties with a known long-term health condition or disability, or newly diagnosed condition or disability, then you should speak to the Disability and Dyslexia Service, and the Student Support Team in the first instance. If there is a sudden and brief deterioration in your condition that was unexpected you may be eligible to apply for coursework extensions or ECs.
12. If you experience difficulties while studying abroad you should follow the policies in place at your study abroad institution.
13. If you are a Post-graduate Researcher, you should liaise with your Supervisor as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements and support can be made for you.

What are ECs?

14. ECs are significant events which negatively affect your ability to complete or attend an assessment, or perform to your usual standard.
 - a. **ECs should be unavoidable, unexpected and beyond the control of the student.**
15. Examples of what the University would consider as an EC are:

- Acute illness or injury on the day of or during a 'live' assessment
- Serious illness or injury.
- Flare up/aggravation of long-standing health condition, where the condition is not considered a fluctuating condition via a Student Support Profile.
- Death or serious illness of a close relative or family friend.
- Significant domestic / immediate personal or financial problem.
- Court attendance or Jury Service
- Unforeseen major transport disruption.
- IT issues beyond your control or planning

16. This list is not exhaustive, and the University will consider each application on its merit and provide a consistent and fair approach to all submissions.

17. The University expects that you should continue with your studies even if you are experiencing minor ailments. The following non-exhaustive list comprises concerns things that are not normally considered to fall under the remit of the ECs Policy:

18. LIST

- Common Cold;
- Sprains;
- Dental appointment and minor tooth ailments;
- Planned medical appointments and procedures
- Foreseen domestic arrangements, such as caring for family members or moving house;
- Employment.
- Religious Festivals/celebrations;
- Regular childcare
- Forgetting an assignment
- Normal daily life
- Examination/assessment stress or writer's block.

19. You do not need to provide evidence to support your ECs, however, you can share evidence with us if you wish to. You will need to provide an explanation of your circumstances and how they are affecting, or have affected, your studies and your ability to complete or attend an assessment.

20. If your ECs persist for several weeks and will affect your ability to study and submit other assessments, it may be beneficial to take a formal break from your studies/abeyance and return when you are in a better position to succeed. Further details can be found in the [Abeyance Policy for Students on Taught Programmes](#). If

you think taking a period of abeyance might help you, you should either speak with your [Personal Tutor](#) or the [Student Engagement Team \(SET\)](#) for further advice.

21. The University takes the view that if you have submitted or attended an assessment, you have declared yourself fit and not affected by ECs. However, if you have submitted or attended an assessment but later believe your performance may have been affected by ECs you may apply for ECs. You can submit a claim for ECs up to 10 working days after your assessment deadline as long as you have not received either your grade, or other feedback during this time. If you do not let the university know within 10 working days, then the university will expect you to provide evidence of why you could not apply for ECs at this time.

Who decides if my ECs are accepted?

22. Your ECs claim will be considered by the Exceptional Circumstances Team. This team has a lot of experience in supporting students with difficult circumstances and it will deal with all ECs claims from all Colleges. This means that any decision made about your circumstances will be consistent with decisions made for other students. The Team will consider each application individually to provide a fair and equitable outcome so you are not disadvantaged.
23. The University will always aim to work with you and come to an agreement on the support you need for your studies. If the Team thinks that, given your circumstances, you need further support and guidance, it will refer you to the right service for appropriate support.
24. In exceptional and rare circumstances, the University may need to take additional steps to provide the support you need. In cases where there are concerns about your ability to study effectively due to your health and/or wellbeing the University will follow the [Extraordinary Support for Study Procedure](#).
25. You will be notified of the decision made about your ECs by email. If your claim has been accepted, you will be given information about what will happen next. If your claim is rejected, you will be expected to submit your work by the published deadline.

What are the possible outcomes for my ECs?

26. The Exceptional Circumstances Team will make a decision about whether your submission is accepted or not. The Exceptional Circumstances Team may consult with

other University Departments or staff in making their decision but only when necessary and without affecting confidentiality.

