

# Self-certification and Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment

There are two policies that cover extension and resit requests for assessments: Self-certification and Exceptional Circumstances. Please read the information below to see which process is the most appropriate for you.

- [Self-certification](#)
  - [Purpose of self-certification](#)
  - [Reasons for self-certification](#)
  - [Self-certified deferral of exams](#)
  - [Self-certified extensions on coursework](#)
  - [How do I apply for self-certification?](#)
- [Exceptional Circumstances](#)
  - [What are Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment \(ECA\)?](#)
  - [Things to consider before applying for Exceptional Circumstances](#)
  - [Applying for Exceptional Circumstances \(inc. link to application form\)](#)
  - [Students with ongoing health problems](#)
  - [What will happen when Exceptional Circumstances are accepted?](#)
  - [What will happen if Exceptional Circumstances are NOT accepted?](#)
  - [Who to contact](#)
  - [University Policy documents etc.](#)

## Self-certification

### Purpose of self-certification

Self-certification, in the context of this policy, is intended to serve a number of purposes: (1) To reduce the need for evidence from medical practitioners for short term illnesses (though students should see a medical professional if they require treatment or medical advice), (2) There is recognition that in the current fluctuating pandemic situation, there can be short-term disruption to students' studies, arising from domestic circumstances, self isolation, travel difficulties, internet connectivity and technical issues, etc. These can be impactful in the short term, and challenging to evidence. (3) This is intended to offer reassurance to students that we recognise the degree of uncertainty that the pandemic brings, and that they are trusted to manage short-term illness and disruption without the need to engage formal processes.

### Reasons for self-certification

When a student asks for self-certification, approval will be automatic, as long as the criteria are met and the request is made on time. Students will be required to state the reason for the claim - i.e. one of the following:

- Exceptional Medical Circumstances (Physical Health)
- Exceptional Medical Circumstances (Mental Health)
- Exceptional Medical Circumstances (Physical and Mental Health)
- Exceptional Personal Circumstances
- Inadequate IT resources

### Self-certified deferral of exams

- Students will be able to self-certify to **defer** examinations.
- Examinations will be deferred to the next available opportunity, and will be treated in the same way as the originally scheduled assessments
- Students may only apply for deferral before the start of the exam window. Deferral is not possible once the examination (window) has opened/started.
- If a student defers the exam, and then subsequently submits the exam, it will not be marked
- An Exceptional Circumstances claim can be made for an exam, as usual, whether or not the exam has been attempted. Evidence will be required for this type of claim (see below for more information on the Exceptional Circumstances Process)

### Self-certified extensions on coursework

- Students will be able to self-certify to obtain a short extension to open coursework assessments.
- Extensions obtained through self-certification will be for **four days**
- Students may only self-certify up to the submission deadline. Self-certified extensions can not be requested after the deadline has passed.
- If an extension of four working days is not sufficient to cover the circumstances, an Exceptional Circumstances claim should be submitted. A student may submit an Exceptional Circumstances claim even if they have applied for self certification. Exceptional Circumstances claims will need to be evidenced.
- An individual assessment task may only have one self-certified extension. If a further extension is required, the student will need to submit an Exceptional Circumstances claim.

### How do I apply for self-certification?

To apply for an extension on coursework or a deferral on exams using self-certification, please complete the relevant section on evision.

## Exceptional Circumstances

### What are Exceptional Circumstances affecting Assessment (ECA)?

The University defines exceptional circumstances as problems that students have encountered that go beyond the normal difficulties experienced in life and that have affected their academic performance adversely during the assessment period for which they are claiming. According to the University, these events must be exceptional and unforeseeable. For example, you may have been ill affecting your ability to attend an exam or meet a coursework deadline.

If you think that exceptional circumstances may apply to you, then please **read the whole page** as it contains important advice.

The standard that we will use when measuring whether a circumstance is 'exceptional' is similar to that which employees can expect to be held to in the workplace. (Which is to say, how many days, or weeks, would this person have been excused from paid employment based on the claim and evidence provided).

A full list of circumstances that are and are not usually accepted can be found at: <https://www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/progress/exceptional-circumstances/>

**The normal deadline for submitting an exceptional circumstances claim is 7 days after the assessment deadline. If you cannot submit your form by this deadline, then you will need to provide additional evidence explaining why you could not submit the form on time.**

Further details relating to deadlines can be found in the University's exceptional circumstances policy, which is available through the link above.

### Things to consider before applying for Exceptional Circumstances

The ECA procedure is in place to support you but it's worth thinking carefully about whether it is in your best interests to apply. Here are some things to consider before you apply:

- If you apply for exceptional circumstances and that claim is rejected then normal penalties will apply. This means that if hand in the assignment late, and your claim is unsuccessful, then you will get a reduced mark or a mark of zero. If you submit a claim close to the deadline, then you may not find out the results of your claim until after the deadline has passed. If at all possible, you should continue to work towards the original deadline even if you are applying for exceptional circumstances.
- If you are granted an extension for your assignment(s), then your deadlines will start to back up and you may have several deadlines in quick succession. This can lead to added stress.
- If you apply for exceptional circumstances for an exam, you will have to take that exam at another time, perhaps interrupting your plans for the summer.
- If you sit an exam 'as if for the first time', your new mark will stand even if it is lower than your original mark. As a result, this course of action involves an element of risk.
- Finally, remember that results from your first year do not count towards your final degree mark. The mark for any given assignment in later years is worth only a very small proportion of your overall degree.

### Applying for Exceptional Circumstances (inc. link to application form)

If you would like to request an extension to coursework or request to sit an exam as if for the first time, you will need to complete an online exceptional circumstances form and submit it, along with the relevant supporting evidence.

**The exceptional circumstances claim form can be found here: <https://facultyapp.york.ac.uk/app/excircs/>**

When completing the form, please include brief details of your circumstances and state how many days have been lost as a result of these circumstances. We aim to compensate for time lost on a one-to-one basis, so please make sure you provide a realistic estimate; Please note that this might not necessarily be the same as the duration of the circumstance itself.

In cases where you are still waiting for the supporting evidence, you should submit the ECA claim form without the supporting evidence, but clearly state on the form the nature of the evidence you will supply, explain why it is not currently available and when it will be available. Exceptional circumstances might be accepted conditionally, pending supporting evidence. All outstanding evidence should be provided within 3 weeks of the original claim being made.

**Please note:** If supporting evidence is not received within 3 weeks or is insufficient, the conditional acceptance will be withdrawn and the original submission deadline (with the usual penalties for late submission) will apply.

**Evidence in support of exceptional circumstances claims** should reflect an independent professional opinion of the impact of the circumstances on your ability to perform in assessments, and should be based on the professional having met with the student at the time they were affected. Letters from professionals such as GPs, counsellors, medical consultants, nurses or other independent third party practitioners or the University's student support teams including the Open Door Team must outline the impact of the exceptional circumstance. It may be helpful for you to gather your evidence using the following form: [Confirmation of Exceptional Circumstances Form\\_ Guidance for Professionals.pdf](#)

Any evidence which states "the student reports that" they were being affected by circumstances does not constitute meaningful evidence for a claim. Such a claim will be rejected. Furthermore, a letter confirming that a student met or will meet with a practitioner, but which does not confirm the impact of an exceptional circumstance will not be accepted as evidence.

Where the timing and nature of your exceptional circumstances has affected longer periods, or where you have submitted several claims throughout the academic year relating to the same issue, you may wish to consider the option of applying for a leave of absence.

### Students with ongoing health problems

If you have ongoing physical or mental health problems that are likely to continue for at least 12 months, then you should visit Disability Services (<https://www.york.ac.uk/students/support/disability/>). Disability Services can work with you to create a Student Support Plan (SSP) that helps you to proactively manage your situation. If this Student Support Plan contains reference to the need to grant extensions for coursework, then you can apply through the same procedure as above, but using the form for students with an SSP. It may then be possible to grant an extension without the need to provide additional evidence. Please note this only applies to coursework extensions, not exams.

What will happen when Exceptional Circumstances are accepted?

### **Coursework**

If exceptional circumstances are accepted for an assignment, you will be granted an extension of the deadline for submission of the assessment for which the claim was sought. The exact length of the extension that is granted will depend on the particular circumstances of the case, and will be decided by the ECA Committee on a case-by-case basis. The submitted work will then be marked as normal, as if there were no exceptional circumstances to be considered – that is to say, that all mitigation is deemed to have been dealt with by giving an extended period in which to complete the assessment.

## **Exams**

Compensation for exceptional circumstances is dealt with by allowing you the possibility to resit the exam in question 'as if for the first time' (i.e. the resit mark will contribute to your final Award Mark, and will appear on your Academic Transcript as though it is the only sitting of that exam). If you were able to sit the exam in the first place, you will receive your original exam mark back before deciding whether or not you wish to resit. Please note that if you choose to resit the exam, the new mark will stand and you will not be able to choose between marks gained at the first and second attempt. The original mark will become void when the second attempt takes place. Failure to attend or submit for assessment 'as if for the first time' will be treated as declining the opportunity to do so.

## What will happen if Exceptional Circumstances are NOT accepted?

If exceptional circumstances are not accepted then the mark attained for the assessment stands. This means that for instance for a missed exam the mark will be recorded as 0, or for a piece of "handed-in" work, normal late submission penalties will apply.

## Who to contact

If you have read all of the relevant information and still have questions on the exceptional circumstances procedure, please contact your supervisor or [kelly.freebury@york.ac.uk](mailto:kelly.freebury@york.ac.uk) as soon as possible before a deadline/exam.

## University Policy documents etc.

This page describes the Psychology Department's detailed procedures for dealing with Exceptional Circumstances. For a full list of documents and University policy information visit: <https://www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/progress/exceptional-circumstances/>