

## STUDENT GUIDANCE - EXTENSION, DEFERRAL AND EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES POLICIES

**These arrangements apply to Summer Term assessments and until further notice after that (for review prior to the 2020/21 academic year), and they supersede arrangements in place earlier in the 2019/20 academic session.**

### Background

The Coronavirus (C-19) pandemic means these are 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 significant changes to some key policies and procedures. We want you to have the best and fairest opportunity to achieve and demonstrate 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 appropriate academic rigour that we know all students would expect in assessment.

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](#), your Department and so on.

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

In short:

- Evidence **will not be required** for Deferrals – this is different from previous practice. 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– this is different from previous practice.
- Evidence **will be required** for Exceptional Circumstances (ECs) – this is the same as previous practice.

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](#), whereby 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, concerns about an unwell family member, caring responsibilities, or lack of technical resources to complete an online assessment.

The School will continue to apply a *fit to sit/fit to submit* policy, so if you submit an assessment, or commence a timed take-home assessment, we consider you have declared yourself fit enough to do so.

## **Extension requests**

The School will continue to apply penalties for the late submission of coursework assessments. 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 this case, that means assessments with a duration longer than 24 hours. Extensions will not be granted for assessments lasting 24 hours or less.

You can request an extension before the submission deadline of your coursework assessment, requests submitted after the deadline cannot be considered.

For this assessment period, 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. 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.

You can request an extension using your department’s usual procedures; there is further guidance available [here](#).

## **Deferrals**

In these difficult times, you must think carefully about whether you are fit to sit your assessment. If you are not, you should defer to the next appropriate assessment period.

As before, we recognise that you may encounter circumstances which are sudden, unforeseen, outside of your control and proximate to your assessment. They may have a significant impact on your academic performance in a summative assessment. If you are in a situation where you are not able to attempt or complete an assessment, or obtain a suitable extension, you should request deferral. While we think it best that all students 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 are not able to apply retrospective remedial action if you knowingly attempt an assessment under these conditions, declaring yourself ‘fit to sit/fit to submit’ by doing so.

We recognise the extraordinary circumstances that are impacting on everyone as a result of the C-19 outbreak, and we will continue to do what we can to mitigate its impact on our students. As part of our

efforts, we have introduced a temporary deferral procedure which will apply for the Summer Term and until further notice, as such:

**You will be permitted to request 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 as was required previously. You can request deferral for any reason (it does not need to be related to C-19), and it will be approved.**

You should request deferral 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 affect your performance, or leave you unable to attempt an assessment, you **must** request 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 for your deferral. If you select “other”, please give a brief explanation.

*Please note, if you have a visa to study in the UK, deferring your assessments may have implications and you should read the information [here](#) before you defer. If, having read the FAQs, 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**

We are currently preparing a new online deferral form for Summer Term assessments. This will be available by 27 April on the [Student Services deferral webpage](#). You will simply need to complete the online form stating which individual assessment, course or courses you want to defer, and you will get an automated email confirmation when it is received. If you do not receive confirmation, it is your responsibility to follow up and check that your deferral was received.

- **For 24-hour take-home assessments and shorter timed 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 (UK time) on the day when the 24-hour assessment starts at 12:00 noon, you are declaring yourself fit to sit. If you find that after this, you are unable to attempt the assessment, or perform to the best of your ability, you must submit [Exceptional Circumstances](#) (ECs). In this situation, extension and deferral are not options.
- **For coursework (assessments longer than 24 hours)**, you can apply for deferral up to the submission deadline. If you have been granted an extension, you can apply for deferral up to the extended deadline.

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

- For undergraduate students, this will be the In-Year Resit and Deferred Assessment Period (IRDAP) in late summer 2020.

- For postgraduate students, the next suitable opportunity will be in the equivalent assessment period in 2020/21 (i.e. if you are deferring a May/June assessment, it will be scheduled to take place in May/June 2021).

All re-sit and deferred assessments for undergraduates in IRDAP 2020 will be delivered online. The arrangements and format for re-sit and deferred assessments for all postgraduates, and for undergraduates who defer from IRDAP 2020 to the next academic session, will be announced in due course.

If you are still not able to sit at the next suitable opportunity (for the same or different reasons), you may seek deferral again under the procedure in place at that time. You will have to complete a new deferral request.

These arrangements will apply at least until the end of the 2019/20 academic session.

If you change your mind and decide to submit a Summer Term assessment that you have previously deferred, the deferral will automatically be voided, and your assessment will be marked in the normal way. However, in such instances the School will consider that despite the earlier deferral request, you have declared yourself fit to submit and the mark will stand.

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). However, please note that the Exam Boards will be looking for evidence of why you did not defer or seek an extension, as well as evidence of the circumstances which were sudden, unexpected and affected your performance. You are also strongly encouraged to contact the Student Services Advice team as soon as possible to discuss your options. If you underperform but still pass a course, we are unable to adjust individual marks; however, clear guidance will be given to all those involved in the awarding of your degree to ensure that your ECs are considered fairly, with due regard given to your circumstances and their possible impact on your academic performance. Exam Boards will also be permitted to exercise discretion for all students (without the need to submit additional ECs) at the time of making final classification decisions (whether they are a finalist this year or in future years) to take into account the C-19 related disruptions that the 2020 cohort experienced during the Summer Term assessment period.

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

If your performance in an assessment is affected by **any** circumstances beyond your control, or if you are unable to complete and submit an assessment because of circumstances beyond your control, you **must** 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.”* This means that ECs are only valid if the circumstances became apparent after the assessment started. They 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.

We recognise that it is not always possible to obtain proximate evidence, and that this may be particularly true when there is extra strain on health services due to C-19. Please submit any evidence which you can obtain which may support your case – this may be a medical note, prescriptions, written correspondence with the School and so on. You will also be expected to explain clearly on the form why you did not defer or seek an extension.

ECs are the **only** way the Exam Board can consider information about mitigating circumstances. The Exam Board 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 is seven days after your final summative assessment in the academic year. If you want to submit ECs, please submit an EC form and supporting evidence [here](#).

Again, we must stress that if you are not well enough to complete an assessment, you should seek deferral or an extension as appropriate and please remember that evidence is not required for either of these processes.

For further information on Exceptional Circumstances, please see [here](#)