27. You will then be sent an email that will explain the outcome and what it means for you. If there is anything that you are expected to do following the decision, this will be explained to you in the email.
28. In all circumstances, you should bear in mind that it is your responsibility to keep track of your assessment dates and failure to do so would not be considered a further EC. If you are unsure of any of your assessment dates then please contact the Student Hub.
29. You should bear in mind that, regardless of your circumstances, you will still need to complete your assessment at some point, and normally before you can start the next level of your programme. This might mean, for example, completing coursework or sitting exams in the summer. In some circumstances, it may mean that your graduation is delayed.

What if my ECs affect other students, for example, for a groupwork assessment?

30. If you have ECs which affect your ability to submit a piece of groupwork, or attend a group presentation, this might affect the other students in your group. In this instance, you should list the names of the other students in your group, along with their student number, if you have it, as part of your ECs claim. You should also advise these students to submit a claim for ECs if their work is affected by your absence or ability to submit your work. You should also advise the module leader or tutor responsible for the module so that they are aware.

Can I and how do I apply if I have a Student Support Profile?

31. If you currently have a Support Profile with the University e.g. due to a long standing or fluctuating health condition or neurodivergence, then you should not normally need to apply for ECs regarding this because your reasonable adjustments will already have been made for you. However, if there are ECs that arise that are beyond the scope of your Support Profile, such as a flare up or aggravation to your condition or any issues that don't relate to your support profile, then you can submit a claim for ECs.

32. You should submit your ECs claim via [eVision](#). You do not need to provide any evidence in support of your circumstances, however you can submit evidence if you think it will help the Exceptional Circumstances Team make a decision, or refer you to other support services, dependent on your circumstances. You will normally receive a response within five working days however, at busy times this might be slightly longer. If you do not submit your claim for ECs within 10 working days, you will need to provide evidence as to why you could not submit the claim within the time frame.
33. You should also make the University aware as soon as possible of any additional conditions/diagnoses that you believe will affect your studies, or if you believe your existing Support Profile is not meeting your needs. This is so that your Support Profile can be updated, and adjustments made to adequately support you in your assessments. If you are unsure then you should speak with the [Student Welfare team](#).
34. If you receive a diagnosis that should be managed via a Support Profile during the year, you should use the ECs facility to support your assignments with immediate deadlines, but you must also make an appointment with the Disability and Dyslexia Team to set up a Support Profile as soon as possible.

[Disclosing Personal Information to the University](#)

35. The University understands that it is not always easy to make your personal circumstances known, particularly if your circumstances are not talked about in your family, community or culture. However, in order for the University to effectively help you, you do need to tell us about your situation at the time it affects your studies.
36. You are not required to submit personal, or sensitive personal data when you tell us about your ECs. However, if there is anything you want to share with us this will be treated confidentially and sensitively.
37. If you do not want your circumstances to be shared with your Personal Tutor, where you have made more than three claims in an academic year, then let us know and we will decide how best to support you. You should bear in mind however, that we may be limited in the support we can provide to you in these circumstances. We will work with you as best we can to provide you with the support you need.

Can I appeal a decision to reject my ECs?

38. There is no appeals route for the ECs procedure. If you are dissatisfied with the decision made about your ECs, you will need to wait until the Board of Examiners has met before you can take further action. The Boards of Examiners normally meet in June and September, although some Boards can take place at other times, for example, in November. The Board of Examiners will decide what should happen with your results for all your modules. You can then raise any concerns via the Results Service and the Academic Appeals Procedure, if you remain dissatisfied.

What effect might my accepted ECs have on my progression or graduation?

39. Your Board of Examiners will decide what should happen to any module where you have accepted ECs. However, you should bear in mind that the timing of this decision might affect your progression to the next level of your programme or your graduation.
40. Normally, if you need to be reassessed, this will take place during the summer months. However, if you have a number of modules affected by ECs, or other modules in which you are either required, or recommended to be reassessed in alongside your ECs, it may be that the Board of Examiners will decide that you have too much assessment to do over the summer months and it may decide that you will need to do your reassessments during the next academic year instead. This would delay your progression to the next level of your programme by a year.
41. If you are in your final year of study and you have accepted ECs, which means you will be required to be reassessed, this might affect your graduation. However, it may still be possible for you to attend your graduation ceremony, but with a lower award, for example, an Ordinary degree. If this is possible you will still be able to attend graduation with your cohort and then take your reassessments to achieve an Honours degree.

