



Exceptional Circumstances Policy and Procedures

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1. Introduction

William College is committed to providing an inclusive, supportive, and fair learning environment for all students. The College recognises that students may encounter unexpected, serious, or unavoidable events which can significantly impact their ability to complete assessments or meet academic deadlines.

This policy applies to all students and academic staff engaged in teaching, learning, and assessment. It aligns with external expectations, including OfS and sector-wide principles of academic integrity observed by partner institutions such as Bath Spa University (BSU).

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy and procedures is to:

- Ensure fairness by providing a transparent and equitable process for considering Exceptional Circumstances (EC) claims, so that students are not unfairly disadvantaged.
- Protect academic standards by maintain the integrity of assessment while accommodating legitimate, documented difficulties.
- Clarify responsibilities by outlining clear guidance for students, academic staff, and administrative staff regarding submission, consideration, and decision-making processes.
- Support student success by directing students to relevant academic, wellbeing, and support services to help manage challenges and enable successful completion of their studies.
- Inform Decision-Making by ensuring students are aware of potential implications of EC claims on progression, reassessment, and award completion.
- Promote Continuous Improvement by using outcomes from EC claims to refine and enhance College processes and student support mechanisms.

This policy applies to all students enrolled on undergraduate taught programmes at William College and is aligned with UK higher education standards, including guidance from the Department For Education (DFE) and sector best practices.

3. Scope

This policy articulates the procedures in place for the submission, consideration, and approval of Exceptional Circumstances (EC) claims for students registered on undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes at William College. The College operates this policy under the following principles:

Fit to Sit/Submit	Students are expected to declare themselves fit to undertake assessments. If unfit, they should submit an EC claim or request a short extension.
Fairness and Equity	EC claims are considered through an equitable process ensuring students are not unfairly disadvantaged.

Transparent and Evidence-Based	Decisions are made using clear criteria, supported by evidence where applicable.
Student Support	The policy guides students to academic and wellbeing services to help manage study challenges.
Awareness of Impact	Students are informed about potential implications for progression and completion.
Alignment with Support Services	EC decisions complement Academic Access Plans, Support to Study, and Student Wellbeing Services.
Continuous Improvement	Outcomes are regularly reviewed to improve process effectiveness.

It should be noted that:

- Students studying with William College on BSU programmes, BSU's Exceptional Circumstances Policy should be followed.
- Students studying with William College on a Birkbeck, University of London programmes, Birkbeck's Mitigating Circumstances Policy should be followed.

4. Definitions

Term	Definition
Exceptional Circumstances	Unforeseeable, unavoidable, and serious events beyond the student's control that significantly affect academic performance.
Deferral	Permission to undertake an assessment at the next opportunity without penalty.
Extension	Short Additional Time to Submit Coursework.
Panel	Group of College Staff that considers EC claims when they cannot be resolved in the first stage.
Evidence	Independent documentation verifying the circumstances (e.g., medical certificate, police report).

5. Policy Statement

William College is committed to supporting students who experience unexpected, serious, or unavoidable events that impact their academic performance. The College will:

- Ensure that all EC claims are treated fairly, consistently, and confidentially.
- Protect academic standards while accommodating legitimate student difficulties.

- Provide clear guidance on submission, supporting evidence, and potential outcomes.

6. Responsibilities

Department/ Individual	Responsibilities
Students	Submit EC claims promptly with relevant details and evidence.
Academic Staff	Advise students and verify assessment impact where needed.
Student Services	Log claims, acknowledge receipt, coordinate panels, and maintain records.
Exceptional Circumstances Panel	Review claims and make consistent, evidence-based decisions.
Academic Board	Review annual reports and recommend improvements.

Policy Responsibility Matrix	
Responsible	Academic Quality Officer, Registry Manager. Ensure policy aligns with regulations, produces annual assurance report.
Accountable	Student Experience Manager. Ensures effective implementation and oversight of policy.
Consult	Programme Leaders, Student Representative. Provide practical feedback, ensure student-centred application.
Inform	All Students, All Staff Informed of policy principles, submission deadlines, and updates.

7. Procedures

7.1 Submission of Claims

Claims are requested from Student Services such as Student Support, Wellbeing Team and Student Success Team. Documents can be acquired by email or in-person, located on the second and third floor.

Claims must be submitted via email: ecs@williamcollege.ac.uk

Students should indicate the affected assignment, module, deadline and reason for the claim, provide supporting evidence (examples can be found on pages 8 – 9).

7.2 Initial Review

Student Success Team reviews claim for sufficient information.

If clear, decision may be made immediately; otherwise escalated to the EC Panel.

7.3 Exceptional Circumstances Panel

Membership: Provost (Chair), Student Experience Manager, Programme Leader Student Wellbeing representative.

Reviews claims that cannot be resolved at the first stage.

Decisions: Approved, Not Approved, or Recommendations for further action.

Students are informed of the panel meeting and can submit additional evidence.

