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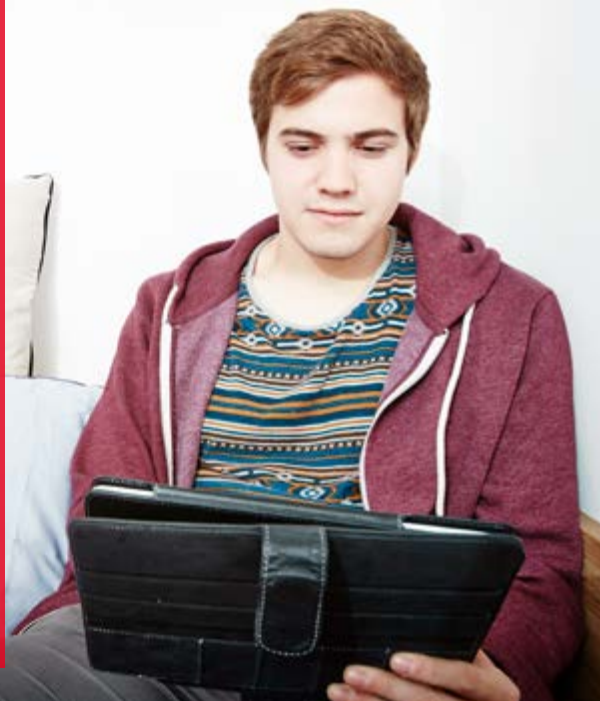
Manchester
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Procedure for Consideration of Exceptional Factors



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About this procedure

The Procedure for the Consideration of Exceptional Factors provides terms, mechanisms by which exceptional factors affecting student performance are considered.

Scope and Purpose

1.1 Throughout their studies, students are required to complete and submit, or sit, a wide range of assessments. This will require students to balance their workload and time management skills to ensure that assessments are submitted to stated deadlines. However, the University recognises that illnesses and difficult or distressing life events do occur, outside of students' control, and that it is a normal part of life to have to manage these and continue with work or study. Such circumstances may prevent students from completing assessments and any Exceptional Factors should be considered when determining students' results. Manchester Metropolitan University has therefore developed an Exceptional Factors policy to determine how, and against what criteria, students can make formal submission for consideration of any Exceptional Factors that they consider have affected their performance in assessment.

1.2 The purpose of this procedure is:

- (i) to clarify the types of serious adverse events and / or circumstances that the University will consider as Exceptional Factors and to set out the process by which Exceptional Factors claims are to

be submitted and considered;

- (ii) to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all students when considering Exceptional Factors, including appropriate provision for disabled students and those with chronic conditions.

What are Exceptional Factors?

2.1 Exceptional Factors are exceptional, short-term events which have a serious impact on the student's assessment in one of two ways:-

- (i) Preventing a student from attending, completing or submitting an assessment on time
- (ii) Significantly affecting performance in an assessment.

2.2 Exceptional Factors are serious events which impact upon performance. Exceptional Factors must be:

- **Severe:** The event or circumstance must have had a serious impact on assessment performance;
- **Unexpected:** The student must have had no prior knowledge that a particular event would occur;
- **Unpreventable:** There must have

been no reasonable steps that the student could have taken to prevent the event or circumstance from occurring;

- **Relevant:** The event or circumstance must have occurred at the time of the assessment or during the period immediately leading up to the assessment;
- **Corroborated:** The claim for Exceptional Factors must meet the requirements for independent documentary evidence that are outlined in this policy.

2.3 It is important to note that even if extremely difficult or distressing events have occurred, these are not in themselves Exceptional Factors. There must also be evidence of a demonstrable adverse effect on academic performance, which may take various forms, including:

- That the student has been unable to submit work by a deadline date or attend a presentation, test or examination;
- That the event or circumstances have meant that the student has underperformed in the assessment task.
- Changes in circumstances

2.4 Long-term circumstances (life and occasional) may come within the scope of the Exceptional Factors procedures if there is a serious, unpredictable and unpreventable increase in their severity at the time of the assessment or in the period immediately leading up to the assessment. Full independent documentary evidence in support of the exacerbation of the circumstances (not just evidence of the circumstances themselves) would be required.

What are not Exceptional Factors?

3.1 All students are expected to conduct their work and study with maturity and diligence, and to cope with what could be reasonably considered normal life events. In addition, students should try to avoid situations which might otherwise lead to Exceptional Factors claims, and should try to limit adverse effects on academic performance.

3.2 Exceptional Factors are not a substitute for academic performance and should not be submitted as an insurance against possible poor performance. The acceptance of Exceptional Factors will not result in individual marks being raised.

3.3 Examples of situations which could have been avoided, or in relation to which, a student could have acted to limit the impact of the circumstances:

- late submission of coursework / missed deadlines;
- non-availability of books or other resources;
- lost or not backed-up coursework;
- financial problems (other than cases of the most extreme hardship);
- house moves, family celebrations or other events where the student either has control over the date or may choose not to participate;
- problems with postals delivery of work (students are advised to obtain receipts for assessments submitted in this manner);
- normal work commitments reducing time available for study or coursework;
- appointments (legal, medical, etc) which could be re-arranged;
- a long-standing condition, such as susceptibility to hay fever;

- misreading the examination timetable;
- over sleeping / alarm clock not going off causing a student to be late for or miss an exam or assessment;
- holidays or travel.

Long-Term Life Circumstances

3.4 Long-term life circumstances such as a disability or a chronic/ ongoing medical condition are not dealt with under the Exceptional Factors Procedures. If a student has a disability or medical condition that may affect their assessment, they should seek advice from the [University's Disability Service](#) at the beginning of their studies, so that a suitable [Personal Learning Plan \(PLP\)](#) can be drawn up. Where appropriate, a PLP may include adjustments to the normal assessment requirements.

3.5 Where a student with a long-term life circumstance experiences an Exceptional Factor that is unrelated to their disability, then the student must submit a claim under the normal University procedures outlined below.

3.6 If a disability or a chronic / ongoing medical condition worsens significantly, or such a condition develops following the commencement of the programme of study, students should seek advice from the [Disability Service](#). In some cases, this may result in a revised PLP being prepared for the student.

Submission of Independent Evidence

4.1 Claims for Exceptional Factors will not be considered unless they are supported by independent documentary evidence. [The Exceptional Factors Form EF1](#) may be submitted

even if the documentary evidence is unavailable at the time of submission; however, the [EF1 Form](#) must include the date when the evidence will be available (no later than 5 working days following submission). The claim will be considered once the documentary evidence has been received. If it is judged that the evidence could have been reasonably expected to have been submitted on time, then the claim will be rejected. Likewise, evidence must be obtained when the Exceptional Factors are present. Post-dated evidence will not be accepted unless it can be demonstrated that the evidence could not have been obtained at the time.

Adequate Evidence

4.2 Independent evidence would normally be an original document on headed paper written and signed by an appropriate third party, giving details of the circumstance, its dates and / or duration, and, where possible, its impact. Where it is necessary to retain the original copy, the relevant Student Life Office will take a photocopy, sign the copy and return the original to the student. An appropriate third party would be one who knows the student in a professional capacity or one who can verify the circumstance from a position of authority (e.g. police officer, solicitor, GP, University Counsellor) and who is in a position to provide objective and impartial evidence. Electronic evidence such as faxes and emails will only be accepted from verifiable facsimile and email addresses.

4.3 All evidence must be provided in English. If the documentary evidence is not in English, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that it is accompanied by a translation which has been certified as correct by a Public Notary or translated by an accredited

translator (i.e. be a member of the [Association of Translation Companies](#).

4.4 Students are advised to keep their tutor(s) informed of Exceptional Factors and ask them to provide a supporting statement on their application if relevant and appropriate.

Medical evidence

4.5 A student must submit medical evidence in support of an Exceptional Factors claim. Any medical certificates / notes must:

- relate specifically to the dates and duration of the illness;
- contain a clear medical diagnosis or opinion and not merely report the claim that the student felt unwell, nor report any claim that there was reason to believe that the student was ill.

4.6 Neither the University nor any of its officers will undertake to obtain medical certificates on behalf of students.

4.7 The University will not normally consider claims for Exceptional Factors that relate to long-standing controlled conditions, or self-limiting illness. This is because the student would normally have had the benefit of experience, medical knowledge or help to control the condition; and would normally have been assessed with the [University's Disability Service](#) and have a [Personal Learning Plan](#) to support his/ her studies.

Submission Procedures

5.1 Normally, a claim is made by means of an [Exceptional Factors Form \(EF1\)](#) completed by the student. Where exceptionally a student is unable to complete the [EF1 Form](#) for valid

reasons, an [EF1 Form](#) may be submitted by an appropriate 3rd party. All claims must be submitted on the [Exceptional Factors Form \(EF1\)](#) and handed in to the appropriate Student Life Office / [Student Hub](#) for all units affected, even if these units are from other Faculties. Only Exceptional Factors reported in this way will be taken into account by the relevant Exceptional Factors Panel. Discussing Exceptional Factors with members of staff does not constitute a submission of a claim for Exceptional Factors. The [Exceptional Factors Form](#) should record exactly which elements of assessment have been affected and link them to the particular unit(s) for which they have been set. Students are expected to construct an argument that explains why the circumstances were serious and how they affected her or his performance in, ability to attend, complete on time, or submit the element of assessment. This argument should relate the dates of the circumstance(s) and the assessment(s) carefully to the reasons given.