Tier 4/Student visa holders

42. If you are a visa-sponsored student, you will be aware that your visa has an expiry date and both you and the University must bear this in mind. If your visa is coming to an end and you are required to undertake further attempts at any assessments, it is your responsibility to ensure that you apply for an extension in good time. Your student visa must be valid to allow you to remain enrolled and undertake any required reassessment.

43. However, if you have been offered reassessment because of this procedure, but your visa cannot be renewed for whatever reason The ECs Procedure does not override the requirement that you must have a valid visa to remain enrolled to undertake any reassessment. This means that even though you may have a valid claim for ECs, you may not be able to take your reassessment if you no longer hold a valid visa. You should expect to be on campus for any live assessment, although you will be able to submit coursework online.
44. Please note that visa requirements may mean that you need to submit evidence to support a request to extend your student visa.
45. If you are concerned about any aspect of your visa, you should contact the [Student Immigration Team](#) for further advice.

Providing evidence in support of your ECs claim

46. You are not required to provide any evidence in support of your ECs claim however, you can provide us with information or evidence if you think it will help us to understand your situation and for us be able to support you. If you do not apply for ECs within 10 working days of an assessment then the university will expect you to provide evidence of why you could not apply for ECs at this time.
47. In the past, the University has seen a number of instances where students have submitted falsified documents in support of their circumstances. Such practice is considered by the University to be fraudulent and may be considered to be a criminal offence. The University takes incidents of falsification very seriously and it will investigate these concerns robustly. If we are satisfied an offence has been committed, we will report such an offence to the relevant authorities including the police where required. If the University has good reason to believe that the information you have provided is misleading, or false, your submission may be referred to Senate Regulation 6 - Student Conduct (Academic and Non-Academic) for further consideration. This could result in expulsion from the University, delays to your progression, and the loss of some or all credit.

Coursework Extension Requests

48. You should apply for a coursework extension via [eVision](#) where you believe that your personal circumstances will affect your ability to meet a deadline to submit a written piece of work, such as a coursework assignment (essay, lab report, etc) or dissertation. An extension allows you extra time to complete an assessment. A coursework extension can only be used for submitted pieces of work such as coursework, video assessments or artwork and cannot be applied to live assessments such as presentations, performances or examinations. If you are experiencing exceptional circumstances for a live assessment then you should submit a claim for ECs.
49. You will be able to apply for a coursework extension until 48 hours before a submission deadline. While there is no limit on the number of coursework extensions you can apply for, you should be aware that if you apply for either a coursework extension or ECs more than three times per academic year you may be referred to your personal tutor or the Student Wellbeing Team for support.
50. If your coursework extension request is accepted, you will be given an extra five working days from the original deadline in which to submit your assessment. If you have been given an extension for a larger piece of work, such as a dissertation or final year project, your extension will allow you 14 calendar days from the original deadline to submit your work.
51. You will need to make the decision, based on your personal circumstances, about whether a coursework extension will allow you sufficient time to submit your assessment. You may wish to discuss this with your personal tutor if you are unsure and need further guidance.
52. If you have a coursework extension and you are unable to meet your extended deadline due to your circumstances, you must submit a claim for ECs. If you fail to submit a written piece of work by the extended deadline, submit your work late or fail to apply for ECs, your work will be marked according to the Coursework Submission Policy, which may include a late submission penalty or a mark of 0 because you did not submit your work at all.
53. If your coursework extension is rejected, you can still apply for ECs.

When should I apply?

54. You should apply for an extension before the assessment due date.

55. You can apply for an extension until 48 hours before your deadline, but not after.

Can I apply for an extension for an assessment I have completed?

56. No. You will not be able to apply for an extension for an assessment that you have already submitted if the deadline has passed. However, you may still apply for ECs if you believe that your assessment was affected by circumstances beyond your control.