7.4 Deferral and Extensions

If approved, this would 'defer' a student's assessment deadline to the next week. Deferred assessment is treated as first attempt (i.e., uncapped), with the full range of marks available. Students can also seek to 'defer' a referred (capped) piece of work to the next assessment period through this policy

An approved Exceptional Circumstances claim will not excuse students from completing their assessment(s) but will defer the coursework deadline for those modules or assessments approved on the claim to the next College assessment point. Students will still be required to demonstrate that they can achieve the required learning outcomes to successfully pass each of their modules and to meet the programme requirements for progression or award.

Deferrals are uncapped; students retain opportunity to demonstrate learning outcomes.

7.5 Impact on Progression and Completion

- Students should consider the current College progression rules when working towards their modules and assessments and considering whether to submit an Exceptional Circumstances claim. The reassessment period of August and December represent the last assessment point within each academic year, and students should check whether deferring their assessment/s to the next academic year would impact upon their eligibility to progress to their next year of studies. Students should also be made aware that deferrals may impact their Student Finance arrangements. Bath Spa University will determine if students are eligible to progress to their next year of studies.

- Final year students are informed that they will not be eligible to attend Graduation until all assessments have been successfully completed. Therefore, deferring coursework through Exceptional Circumstances may result in the student becoming ineligible to graduate with the majority of their cohort. The student will be invited to a later Winter or Summer graduation, depending on when the student successfully completes their award.

7.6 Examples of Eligible Exceptional Circumstances

In line with William Colleges' definition of exceptional circumstances, the following examples are likely to be considered eligible exceptional circumstances and as such form part of the criteria used to assess each exceptional circumstances application:

- Serious personal accident, injury or illness.
- Hospitalisation (including operations).
- Death or serious illness of close family member, dependent, partner or friend.
- National disruption or national mourning.
- Serious complications in pregnancy or maternity.
- Unexpected caring duties for child, family member or friend Sudden deterioration or escalation of ongoing illness, condition or disability.
- Serious personal disruption (such as a relationship breakdown, separation, divorce, house move, victim of crime).
- Serious incident (such as assault or harassment).
- Major household problem (such as break-in, fire, homelessness).
- Absence for public service (such as jury service, service with reserved forces).
- Recent diagnosis of disability or long-term condition.
- Recent change, commencement or cessation of medication.
- Delay in the receipt of appropriate support for disability or long-term condition.
- Competing in national/international sports.
- Participation in cultural events.
- Faith-related observances and practices.
- Significant opportunities to benefit your career or studies.

7.7 Examples of Non-eligible Exceptional Circumstances

- Short-term or minor illness (e.g. sore throat, cough, cold).
- Transport issues.
- Misreading of assessment submission dates and times.

- Personal events that could have been anticipated (such as a holiday, wedding, sports event or field trip) and where you have control over the date or may choose not to participate.
- Inadequate planning, organisation or time management or pressure of work.
- Pressure of academic workload, including the management of multiple submission deadlines (there may be exceptions related to disruption pertaining to placement modules, semesters abroad and where an assessment is contingent on work-related activities, which will be assessed on a case-by-case basis).
- Demands of paid employment.
- Language of assessment not being the student's main language.

7.8 Stage Two Review

Students may request a review of the decision in accordance with the Partner Institutions Appeals Policy.

7.9 Retrospective Claims

Retrospective claims can be submitted up to ten working days after receiving official results with an explanation for late submission.

7.10 Retrospective Exceptional Circumstances

Retrospective or late claims for Exceptional Circumstances can be submitted up to 10 working days following the receipt by the student on their official University results email. The claim should be accompanied by a clear explanation as to why it was not possible for the student to submit the claim on time.

Retrospective Exceptional Circumstances claims will follow the same approval procedures outlined above.

7.11 Support for Exceptional Circumstances and Student Studies

The University offers a range of student support services and opportunities to enable students to manage the challenges and demands of academic study. Students are encouraged to seek support from Academic faculty, module and course leaders, Student Wellbeing Team, or to use other mechanisms, such as a study break, as appropriate.

Students are encouraged to use the University's Assessment Action Plan template to help to map out their assessments and reassessments, where appropriate, throughout the academic year.

7.12 Evidence for Exceptional Circumstances Claims

Students will need to submit evidence with each claim as part of their application. Where deemed relevant, students may be asked for evidence to support their claim. Examples include:

- Medical certification (doctor's note, hospital appointment, hospital or letter from a medical or specialist service).
- Letter from solicitor or court.
- Written evidence from police (including crime reference number).

If a student submits a claim or evidence which is found to be false, forged or has been tampered with in any way, it will result in disciplinary action being taken against the student.

8. Compliance and Monitoring

- Annual report to Academic Board reviewing EC claims, outcomes, and policy effectiveness.
- Continuous monitoring ensures fairness, compliance with regulations, and alignment with student support services.

9. Training and Communication

- Mandatory student induction workshops on referencing and avoiding plagiarism.
- Online tutorials and resources available year-round.
- Staff training in use of plagiarism detection tools and case handling.
- Ongoing communications to reinforce academic integrity principles.

10. Policy Review

Reviewed annually by the Student Experience Manager and reviewed and approved by the Academic Board.