

Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure

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1. Amendment History:

Version Number:	Effective Date:	Summary of Amendments:	Author:
1.1	29th July 2021	Updating of areas of business, job titles, addition of 'apprentices' to policy body.	Student Administration Assistant
1.2	15th August 2023	Scheduled review: - Updated links Routine updates (eg dept and role titles)	Student Administration Assistant, Assistant Registrar
1.3	18th June 2024	Scheduled review: - Routine updates section on Learning Support Plans was reviewed in line with recent updated guidance on Equality Act	Assistant Registrar
2.0	1st September 2025	Scheduled review. - Routine updates - Updated links - Updated template	Assistant Registrar

2. Purpose

2.1 This policy and procedure sets out how Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances (EMCs) will be considered and the responsibilities of all parties.

2.2 The procedure links to the requirements outlined in appendix 5 of the Lancaster University/UA92 Manual of Academic Regulations and Procedures (MARP) (see associated documents).

3. Scope

3.1 This policy and procedure applies to all current students registered on a UA92 programme.

4. Definitions (where required)

Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances	Unforeseen or unpreventable circumstances that affect a student's performance in an assessment, or prevent them for attempting an assessment.
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5. Responsibilities

Role	Responsible for
Lead Officer (Registration and Student Communications)	Primary administrator of EMC applications, including adjudication of standard cases. Supporting students with all aspects of EMC applications and following procedures. Arranging panels as required.
Registrar	Leadership responsibility for EMC Policy and Procedure
Academic staff	Supporting with EMC panels. Signposting students to EMC procedures and/or Registry for support.

6. Policy Statement

6.1 If a student's performance in, or completion of, an assessment has been seriously impaired by medical or other unforeseen exceptional adverse circumstances, then this may be considered under the EMC Policy and Procedure.

6.2 For more long-standing conditions and circumstances, the student will be expected to have made full use of the appropriate support services provided by the UA92 to have relevant adjustments made, and/or to develop coping strategies which will support them in their study. Where necessary, a student with conditions or circumstances which cannot be resolved or accommodated within their programme of study may need to consider a temporary leave of absence from the programme of study to allow them to re-engage when they are better able to benefit from the programme.

6.3 Circumstances accepted under this policy must be exceptional (i.e. serious and unusual) relative to the normal daily challenges that academic study presents, and unpredictable in that the student could not reasonably have been expected either to avoid them, or to allow for them in planning and undertaking their assessment. It is recognised that the assessment process itself can cause a student or apprentice to be more anxious or stressed than at other times of the academic year, and this should be considered as one of the normal challenges that academic study presents. Except in a very small number of cases, where the impact is serious and incapacitating, this would not be considered as a valid exceptional mitigating circumstance.

6.4 The aim of the exceptional mitigating circumstances process is to ensure that fairness and academic standards are maintained for all students who endeavour to manage the challenges inherent in academic study.

Support for Students

6.5 UA92 offers a range of student support services and opportunities to enable the student to manage the challenges and demands of academic study and encourages its students to access them.

6.6 Students with physical or mental impairments that have a substantial and long-term negative impact on their ability to study should seek support and reasonable adjustments to assessment through UA92's Student Support team. Support and reasonable adjustments would normally be approved as part of a Learning Support Plan (LSP) and would not require further adjustment using the EMC procedure. Consideration of disability as an exceptional circumstance may also be appropriate where evidence is provided that an abnormal or unforeseeable temporary change or increase in severity of the disability has occurred. The student may then use the EMC procedure to support their study.

6.7 Students with disabilities can claim EMCs where adjustments have not been made in time for an assessment, so long as the delay in the implementation of the adjustments was not caused by the student.