57. If you have submitted an assessment but the deadline has not passed you may be able to retract your submission and apply for an extension. You should contact the Student HUB if you want to retract your coursework submission.

58. Please note that if you ask for your coursework submission to be retracted but you do not submit a revised version by the deadline your work may be capped as per the Coursework Submission Policy. If this happens and you believe it was outside your control, you may be able to apply for ECs.

What happens when I submit my Coursework Extension Request?

59. When you submit your coursework extension request, you will receive an email receipt from eVision to confirm your claim has been submitted. It is your responsibility to check for your email receipt. If you have not received an email receipt within 24 hours, you should check with the Student HUB in case an error has been made or you have not completed the submission process.

60. Your submission will be considered by the Exceptional Circumstances Team which will either accept or reject your claim. You will be notified of the decision by email. If your claim has been accepted, your coursework deadline will be adjusted, normally on Wiseflow. If you have another submission route for your coursework, you will be advised of any alternative arrangements required of you.

61. If your claim is rejected, you will be expected to submit your work by the published deadline. If you are unable to do so, you should submit a claim for ECs.

Can I appeal a decision to reject my Coursework Extension Request?

62. There is no appeals route for the Coursework Extension procedure. If you are dissatisfied with the decision made about your coursework extension request, you can submit a claim for ECs. Alternatively, you will need to wait until the Board of Examiners has met before you can take further action. The Boards of Examiners normally meet

in June and September, although some Boards can take place at other times, for example, in November. The Board of Examiners will decide what should happen with your results for all your modules. You can then raise any concerns via the Results Service and the Academic Appeals Procedure, if you remain dissatisfied.

What should I do if I can't submit by the end of my Coursework Extension?

63. If you have been given a Coursework Extension but your circumstances are still preventing you from submitting your work, you should submit a claim for ECs. You are also recommended to notify your Personal Tutor and you may wish to speak to an Advisor in the Union Advice Service if you are worried about your situation.

Exceptional Circumstances

64. You can apply for ECs for any type of assessment regardless of what type of assessment it is. For example, a live assessment such as examination, presentation or performance; or a submitted assessment, such as written coursework, lab report or dissertation, video submissions or artwork.
65. You should make a claim for ECs where your personal circumstances mean that you are unable to meet your deadline or attend a live assessment, and a coursework extension is not sufficient for you to complete your work and submit it.
66. You may also submit a claim for ECs for submitted work or attended live assessments where you believe that your circumstances affected your ability to perform to your best, however claims of this nature should be submitted up to 10 working days after the deadline for, or date of, an assessment, and before any feedback and grades are received.

When should I apply for Exceptional Circumstances?

67. Where possible, you should apply for ECs before your assessment due date. However, you can apply for ECs up to 10 working days after the assessment and before you receive your grade or feedback on your assessment. If you make a claim for ECs after this time, you will need to provide evidence for why you could not apply for ECs within that time. Once either a grade or feedback for an assessment has been released, any claim for ECs will not be accepted. If this happens, you will need to wait until the Board of Examiners meets and decides what will happen to your assignment. You will not be

able to make a new claim for the assignment via the ECs procedure however, you may be able to submit an Academic Appeal instead, which you can do after the Board of Examiners has made a decision about your results.

Can I apply for an assessment I have completed?

68. The University applies the principle that if you submit your assignment, or attend your assessment, you are declaring that you have not been affected by any exceptional circumstances.
69. If the deadline for your assignment has passed, or you have attended or submitted an assessment but believe that your performance was affected by exceptional circumstances, you have up to 10 working days after the assessment to submit a claim for ECs, and before your feedback, or grade, is released. If this happens, you will need to wait until the Board of Examiners has made a decision about your assessment and you will be able to discuss your situation then via the Results Service in your Department.

What happens when I submit my claim for Exceptional Circumstances?

