

STUDENT GUIDANCE - EXTENSION, DEFERRAL AND EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES POLICIES

These arrangements apply to any assessments taken and due for submission during the 2020/21 academic year. This includes the Undergraduate In-Year Resit and Deferred Assessment Period (UG RDAP) and the Taught Postgraduate dissertation submission period. The policies will be reviewed again ahead of the January 2022 postgraduate resit and deferred assessment period and do not apply to the 2021/22 academic year.

Background

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic means these remain uncertain and difficult times for the whole LSE community, especially for students who are due to take assessments and who may have many competing priorities and concerns. To support and reassure you, we have made, and retained, significant changes to some key policies and procedures. We want you to have the best and fairest opportunity to demonstrate and achieve your potential despite the current circumstances.

Please read below for information about the updated policies – they have been amended to offer flexibility where possible, and to make things as fair and easy as possible for students while maintaining the appropriate academic rigour that we know all students would expect.

We appreciate that it may be a lot of information to take in, under unprecedented circumstances which may be unsettling. There will always be staff available to help you navigate these policies and guide you through your options. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you simply want further guidance or someone to support you as you make a decision, please do not hesitate to contact staff; for example, the [Student Services Advice Team](#) or your Department.

We realise that in the coming weeks you may not be able to obtain evidence of medical conditions, or of self-isolation or other COVID-19-related circumstances such as caring for dependents etc. We also recognise you may be indirectly impacted by COVID-19 and may have difficulty seeking medical attention or obtaining evidence for unrelated conditions. In addition, the changes to learning and assessment formats may have an impact on you. Considering this, the School has therefore revised – and in some cases removed – the requirement for corroborating evidence for *some* of its processes.

In short:

- Evidence **will not be required** for Deferrals – Deferrals will be granted on request without evidence.
- Evidence **will not normally be required**, for Extensions, *but may assist* in the consideration of your request.
- Evidence **requirements will be more lenient** for Exceptional Circumstances (ECs).

If you are worried about difficulties with completing assessments, please consider the information below very carefully and seek further guidance from the [Student Services Advice Team](#) if you remain unsure about the processes described below.

Fit to Sit/Submit

The School has a *fit to sit/ fit to submit* policy, where by attempting a summative assessment, you are declaring yourself fit to complete it. “Fit” in this instance does not only apply just to physical or mental health, but other factors which may affect your academic performance. Examples include, but are not limited to, general anxiety about COVID-19, concerns about an unwell family member, caring responsibilities, or lack of technical resources to complete an online assessment.

You need to decide if you are fit and able to sit and if you're not, you should defer. We acknowledge that in the current circumstances, there are additional factors that may affect your fitness/ability to sit and that it may well not be possible to get evidence of these factors and/or their impact on you. In recognition of this, we've revised the evidence requirements around requesting an extension (i.e. evidence will not normally be required, *but may assist* in the consideration of your request) and removed entirely the requirement for evidence when deferring.

We advise you to defer your assessment if you know you are not fit to sit ahead of an assessment period, but we also recognise the ongoing impact COVID-19 may have on your ability to perform at your best academically, whilst not rendering you unable to sit/submit an assessment. You should always submit [Exceptional Circumstances \(ECs\)](#) if you feel your performance has been affected by circumstances that have impacted you as an individual. You should think very carefully before sitting/submitting an assessment, if you are not fully fit/able to do so. Moreover, you should bear in mind that if you do attempt an assessment and submit ECs, they will be considered in the normal way and will not lead to any change to the mark for the assessment.

Extension requests

If you are struggling to meet a deadline due to circumstances outside of your control, you can request an extension. There are many reasons for requesting an extension, including but not limited to sudden equipment or technology failure, short-term illness, caring responsibilities etc.

As previously, extensions can only be considered and granted for coursework assessments; in the case of assessments replacing exams, that means assessments with a duration longer than 24 hours. Extensions will not be granted for assessments lasting 24 hours or less. You should request an extension before the submission deadline of your coursework assessment. Extension requests submitted after the deadline cannot be considered.

For assessments with durations of 3 weeks or less, the maximum extension that you will be able to request is 50% of the assessment period concerned; e.g. for a two-week assessment, the maximum permitted extension will be one week. You will need to give a reason for your request, with a clear supporting statement, *but evidence will not necessarily be required*. However, if you can provide supporting evidence, it may help your request be more successful or determine how much additional time you may have. We recognise that it may be difficult, or even impossible, to obtain evidence under current circumstances, e.g. for medical conditions, so please submit what you can, and explain your case in your request. Please visit our webpage for more information on the School's revised [Standard of Evidence policy](#).

You should request an extension using your department's usual procedures; there is further guidance available on the [Extension Policy web page](#). The School will continue to apply penalties for the late submission of coursework assessments where an extension has not been agreed.