5.2 Each [EF1 form](#) submitted will be considered on one occasion only by the Exceptional Factors Panel. Therefore a separate [EF1 form](#) with supporting documentation must be completed and submitted on each separate occasion for each period of assessment to which the Exceptional Factors relate.

Confidentiality / Personal Information

5.3 The confidential nature of information provided by students will be respected by the University in accordance with [data protection requirements](#). Normally, such wishes will be respected unless to do so would be against the best interests of the University community or the interests of safety or security to any person.

5.4 Students are not required to give detailed personal information unless it is felt to be relevant to the claim. Where it is felt that the Exceptional Factors are highly personal, then claims should be submitted in a sealed envelope marked confidential. Prior to the meeting of the Exceptional Factors Panel, the Secretary to the Panel will open the sealed envelopes and anonymise the claims. All students are encouraged to allow information to be shared at least with Chairs of the appropriate Assessment Boards. Students should be aware of any consequences that may result from non-disclosure of relevant information, i.e. that the Panel may reject the claim.

Assistance with Submission

5.5 If students require assistance with the procedural matters, such as completion of the [Exceptional Factors Form](#) or procedures in relation to the submission of Exceptional Factors to the University, they should contact the appropriate [Student Hub](#). Advice on the merits / strengths of individual circumstances will not be given, since a full consideration of a student's circumstances will be undertaken by the relevant Faculty Exceptional Factors Panel. Students wishing to discuss their Exceptional Factors in confidence should contact the [Students' Union Advice Centre](#).

Retrospective Claims

5.6 Retrospective claims for previous assessment periods will be rejected. A claim of Exceptional Factors can only be submitted in relation to the assessment period in which they occurred. A new claim must be submitted for each period of assessment affected.

Submission Dates

5.7 In relation to all assessment, claims must be submitted prior to the submission date for the assignment. Exceptionally, where the reason is acceptable to the relevant Faculty Exceptional Factors Panel explaining why a student was not able to submit by the deadline indicated above, submission may be accepted up to a maximum 5 working days beyond the original submission date.

5.8 Forms submitted after the deadlines will be not automatically be considered. Claims which are received after the Assessment Board has met can only be submitted in accordance with the [Academic Appeals Procedure](#).

Timescale

5.9 Any notification of Exceptional Factors must show that their timing was such that it might have adversely affected assessment, and must include evidence of the timing.

5.10 If there are Exceptional Factors which adversely affect a range of assessments, or if there are non-academic reasons which will adversely affect performance over a longer period, the student may wish to discuss some other course of action with the relevant Programme Leader / Personal Tutor. This may include intercalation or repeating the level of study.

Exceptional Factors affecting groups of students

5.11 Particular conditions which have affected groups of students (e.g. disruption in an examination) should be reported to the appropriate Exceptional Factors Panel(s) through the Examination Incidents procedure.

This will avoid the need for multiple submissions by students. In such cases, bloc action by the [Assessment Board](#) may be justified.

Consideration of Exceptional Factors

Exceptional Factors Panels

6.1 Exceptional factors claims are considered by an Exceptional Factors Panel. Panels meet at intervals during the year and have full delegated authority from Academic Board, via the [Assessment Board](#), to consider and make decisions on Exceptional Factors on behalf of [Assessment Boards](#).

6.2 Panels decide whether the circumstances described by students are valid Exceptional Factors or not, and assess whether or not they are likely to have adversely affected performance. Panels notify these decisions to students and to the appropriate [Assessment Board](#).

6.3 Exceptional factors claims that relate to examinations will always be considered by a Faculty Exceptional Factors Panel.

6.4 Exceptional factors claims that relate to coursework and / or other elements of assessment may, at the discretion of the Dean of Faculty, be considered by a Departmental or equivalent Exceptional Factors Panel.

Terms of Reference for Exceptional Factors Panels

6.5 Faculty Exceptional Factors Panels will be established having regard to the need to ensure adequate representation of subjects and programmes within the Faculty. The frequency of the Panels shall be determined by the Dean of

Faculty, but shall be no less than twice in each academic session. Panels are encouraged to meet more frequently as necessary to consider the needs of particular groups of students.

6.6 Departmental (or equivalent) Exceptional Factors Panels may be established at the discretion of the Dean of Faculty and shall meet as frequently as necessary to consider Exceptional Factors claims in relation to that particular Department.

Constitution for Exceptional Factors Panels

6.7 Faculty Exceptional Factors Panels

- The Chair of the Panel will normally be the Chair of the Faculty Education Committee.
- The Head of Faculty SAS will appoint an administrator to act as secretary to the Panel, who will not form part of the decision-making membership;
- Appropriate academic staff, who may include programme leaders, unit leaders, with a maximum of two members of staff from each relevant Department. Membership of the Panel for the academic session shall be determined by the Chair and approved by Faculty Education Committee. Faculties should ensure arrangements for deputies to attend as appropriate;
- The quorum for the Exceptional Factor Panel shall be 50% of the decision-making membership.

6.8 [Sabbatical members of the Students Union](#) will be invited to attend in an observer capacity. The Student Union will be invited to advise the relevant Head of Faculty SAS of the proposed Sabbatical Officer. Such sabbatical officers will not have any relationship

with the Faculty in which the Exceptional Factor Panel lies.

6.9 Departmental Exceptional Factors Panels

- The Chair of the Panel will be appointed by the Head of Department from among the Departmental members of the Faculty Exceptional Factors Panel;
- Other members will be appointed by the Head of Department to ensure appropriate representation of programmes within the Department. Departments should ensure arrangements for deputies to attend as appropriate;
- The quorum for the Exceptional Factor Panel shall be 50% of the decision-making membership.

Terms of reference for all Exceptional Factors Panels

6.10 The remit of Exceptional Factor Panels is as follows:

- To consider, under the authority of the Academic Board and on behalf of Assessment Boards, requests from students for deferral of (an) assessment(s) on the grounds of Exceptional Factors.
- To determine whether the Exceptional Factors cited are acceptable grounds for deferral.

Account shall be taken of:

- whether the Exceptional Factors cited are genuinely circumstances beyond the student's control or ability to foresee, and whether they may seriously impair the student's assessment attempt;
- the severity of the event or circumstance;
- the length of time it lasted;

- the closeness in time of the event or circumstance to the assessment(s);
- whether all / other assessment(s) might be equally affected;
- whether there is verifiable and current third party evidence to support the request for deferral.
- In the case of coursework submission, to determine where appropriate a revised submission date;
- To inform the student of the outcome of the Panel's deliberations.
- To provide a written record of the Panel's deliberations for the [Assessment Board](#).
- In exceptional cases to recommend to an [Assessment Board](#), if the student so agrees in writing, that the results of any or all units which the student has passed in the current year's programme be declared void, on the basis that satisfactory evidence that the result, although above the pass threshold was so affected by Exceptional Factors as to render it inequitable to treat it as a pass mark; all assessments associated with those units shall be disregarded and may not be carried forward to subsequent attempts. If the student subsequently fails the unit, the [Assessment Board](#) shall have the discretion to reinstate the previous pass grade and the mark that has been declared void.
- To ensure that decisions are equitable and that there is consistency of treatment across cohorts and over a period of years.
- To monitor the number, nature and resultant decisions of any extension requests in the assessment period.

6.11 The decision of Exceptional Factors Panels shall be accepted by the [Assessment Board](#) without discussion.

6.12 The Chair of an Exceptional Factors Panel shall be authorised to approve Exceptional Factors claims outside formal meetings, where the claim is clearly valid under University Regulations. If the Chair is not convinced that a claim is valid, it must be considered by the Exceptional Factors Panel at its next meeting. All claims accepted outside meetings of the Panel must be reported to the Panel at the next available opportunity.

6.13 A meeting of an Exceptional Factors Panel will not be invalidated by the unavoidable absence of any member, provided that the Chair agrees that there is sufficient expertise available to enable the Panel to make informed decisions.

6.14 If an Exceptional Factors Panel does not consider that it has sufficient corroborating evidence, the Chair of the Panel will adjourn the case pending the receipt of additional evidence as deemed appropriate. The period of adjournment shall be a maximum of 10 working days.

6.15 A record shall be kept of the cases considered by Exceptional Factors Panels and the decisions made. Details of medical or personal circumstances should not be included in the record of the meeting, and supporting documentation, such as the forms submitted by students and medical certificates, should be held separately.

6.16 In cases where Exceptional Factors relating to one student with assessments in one or more Faculties, Deans will ensure that any copies of Exceptional Factors received from other Faculties are destroyed. Original documentation only will be retained in secure filing in the home Faculty

Student Life Office. Files will be periodically reviewed and normally individual [EF1 forms](#) will be shredded. Exceptional factor documentation will be retained on the student record in accordance with the University's [Record Retention and Disposal Scheme](#).