70. When you submit your claim for ECs, you will receive an email receipt from eVision to confirm your claim has been submitted. It is your responsibility to check for your email receipt. If you have not received an email receipt within 24 hours, you should check with the Student Hub in case an error has been made or you have not completed the submission process.
71. Your submission will be considered by the Exceptional Circumstances Team who will either accept or reject your claim. The Exceptional Circumstances Team will always consider each application individually to provide a fair and equitable outcome so you are not disadvantaged. Once a decision has been made about your claim, you will be notified of the decision by email.
72. **If your claim is accepted**, your accepted claim will be referred to your Board of Examiners, and this will be considered when the Board reviews your academic profile. The Board of Examiners will not see your claim, although a representative of the Exceptional Circumstances Team will be able to provide the Board of Examiners with an understanding of the extent to which your assessment(s) was affected. You should be assured that the Board of Examiners considers all student profiles anonymously and so neither you, nor details of your particular situation will be made known to them.

73. If you didn't submit your work or attend your assessment, and your claim is accepted, it is likely that you will be offered a further assessment opportunity as a first attempt. This means that you will receive the full mark/grade for this work based on its merits. If your claim for ECs relates to your second attempt in the module, you should expect to be offered a further capped attempt as per the University Senate Regulations.
74. If you submitted your coursework, but it was late, it is likely that any late penalties that could, or were, applied to your work will be removed and you will receive the grade/mark based on its merits.
75. **If your claim is rejected**, you will be expected to submit or attend your assessment by the published deadline. If you are unhappy with the decision to reject your ECs, you can appeal the decision after the Board of Examiners has met.

What happens to my assessment if my request for ECs is rejected?

76. The University applies the principle that if you submit your coursework, or attend your live assessment, you are declaring that you have not been affected by any exceptional circumstances.
77. If you failed to submit your assignment or attend a live assessment you will be given a grade of NS (non-submission). If you submitted your work, or attended your live assessment then you will receive a mark/grade and feedback in the normal way.
78. If this was your first attempt you may be eligible for a second attempt as per the re-assessment regulations for your programme (see [Senate Regulation 2](#) (Undergraduate Programmes) and [Senate Regulation 3](#) (Postgraduate Taught Programmes)). You should also see if there any specific assessment requirements for your programme set out in your programme specification. You may also wish to speak to your Personal Tutor about your situation.
79. If it is your second attempt, your Board of Examiners will decide what options are available to you and you will be notified in the usual way following the Board of Examiners, via eVision.

Can I appeal a decision to reject my claim for ECs or a Coursework Extension Request?

80. There is no appeals route for the Exceptional Circumstances procedure. If you are dissatisfied with the decision made about your coursework extension request, you can submit a claim for Exceptional Circumstances. Alternatively, you will need to wait until the Board of Examiners has met before you can take further action. The Boards of Examiners normally meet in June and September, although some Boards can take place at other times, for example, in November. The Board of Examiners will decide what should happen with your results for all your modules. You can then raise any concerns via the Results Service and the Academic Appeals Procedure, if you remain dissatisfied.

Support Services

81. The University has a range of support service available to help you with its processes.

UAS (Union Advice Service)

82. The Union Advice Service are experts in dealing with a wide range of student-related issues and their Advisors can give you independent and impartial advice and support on your exceptional circumstances if you require it. The Union Advice Service website address is <https://brunelstudents.com/advice/> and you can contact them by completing the [UAS Enquiry Form](#) or by emailing them on advice@brunel.ac.uk. You can also book a drop in appointment via this link: [Union Advice Service \(office365.com\)](#).
83. [The University's Disability and Dyslexia team](#) can offer you support if you have, or think you may have, a disability or learning difficulty.
84. The University's Medical Centre: Students living on campus, or within a 2-mile radius, can register with the University's Medical Centre and get advice and treatment for any health-related matters.
85. The University's Mediation Service: The University also offers students a confidential and impartial Mediation Service, which can help resolve disputes quickly before they escalate. If you would like to discuss whether mediation may be helpful to you, please do not hesitate to contact me. More information about mediation is available from [here](#).
86. The University's Security Team: You are also advised to contact the Security Office on 01895 255786 if you are ever involved in or witness any worrying or troublesome incidents on campus.