Deferrals

We understand that you may encounter circumstances which are sudden, unforeseen, outside of your control and proximate to your assessment. If you find yourself in a situation where you are not able to attempt or complete an assessment, or obtain a suitable extension, you should request a deferral. While we think it best that all students, where possible, complete their assessments at the earliest opportunity, you should not attempt an assessment if you are in any doubt about your capacity to perform in it to the best of your ability.

We recognise the extraordinary circumstances that have impacted on everyone as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we will continue to do what we can to mitigate its impact on our students. As part of our efforts, we have retained the temporary deferral procedure, which is as follows:

You will be permitted to request a deferral based on self-declaration; this means if you wish to defer, you will not need to provide evidence, and you will not need to seek approval from your Department. However, we would encourage you to discuss your circumstances and intention to defer with either your programme director or academic mentor before you proceed. The final decision will, of course, be yours. You can request to defer for any reason (it does not need to be related to COVID-19), and it will be approved.

You should request to defer if there are *any* circumstances which mean you cannot attempt the assessment to the best of your ability. These circumstances might include, but are not limited to:

- Illness, including mental health difficulties, at the time of the assessment;
- Illness, including mental health difficulties, before the assessment which left you unable to prepare adequately;
- Family circumstances (e.g. caring responsibilities);
- Environmental factors (e.g. not having the equipment or environment which is suitable for you to complete online assessments).

If there are any circumstances which are likely to significantly affect your performance, or leave you unable to attempt an assessment, you **must** request a deferral and you **must** ensure that you complete the deferral form in good time as set out below. On your deferral form, please indicate the reason(s) for your deferral. If you select “other”, please give a brief explanation.

If you do not request a deferral in time and then feel that your performance was affected by your circumstances, or if you were unable to submit the assessment at all, you must submit [Exceptional Circumstances \(ECs\)](#) as detailed below. You are also strongly encouraged to contact the [Student Services Advice Team](#) as soon as possible to discuss your options.

Please note, if you have a visa to study in the UK, deferring your assessments may have implications and you should read the information [COVID immigration advice](#) before you defer. If, having read the FAQs on the page, you have any further queries regarding your options and obligations, you must discuss your situation with the [International Student Visa Advice Team](#) as soon as possible who would be happy to offer you advice.

How to defer an assessment

You should complete the deferral form which is available on the [Student Services deferral webpage](#). You will simply need to complete the form stating which assessment(s) you want to defer, and you will receive email confirmation in due course when your request has been approved. If you do not receive confirmation, it is your responsibility to follow up and check that your deferral was received and that your request was valid. We would advise you to defer in plenty of time prior to the assessment to ensure that you receive the confirmation prior to the assessment deadline/release.

- **For 24-hour take-home assessments and shorter time limited assessments:**
You can only apply for deferral up to the date and time the assessment is *first* released. You cannot defer once the assessment has been made available to download. If you have not deferred by the time the assessment is released, e.g. before 11.59am (GMT) on the day when the 24-hour assessment starts at 12:00 noon, you are declaring yourself ‘fit to sit/fit to submit’ and you will be expected to sit and submit the assessment. If you after the assessment is released, you are unable to attempt it, or perform to the best of your ability, you must submit [Exceptional Circumstances \(ECs\)](#).

- **For coursework and assessments longer than 24 hours:**

You can apply to defer up to the relevant submission deadline(s). If you have been granted an extension, you can apply to defer up to the extended deadline.

Once your deferral is processed, you will automatically be entered to take the deferred assessment(s) at the next suitable opportunity.

- For undergraduate students, this will be the Undergraduate Resit and Deferred Assessment Period (UG RDAP) in late summer 2021.
- For postgraduate students, this will be the Postgraduate Resit and Deferred Assessment Period (PG RDAP) during the January 2022 exam period.

If you are still not able to sit your deferred assessment(s) (for the same or different reasons), you may seek to defer again under the procedure in place at that time. You will have to complete a new deferral request to do this.

What if I change my mind about deferring an assessment?

You can change your mind and decide to submit an assessment that you have previously deferred. In such instances the School will consider that despite the earlier deferral request, you have declared yourself 'fit to sit/fit to submit'. If you would like to withdraw your deferral request, you do not need to inform the School and should simply attempt your assessment in the normal way. Your deferral will be voided, and the assessment will be marked. If after having deferred, you subsequently view/access an online assessment, you will be considered to have declared yourself 'fit to sit/fit to submit' and that you are making an attempt to submit the assessment. Therefore, any previous deferral for the assessment will be voided automatically.

Deferring and Maximum Period of Registration

Every taught programme has a maximum period of registration: this is five years for a three-year undergraduate programme, six years for a four-year undergraduate programme, and three years for a Masters programme. If by deferring an assessment you will extend your studies beyond the maximum period, you may not be permitted to continue with your studies, irrespective of any outstanding assessment opportunities. If you are unsure whether you are likely to exceed your maximum period of registration or require any further advice on this, please contact the [Student Services Centre](#) in plenty of time before your deferral deadline.