6.8 Circumstances that may be considered under this policy and procedures are:

Circumstances	Notes (examples)
Exceptional Medical Circumstances	E.g. hospitalisation, or incapacitation through injury, illness, or mental health crisis.
Medical circumstances currently covered by a Learning Support Plan (LSP)	Temporary escalation of an existing medical condition for students who already have a LSP in place with the Inclusive Support Team.
Close bereavement	The following relatives are accepted as 'close': partner, child, parent, sibling, grandparent, and grandchild. Housemates or very close friends may also be considered as 'close', though evidence of the relationship may be required.
Victim of a serious crime	Being the victim of a crime that can be evidenced through official documentation.
Exceptional and unforeseeable transport difficulties	E.g. major transport incidents, cancelled flights. This does not include every-day issues e.g. traffic congestion, missed buses or trains.
Legal proceedings requiring attendance	Being involved with legal proceedings that require direct involvement and that can be evidenced through official documentation.
Exceptional Personal Circumstances	E.g. events that result in a serious impact on a student or apprentice's ability to engage with academic work during the assessment period in question.

6.9 What does not qualify as an exceptional mitigating circumstance?

- i. Loss of work not backed up, computer, printing problems or other similar IT failures;
- ii. Accidental submission of an incorrect document e.g. an assignment from another module or an incomplete or earlier draft of the assignment;
- iii. In the event of electronic submission, the following will not be accepted as exceptional circumstances:
 - a) the student or apprentice submits the wrong file type or a corrupted file
 - b) the student or apprentice begins their upload after the deadline has passed

- c) a claim of technical issues with no proof of an error message/system failure on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE – typically Microsoft Teams);
- iv. Misreading of the examination timetable or instructions on assessment deadlines;
- v. English not being a first language;
- vi. Deadlines for work or assessments being set close together;
- vii. Weddings;
- viii. Constraints arising from paid employment;
- ix. Holidays;
- x. Relationship breakdown;
- xi. Moving to a new house;
- xii. Disabilities for which reasonable adjustments have been made (see 1.7 for exceptions);
- xiii. Financial difficulties;
- xiv. Planned health appointments.

6.10 Time limits for submitting an EMC claim: All EMC submissions must be received within seven days of the relevant assessment deadline.

6.11 Extending time limits: UA92 will not routinely extend time limits for submitting EMC claims. Where a student has exceptional reasons for a late submission, at its discretion, UA92 may extend a time limit for submission. Any request must be supported by evidence to support the reasons for making a late submission.

6.12 Decision: Consideration of EMCs must always take place in advance of consideration of the assessment result by the Module Board.

6.13 Notification to student: Students will typically be informed in writing (by email) within five working days of a decision being made. This will include reference to their right to appeal if they are dissatisfied with the decision. Where a claim is rejected or partially rejected, reasons will be given for the decision, in sufficient detail for student to make an informed academic appeal if they wish. The rejection of an EMC application in itself is not grounds for an Academic Appeal under UA92's related policy and procedure.

6.14 Microsoft Teams should be updated with all decisions as soon as possible and, in any case, within a week of each formal meeting.

6.15 Delays in consideration: UA92 wants to resolve EMC submissions quickly but recognises that this is not always possible and sometimes we may be unable to make a decision in line with the indicative timeframes. Where there is a delay, we will write to affected students with an explanation and inform them of the timeframe in which the procedure will be completed. UA92 will provide progress updates to student as appropriate.

7 Implementation, Communication and Training (where required)

EMC Procedure

7.1 A student who wishes exceptional circumstances to be considered must apply by submitting a completed EMC form (submitted electronically via Microsoft Forms) and by providing the required evidence. Claims must be received no later than one calendar week after the deadline for the assessment or date of the examination. Should a student require the form in another format due to accessibility requirements, this can be arranged by contacting registry-EMC@ua92.ac.uk.

7.2 Claims can be submitted in advance of evidence becoming available; if a student is unable to provide evidence within seven days of the assessment deadline, they should submit the claim and confirm the expected date that evidence can be provided. Evidence must be submitted as soon as possible and, in any event, no later than either:

- i. Three weeks after the assessment deadline, or;
- ii. The date of the Module Board meeting at which marks for the assessment will be ratified (whichever is earlier).