6.17 Student Life Officers with responsibility for the administration of Exceptional Factors will ensure all reports of Exceptional Factor Panels are submitted to the Student Case Management Team.

6.18 In order to monitor and advise on the operation of the provisions for Exceptional Factors, an annual report on the operation of Exceptional Factor procedures and analysis of the submissions shall be submitted for consideration by the [Academic Quality and Standards Committee](#).

Approval of Exceptional Factors

Possible outcomes in the affected element of assessment

7.1 If a Panel is satisfied that a student's absence, failure to submit work, or poor performance, was due to a valid and acceptable cause, the Panel will:-

- recommend to the Assessment Board that the student be assessed or reassessed as if for the first time, or without further penalty if already reassessed, in the unit in any or all of the assessments which the Panel decides were adversely affected. This will apply irrespective of whether the student has passed or failed the assessment concerned. This means that the student has another assessment opportunity, without being affected

by Exceptional Factors.

- In cases where Exceptional Factors claims relate to coursework, an Exceptional Factor Panel may agree to offer the student an extension to the published submission date.

7.2 If the student has already achieved a pass mark and is claiming underperformance, then the student will be given the opportunity to take the assessment or reassessment again as if for the first time. Outcomes of assessment will be determined in accordance with the [University's Assessment Regulations](#); and if the assessment or reassessment has not been taken or submitted then the student will be given the opportunity to sit or take that assessment at the next available opportunity.

Continuing Inability to Proceed owing to Exceptional Factors

7.3 Students with Exceptional Factors would normally be required to undertake an assessment as if for the first time (or second / third time in the case of Exceptional Factors affecting reassessment), unless they were unlikely to be able to complete further assessment as a consequence of the circumstances. On advice from Exceptional Factors Panels, Boards of Examiners would have the discretion to require medical evidence that the candidate was able to undertake further assessment. The final decision of the [Assessment Board](#) must take into account the programme requirements and ensure the learning outcomes are fulfilled.

7.4 A student whose health (or other) problems have prevented her / him making academic progress in the previous session, for example, in a second repeat of Year 1, will be referred to the appropriate Programme Leader

for guidance on suitable courses of action.

Non-Approval of Exceptional Factors

8.1 If the Panel decides that a student's absence, failure to submit work, or poor performance, was not caused by Exceptional Factors, or that the claim and / or evidence provided does not demonstrate Exceptional Factors, the claim will not be accepted.

8.2 This means that the University has decided that the assessment was not affected by the circumstances and the mark awarded by the [Assessment Board](#) will stand.

Communication of Decisions to Students

8.3 Students will be notified of the decision by the Panel within 5 working days of the Panel meeting.

8.4 A report of the decision will also be forwarded to the Programmes Officer for consideration at the appropriate [Assessment Board](#).

8.5 The decisions of the Exceptional Factors Panel and [Assessment Board](#) are final and any challenge to these decisions must be submitted via the [Academic Appeals Procedure](#).

Student Sickness Certification Procedure

9.1 Students must inform their Head of Department regarding absence due to illness as soon as possible.

9.2 Medical Certificates or other signed

statements are only required where a student is:

- absent due to illness for 7 or more days and / or
- absent due to illness from an examination or assessment

9.3 Illnesses of one to six days duration should be reported to the Head of Department using the Student Self Certificate for Absence due to Illness.

9.4 The University is obliged in certain circumstances to inform official bodies (such as Local Education Authorities and the [Student Loans Company](#)) of absences and in cases where this is done student financial support may be withheld by such bodies.

Additional Information

This Procedure forms part of the University's regulatory framework. Other institutional Policies and Procedures that relate to Assessment include:

- [Undergraduate Assessment Regulations](#)
- [Taught Postgraduate Assessment Regulations](#)
- [Procedure for Addressing Academic Misconduct](#)
- [Procedure for Consideration of Exceptional Factors](#)
- [Procedure for Academic Appeals and Review of Assessment-Related Matters](#)
- [Student Complaints Procedure](#)
- [Assessment Arrangements for Disabled Students](#)
- [Procedure for the Suspension and Expulsion of Students on the Grounds of Professional Unsuitability](#)



Support and Guidance

Further support and guidance in relation to these Assessment Regulations is available from the following locations:

Assessment Regulations Website
www.mmu.ac.uk/assessment-regulations

Student Hubs
www.mmu.ac.uk/students/hubs

Faculty Student Support Officers
www.mmu.ac.uk/sas/student-services/student-support-officers.php

Students' Union Advice Centre
www.theunionmmu.org/your-advice-centre
Tel: 0161 247 6533
Email: s.u.advice@mmu.ac.uk