Exceptional Circumstances (ECs)

If you attempt an assessment but decide that your circumstances had a significant detrimental impact on your performance in a way you could not have fully anticipated, you should submit [Exceptional Circumstances \(ECs\)](#). The School defines these as "*sudden, unforeseen, out of the student's own control and proximate to the assessment(s) in question.*" As deferring is now more straightforward and evidence free, you will need to provide a reasonable explanation as to why you did not take the opportunity to defer. The School will not request material evidence from you to support your explanation, but you are encouraged to submit what you can in support of your EC submission. You should submit ECs within the deadline set out below using the Exceptional Circumstances form, which is available via the [Student Services Exceptional Circumstances webpage](#).

If you were unable to submit a deferral request, you **should** submit Exceptional Circumstances if you have experienced a unique, significant impact due to COVID-19 pandemic and/or other circumstances:

- Been ill with COVID-19 or otherwise;

- Experienced the exacerbation of an existing health condition, including a mental health condition, due to the pandemic or for other reasons. For example, if you suffer from long-term anxiety and stress and this was suddenly exacerbated during the assessment by factors outside of your control, such as technical issues in uploading your work;
- Experienced the death or serious illness of someone close to you;
- Taken on exceptional caring responsibilities due to COVID-19. For example, it was not possible/practical to make alternative caring arrangements to allow you to sit an assessment, or the person(s) you care for required unexpected care during your assessment
- Been required to carry out more paid work than usual, as a “key worker” (e.g. in healthcare, retail, delivery etc.);
- Experienced significant and prolonged problems with access to teaching and learning materials, e.g. due to connectivity, power, equipment issues or because your time-zone is significantly out of step with the UK;
- Needed to sit an exam in the early hours of the morning, or late at night due to your time zone or another mitigating factor. For example, time zone issues may be inconvenient, but are there additional factors that meant this had a significant impact on you such as a pre-existing medical condition and/or needing to take medication at a specific time that may impact your performance at certain times of the day;
- Experienced issues with hardware, e.g., your laptop failing during an assessment or not having access to appropriate technology;
- Needed to sit an assessment in an inappropriate location. For example, your working environment was not conducive to sitting an assessment, but due to circumstances beyond your control, such as a pandemic related lockdown, you were unable to sit it somewhere more suitable;
- More generally, the circumstances may include, but are not limited to, illness (including mental health difficulties), injury, bereavement, procedural issues, personal or family difficulties or being victim of a crime;

In your statement you should clearly explain the *impact* your circumstances have had on you. Your ECs will be considered anonymously so you should not presume that the Exam Boards have any prior knowledge of your circumstances or situation. You need to ensure that you explain:

- When the circumstances occurred, including any significant deterioration of ongoing circumstances/conditions etc.;
- How these circumstances impacted on you at the time of the assessment;
- What you did to limit the impact of the circumstances before and during the assessment;
- Why you could not submit by the deadline;
- Why you could not defer
- Why you chose to sit/submit an assessment if you were not fully fit/able to do so.

We recognise that it is not always possible to obtain proximate evidence in support of ECs, and that this may be particularly true when there is extra strain on health services due to COVID-19. Please submit any evidence and/or supporting documentation that you can obtain which may support your case – this may be for example, a medical note/letter, death certificate, police report, prescriptions, written correspondence with the School (including statements from Academic Mentors or DWS staff) and so on. Please visit our webpage for more information on the School’s revised [Standard of Evidence policy](#).

ECs are the **only** way information about mitigating circumstances particular to you can be considered, whether COVID-19 related or otherwise. Exam Boards will not be informed of any communications you had with your Department, Student Services, the Student Wellbeing Service, your Academic Mentor or

any other part of the School, so it is essential that you submit ECs if you want this information to be taken into account.

The deadline to submit ECs for programmes with a summer exam board (i.e., undergraduate and 9/10 month PGT programmes) is fourteen days after your final ST assessment or **by 25 June 2021 at the latest, whichever is earlier**. The deadline for 12-month PGT programmes is seven days after your final summative assessment for the academic year (e.g. your summer dissertation/project deadline). All students are encouraged to submit as soon as possible. If you want to submit ECs, please submit an EC form and supporting evidence using the [Student Services Enquiry Form](#).

The deadline to submit ECs following resit and deferred assessment periods is five days after your final assessment taken during the relevant resit and deferred assessment period.

Again, we must stress that if you are not well enough to complete an assessment, you should seek deferral or an extension as appropriate. Evidence is not required for deferral, and not normally required for extensions but may help in the consideration of your request.

Please visit our web pages for further information on [Exceptional Circumstances](#).

Page last updated on 8 March 2021