7.3 Evidence requirements

- i. Each application must be accompanied by satisfactory supporting evidence, normally from an independent and relevantly qualified third-party professional. The evidence must give direct confirmation of the circumstances, from which it is possible to infer their effect on the student's ability to engage with work in general, or assessment tasks in particular, made at the time of those circumstances or as soon as possible thereafter.
- ii. Evidence must be provided in English or, where the original evidence is in a different language, with a translation by an independent professional third party into English. Translations by the student will not be accepted. Where medical evidence is being provided for EMCs that occurred during term time, this will only be accepted from medical professionals registered and working in the UK.
- iii. The evidence needs to indicate the period of disruption, including the duration of the impact. A doctor, for example, may be willing to report a retrospective account given to them by the student after the event, but this alone does not carry weight as evidence if the doctor simply notes that a student reports the impact.
- iv. In the event that the professional concerned did not see the student at the time of the assessment but believes that their condition would have prevented them from engaging not only with assessment, but also with professional support services, a claim can still be considered. The professional's evidence in such a case would need to explain the extent to which the circumstances would have prevented engagement with professional services.
- v. Students who are too ill, or suspect themselves to be too contagious, to attend a doctor's surgery or other support service at the time of their assessments should engage with telephone or online services.

Circumstance	Examples of evidence that would support a claim
Exceptional Medical Circumstances	A letter from a doctor, nurse or other health professional confirming the exceptional and unforeseen nature of the exceptional circumstance and the impact on the student or apprentice. Health professionals must be registered with an appropriate accrediting body in the UK. Any submission that notes only that "the student reports that..." is not acceptable, as it is not independent third-party evidence of either the circumstances or the impact on the student.
Close bereavement	A death certificate, an obituary or confirmation from an independent relevant professional e.g. a solicitor or an undertaker or an order of service from the funeral ceremony. Where not a relative, the EMC panel should see evidence of closeness of the relationship in the form

	of a statement from a third party or a tenancy agreement (in the case of a housemate).
Victim of a serious crime	Documentation from the police indicating that the student has reported a crime and the nature of the crime, an insurance claim, or medical report. A letter from a relevantly qualified professional outlining the circumstances and the impact on the student.
Exceptional and unforeseeable transport difficulties	Evidence of a major transportation incident, or a letter from the relevant transport company confirming the nature of the delay. Evidence will also be required that the circumstances described affected their question.
Legal proceedings requiring attendance	A letter from a solicitor or a court.
Exceptional Personal Circumstances that impact on the student's ability to engage in assessment activities.	A letter from a support practitioner, counsellor, religious leader, member of UA92 staff or other professional third party directly confirming that, in their professional opinion, the circumstances have had a serious impact on the student's ability to engage in assessment activities.

7.4 Decisions available to the EMC panel:

- Accept the EMCs (see potential outcomes below in section 4.1)
- Not accept the EMCs (see reasons below in 2.12)

7.5 The following examples are indicative but not exhaustive reasons for non-acceptance of an EMC application:

- The student has not submitted the claim within seven days of the assessment and has not provided or evidenced good reason for failing to do so.
- The full information required by the EMC form is incomplete. If claims are incomplete, UA92 staff will normally prompt the student for the necessary documents before any decision to reject the claim is made.
- No independent documentary evidence has been supplied to support the request (letters from family, fellow student or coaches are not normally sufficient on their own but may be submitted in addition to independent third-party evidence).
- The timing of the circumstances cited would not have adversely affected the assessment(s).
- The nature of the circumstances cited is not over and above the normal difficulties experienced in life.
- Sufficient adjustment has already been made for the same circumstances; the evidence has already been used to support adjustment for the same assessment and no new evidence has been provided.
- The circumstances in question relate to a disability for which reasonable adjustments have been made but which the student has not engaged with to a reasonable extent. For example, where mentoring or specialist tuition is provided and agreed but the student decides not to attend.
- The claim is submitted after the assessment marks have been ratified by the Module Board. Claims submitted after ratification cannot be considered by an EMC panel. Such claims must be considered as formal academic appeal under the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure.

Outcomes

7.6 The following outcomes are available in response to an accepted EMC claim, including but not limited to:

- i. The opportunity to receive a short deadline extension or the removal of the late submission cap penalty;
- ii. The opportunity to take a further assessment or submit new coursework as a first sitting, following an assessment board (for which therefore there will be no fee, the marks will not be capped and there will be a subsequent resit opportunity if required);
- iii. The opportunity to take 'as if for the first time' a different form of assessment than the original assessment;
- iv. The opportunity to retake modules with attendance (either capped or uncapped depending on individual circumstances) after all other reassessment opportunities have been exhausted, or;
- v. (For a graduating student) recommending a class of award higher than that obtained by applying the rules in the normal way.

Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances (EMC) Panel

7.7 Where the outcome of an EMC application requires further discussion and consideration, a panel will meet to discuss the case and reach a decision.

6.8 Membership of EMC Panel

- i. An EMC Panel must consist of the Chair of the panel (a member of Academic Registry staff) and one member of academic staff independent of the subject area. Quorum for meetings of the EMC Panel is two, and an EMC Panel meeting must not take place unless it is quorate. External Examiners are also entitled to attend.
- ii. Students are not permitted to attend the EMC Panel meetings.

6.9 In cases where a formal complaint has been lodged against a member of the EMC Panel by a student making a claim of EMC, or there is an evidenced conflict of interests for a member of the EMC Panel, that member should exclude themselves from consideration of the relevant case(s) and a different panel member will be appointed. Where the conflict of interest exists with the Chair of the panel, the Registrar will appoint a different Chair.

EMC panel decisions

6.10

- i. Decisions may be made either at a face-to-face meeting, or virtually (via Microsoft Teams), but in either case, adequate records of the decisions and rationale must be kept.
- ii. In the event that an EMC Panel cannot come to an agreement about whether to grant an EMC claim, the benefit of the doubt will be given to the student and the claim should be accepted.
- iii. Decisions will be reported to the Board of Examiners.

Guidance for EMC Panels

6.11 EMC Panels will be guided in their decisions by the principles outlined in this policy. If EMCs are identified, one of the outcomes in Section 2.13 will normally be applied.

6.12 The following will apply in relation to EMC claims:

- i. Where assessments are affected by exceptional mitigating circumstances, the normal timescale for completion of the programme should be adhered to as far as possible.
- ii. Consideration of exceptional circumstances must always take place in advance of consideration of the assessment result by the Module Board.
- iii. If the EMC administrator or panel has been notified of exceptional mitigating circumstances at the appropriate time but the evidence has not been supplied, it may make a provisional decision if the following conditions are met:
 - a) The student has stated the nature of the evidence.
 - b) The student has stated why it is not currently available and the administrator or panel accepts the reason(s).
 - c) The student has stated when the evidence will be available.
 - d) The student is informed that if the evidence submitted does not meet the required standard, the provisional decision will be rescinded.
 - e) The student is advised that they may complete the assessment at the standard time to ensure that they are not unduly penalised in the event that their claim is not ultimately upheld.

Example: A student has an accident close to the time of assessment and medical evidence has been requested but not supplied by the doctor in time for consideration. A deadline for appropriate evidence in such cases should be set at no more than three weeks after the submission of the original claim. In the event that the evidence is not provided by this date, the provisional acceptance must be rescinded.

- iv. When an EMC claim is submitted after the ratification of the assessment marks in question, and when the conditions relating to evidence are not met, or if the claim has been submitted beyond the seven day deadline for submission of a claim and the administrator does not consider that there is good reason for this, the EMC claim cannot be accepted and the student must follow the procedure for an academic appeal if they wish to have their circumstances considered. In such cases, the EMC administrator should notify the student that their claim has not been upheld, the reason for this, and that the student has the right to appeal the decision.
- v. All appeals must be made in line with the Academic Appeals policy and procedure <https://ua92.ac.uk/help-guidance/student-regulations/>

6.13 Any reference to named members of UA92 staff also includes reference to their nominee, and named staff may delegate their responsibilities to other appropriate members of staff without invalidating the procedure. The identity of nominees or members of staff to whom responsibilities are delegated will be notified to the student.

6.14 Advice on how to use this procedure is available from the UA92's Academic Registry team via registry-EMC@ua92.ac.uk. Academic Registry will oversee this Policy and Procedure and provide advice to all parties on the procedure.

6.15 Record keeping: UA92 will keep a record of EMC submissions made and evidence collated as part of EMC procedures. Students are advised to also keep their own records. Records will be retained in line with the UA92 Retention Policy.

7 Associated Policies and Documents

UA92/Lancaster University Manual of Academic Regulations (MARP)

Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure