



## Assessment Policies: Exceptional Circumstances Policy 2018-2019

(For all students EXCEPT new 1<sup>st</sup> year Undergraduate students)

### Overarching Framework

Students may experience circumstances which are unforeseen and outside of their control which they feel may have had a significant impact on their academic performance e.g. in an exam or other form of summative assessment. Such circumstances might include, but are not limited to, illness, being victim to a crime, injury, personal/family problems or bereavement. The School defines exceptional circumstances in the General Academic Regulations as “sudden, unforeseen, out of the student’s own control and proximate to the assessment(s) in question”

The School offers four options for students whose assessment performance is affected by such circumstances.

*Before an assessment deadline or examination sitting*

1. **Extensions:** this applies to coursework and dissertations/projects only. Students who experience exceptional circumstances before an assessment deadline may apply for an extension.
2. **Deferral:** This applies when a student has received tuition but:
  - i) is unable to submit an assessment by the published deadline or within the 10 working days allowed by an extension *or*
  - ii) has determined they cannot sit an examination before entering the examination room and wishes to postpone the assessment to the next available opportunity. The student may request a deferral before or on the day of an assessment, but not after the assessment completion deadline.

*After an assessment deadline or examination sitting*

3. **Exceptional Circumstances (EC):** This applies to students who have attempted the assessment but believe their performance has been affected by circumstances beyond their control. This can include missing a coursework/project deadline. However, students who do not attend an exam without first seeking a deferral will be marked as absent, which will count as one of their attempts at the assessment.
4. **Repeat Teaching (RT):** A student who feels that circumstances prevented them from fully engaging with the teaching they received, and who have assessment attempts remaining, may apply for RT. The student would be re-assessed in line with the standard assessment pattern for the course(s) being taken e.g. in the January exam period or during term time. Students may apply for RT upon receipt of their results.

This document should be read in conjunction with the School’s policy and procedures on Extensions, Deferrals and Repeat Teaching.

# The Exceptional Circumstances Policy

## Regulations underpinning this policy

- [General Academic Regulations \(for all students except new undergraduate students starting 2018-2019\)](#)
- [Regulations for first degrees \(for all students except new undergraduate students starting 2018-2019\)](#)
- [Regulations for taught masters degrees for students entering in the 2018/19 academic year](#)
- [Regulations for Certificates](#)
- [Regulations for Diplomas](#)
- [Code for Good Practice in Teaching, Learning and Assessment](#)
- [Appeal Regulations](#)

### 1. Exceptional Circumstances: Scope and Purpose

- 1.1 Students must submit their assessments and sit their exams at the deadlines or times prescribed by the School. It is recognised that exceptional, serious and acute problems may arise that may genuinely affect a student's ability to fulfil these requirements.

If a student experiences such difficulties prior to a deadline or exam sitting, the Extension Policy (for coursework only) or Deferral Procedures should be followed. The School determines that by submitting an assessment or by entering the exam room a student is declaring themselves able to attempt the assessment.

- 1.2 However, if a student has attempted an assessment and experienced difficulties which they feel may have had an impact on their performance, they must submit details of their Exceptional Circumstance (ECs) for consideration by the Sub Boards of Examiners within the following deadlines.

- **January exams;** no later than seven calendar days after a student's last exam;
- **Summative assessments during term time;** no later than seven calendar days after the submission deadline of a student's last assessment;
- **Summer exams;** no later than seven calendar days after a student's last assessment which could be a project or dissertation which is due after the exam period.
- **12 Month Master's dissertations/project work;** no later than seven calendar days after the submission deadline.

- 1.3 If the seventh calendar day after the last assessment falls on a bank holiday, then an EC submission form and evidence will still be accepted on the next working day **after** the bank holiday. Any documentation submitted after this deadline may not be considered by the Sub-board of Examiners.

- 1.4 This policy applies to all forms of summative assessment which counts towards a degree classification. It does not apply to formative assessment.

### 2. General Information, Requirements and Entitlements

- 2.1 LSE academic regulations state that that students should request an extension or deferral prior to the assessment deadline wherever possible and the Sub-board of Examiners

reserve the right to determine whether or not it was appropriate for the student to attempt the assessment or whether they should have sought an extension or deferral.

- 2.2** LSE operates a 'Fit to Sit' Policy. Students are strongly advised not to sit an examination or undertake an assessment if they feel unable to do so.
- 2.3** EC submissions must be supported by adequate evidence. Please refer to the standards of evidence for the types of evidence required.
- 2.4** Students may submit ECs in relation to any assessment or component of assessment and must list on the EC form each component of assessment they wish to be considered.
- 2.5** If less than all components of assessment for a course are affected by ECs, the student will be expected to attempt and complete all other components in accordance with published deadlines.
- 2.6** Sub-boards of Examiners cannot guess, assume or predict how a student's circumstances might have affected them. Therefore students need to write a statement explaining how they feel the circumstances affected their wellbeing and their performance in an assessment or examination
- 2.7** If the ECs are of a kind where the student feels their performance was affected because they were worried about somebody else's wellbeing (for example a very sick relative), then where possible they should provide evidence of that illness. However, in such cases the School will also need evidence of how these circumstances specifically impacted the student's own wellbeing. Therefore, students should also provide information and evidence relating to the impact of these circumstances on their own health and wellbeing.
- 2.8** Submitting an EC form to the Student Services Centre is the only way for students to make the relevant Sub-boards of Examiners aware of their circumstances when it considers their results.
- 2.9** The School will consider all EC submissions in confidence. Information submitted through the EC procedure will only be made available to staff who are directly involved with the process.
- 2.10** Individual marks will never be changed as a result of ECs. Rather, for resitting or deferred first year students or second year students, the Sub-board of Examiners can only consider ECs if a student has failed a half or full unit course, or been unable to complete all components of a course e.g. failure to submit an assessment or sit an exam resulting in a Zero Incomplete mark. The Sub-board of Examiners may recommend that the failed, absent or non-submitted course mark be discounted i.e. removed from the student's academic record or a further exceptional attempt at the assessment be awarded. For Finalist students, the Sub-board of Examiners may consider whether to award a higher degree classification than a student's overall mark profile would ordinarily allow Therefore, Sub-boards of Examiners may recommend the following to the School Board of Examiners (SBE) or Graduate School Board of Examiners (GSBE):
  - For continuing students: that an attempt at an assessment be discounted so the student may be provided the opportunity to resubmit any failed components of that course. The marks for any passed components will be banked and contribute to the new mark. Discounted assessment attempts will be taken in the equivalent assessment period of the following academic year.

- For continuing students: that the student may be granted an additional attempt at an assessment. The student will then have the opportunity to resubmit any failed components of that course. The marks for any passed components will be banked and contribute to the new mark. Additional assessment attempts will be taken in the equivalent assessment period of the following academic year.
  - For final year students: that, at the point of classification the normal classification rules might be suspended so that a borderline student is awarded a higher degree classification than their overall mark profile would ordinarily allow. Sub-boards of Examiners must consider whether the student meets the following conditions:
    - a) be very close to the next higher classification boundary, normally within 3 marks of a single full unit course or 5 marks on aggregate
    - b) have marks in that higher classification range
    - c) clearly be able to show that the assessment(s) in question were significantly and negatively affected by exceptional circumstances which were unforeseen and beyond their control
    - d) be able to show that their performance in the affected assessment(s) was significantly out of line with their performance in other, unaffected assessments.
- 2.11** For all continuing students who pass all of their courses, their submitted EC form will be filed and considered at the point of final classification. At this point, if the student has a borderline mark profile, the Sub-board of Examiners may consider whether to award a higher degree classification than the student's overall mark profile would ordinarily allow.
- 2.12** Where a student is aware of their circumstances before their results are known then they must submit an Exceptional Circumstances Form within the seven day deadline.
- 2.13** It is an important part of the exceptional Circumstances procedure that information about exceptional circumstances are submitted before results are known. This is so that the Exam Boards can properly consider them at the point of classification and if necessary suspend the regulations before results are formally released.
- 2.14** Exceptional circumstances that are not declared within the seven day deadline normally cannot later be taken into account, i.e. they cannot be used as the basis for an appeal unless there is an extremely compelling reason why the circumstances were not declared to the School within the seven day deadline.
- 2.15** Failing a course or failing to be awarded a degree is not considered to be evidence that the assessment was affected by exceptional circumstances.
- 2.16** Any re-assessment approved will be undertaken without tuition and no fees are applied. Students may be offered, but are not automatically entitled to, additional tutorials or supervision.
- 2.17** Students undertaking additional or discounted attempts will have access to LSE's facilities such as the library, LSE Life and other learning resources for study support, although there may be limited availability of some resources during LSE holiday periods.
- 2.18** Students with a declared disability will receive the specified Reasonable Adjustments or Individual Examination Adjustments (IEA) provisions awarded for all other assessments

when taking additional or discounted attempts. Please see [here](#) for information regarding applying for Individual Exam Adjustments or an Inclusion Plan.

**2.19** The EC procedure is available to students at all levels of study.

### **3. Procedure for Submitting an Exceptional Circumstances Form and Evidence**

**3.1** Students must complete an Exceptional Circumstances Form. This must be accompanied by appropriate official corroborating evidence as set out in the School's [Standards of Evidence procedure](#).

**3.2** The form must be submitted to the [Student Services Centre](#) (SSC). It is the student's responsibility to provide all relevant documentation.

**3.3** Students who can obtain corroborating evidence but will not be able to submit the evidence within the seven day deadline must still complete and submit the form and clearly note on the form that the evidence will follow shortly. The evidence must then be submitted as soon as possible.

**3.4** Where a student is unable to meet the evidence standard as set out in section 4.1 above, they must submit any corroborating evidence they do have within the normal deadline or as soon as possible as above. It is not possible for Sub-boards of Examiners or the Graduate or School Boards of Examiners to consider evidence once results have been formally ratified. Therefore, evidence must be submitted in good time.

**3.5** Students are encouraged to discuss their circumstances with their Academic Mentor in order to ensure full support and referral to other appropriate sources of support. However, students must ensure they also submit an EC form and evidence to the SSC.

**3.6** Students will be sent an email to their LSE account confirming that their request has been received. A record that an EC form has been submitted will be kept.

**3.7** Where students have submitted assessments throughout the academic year and/or main summer exam period and submitted ECs relating to a failed course, the ECs will be considered at the end of the academic year. If the ECs do not relate to a failed course they will be considered at the end of the degree programme when the Sub-board of Examiners determines the overall degree classification.

**3.8** ECs submitted by 3rd year UG and 9 Month Masters students will be considered in July. ECs submitted by 12 Month Masters students will be considered between September and November.

**3.9** Where a discounted attempt at assessment has been approved the fail or absence mark will not appear on the student's profile in [LSE for You](#) or on their final transcript. If a discounted attempt has been granted and the student can be re-assessed, or if they have exhausted attempts and have been granted an exceptional third attempt, the [Results Team](#) will inform the student of this by email.

**3.10** Where ECs relate to a student's overall classification, they will not be sent notification of the Sub-Board decision but will need to check their results on [LSE for You](#) when they are formally [published](#). If an adjustment has been made it will be reflected in the award shown on [LSE for You](#) on the day the results are released. If the overall award has not been adjusted on [LSE for You](#) it means the normal regulations have been applied.

#### **4. Format and Marking of Re-assessment Due to ECs**

- 4.1** Students will be assessed under the syllabus of the original assessment.
- 4.2** Additional or discounted attempt tasks will be as rigorous as the first assessment, and measure the same learning outcomes and breadth of subject matter.
- 4.3** Where it is not possible to exactly replicate the first format of assessment for a discounted or additional attempt e.g. a group project, an alternative method of assessment can be set with the agreement of the External Examiner. The alternative assessment will be as rigorous as the original assessment in the same way as above.

#### **5. Students with Long-Term Health Conditions**

- 5.1** Where a student has a longer-term health condition, they must contact Student Disability and Wellbeing Service directly as soon as possible so that LSE can ensure that reasonable adjustments are implemented to support study and assessments.
- 5.2** Sub and School Boards of Examiners will not be notified of any Individual Exam Adjustments (IEAs) that a student has in place or of their health condition. The Disability and Well-Being Service will not pass on any information about a student's circumstances to these Boards. Therefore, students must submit an Exceptional Circumstances form if they feel that the even with the IEAs in place, their performance in the assessment was impacted or if there are other circumstances which they wish to bring to the attention of the Boards.
- 5.3** Students who have informed their Department in person about a long-term health condition, or their experience of exceptional circumstances, must still submit an EC form with evidence. All marks and exceptional circumstances are considered anonymously at Board meetings and therefore, the only way in which circumstances can be considered by the Boards is by submitting an Exceptional Circumstances form with evidence to the Student Services Centre. This includes if a student has requested and was granted an extension but still feels that their performance was impacted by circumstances beyond their control.

#### **6. Sources of Support**

- 6.1** If a student experiences difficulties and requires advice, they may wish to approach their Supervisor or Academic Mentor in the first instance. Please note, however, that any information given to the department will only be made available to the Sub-Board if the student submits an Exceptional Circumstances Form.
- 6.2** If a student would like further support in relation to sexual violence, including sexual harassment, a Safe Contact will be able to refer them to LSE and external specialist sources of support.
- 6.3** For specific advice on submitting the Form, and on degree and classification regulations, students should contact the Advice Team.
- 6.4** The Students' Union Advice Service can provide independent advice.