

Section 18 Exceptional circumstances policy

18.1 Purpose

18.1.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline the policy and procedures that staff and students should follow in cases where students' unforeseen exceptional circumstances have seriously impacted on their academic performance.

18.2 Principles

18.2.1 This policy is designed to:

- a) Ensure that students are appropriately supported by the University when they bring exceptional circumstances to our attention in a timely manner.
- b) Outline the responsibilities of students to notify the University of circumstances which are affecting their performance.
- c) Ensure that all students claiming exceptional circumstances are treated fairly and equitably.
- d) Protect the academic integrity of programmes for all students.

18.2.2 An extension deadline will not be set on a day when the University is closed, so that if there are technical problems with the VLE, technical support would be available to resolve and/or mitigate the issues. This includes:

- Saturdays and Sundays
- Bank Holidays
- University closure days over the Christmas period

18.2.3 Extension deadlines will be set for the **first working day** that the University is open following the closure, with the exception that following the Christmas closure extensions will be set for the **second working day** following the re-opening.

18.2.4 For clarity deadlines may be set in vacation periods provided they are not set for the periods above.

18.3 Scope

18.3.1 This policy applies to taught assessments, and therefore does not apply to most research degree programmes. It would, however, apply to any taught modules completed as part of a research degree.

18.3.2 This policy applies to students enrolled on programmes delivered in whole by the University, or in whole or part by a franchise partner institution (franchise provision).

The procedure to be followed in relation to programmes delivered by a validated partner organisation (validated provision) will be set out in the programme documentation provided by the validated partner.

18.4 Introduction

Expectations

18.4.1 The University recognises that illnesses and difficult or distressing personal circumstances occur as part of everyone's life. However, such circumstances are a normal part of life and can normally be absorbed. Students are expected to attend all assessments and to meet deadlines, and they should plan their work so that they are not affected by unexpected last-minute problems.

18.4.2 It is acknowledged that the assessment process itself can lead students to become more anxious or stressed than at other times of the academic year, and this should be considered to be one of the normal challenges of academic study. Except in a very small number of cases, where the impact is severe and incapacitating, this would not be considered as a valid exceptional circumstance.

- 18.4.3 The exceptional circumstances process is evidence-based, and satisfactory evidence or self-certification declaration must be supplied by the student as explained in this policy.
- 18.4.4 If a student's circumstances are so serious that they cannot engage with their assessment, they should consider suspending their studies. If a student remains on the programme, they are considered to have made the decision that they are in a position to engage with the programme. For more information, please refer to our [suspension of studies page](#).
- 18.4.5 An attempt to gain an unfair advantage in an assessment by faking exceptional circumstances is considered deception and will be treated as academic misconduct (refer to [section 24](#)).

Definitions

- 18.4.6 **Deadlines** include the date for submitting written assessments and the dates for examinations, practical demonstrations, presentations, performances and other forms of assessment.
- 18.4.7 **Assessment submissions** – include those assessments for which students are required to adhere to a deadline for submission.
- 18.4.8 **Scheduled assessments** – include those assessments which are not easily retimed and for which an extension is not appropriate e.g., centrally organised exams, practical assessments, in-class tests, practical demonstrations, presentations, performances etc.

Standard criteria

- 18.4.9 In exceptional circumstances, if a student cannot attend an assessment or meet the deadline or believes their exceptional circumstances have severely impacted upon their performance in an assessment the University may make arrangements for exceptional circumstances to be taken into account in line with the principles and outcomes defined in this policy.

For this to apply, a student must show that:

- a) They could not have **reasonably avoided** the situation or otherwise acted to limit the impact (such as requesting to suspend their studies) i.e., the circumstances were **outside the control of the student**.
- b) The events concerned are **genuinely exceptional** relative to normal daily challenges of academic study. Circumstances such as the normal pressures of academic stress, paid employment, relationship issues, computer difficulties, transport difficulties, and financial difficulties are unlikely to be accepted.
- c) The events must have had a **significant impact** on the student's ability to study or complete an examination, presentation or submit an assessment.
- d) The **timing** of the exceptional circumstances must be related to the **timing of the impact** for which the student is claiming.

Types of claim

- 18.4.10 There are 4 ways in which exceptional circumstances can be applied for:

Method	Description
Extension (self-certification)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may apply for an extension to the deadline using self-certification instead of evidence (if eligible). • The extension must be applied for in advance of the assessment submission deadline. • Students are only eligible to claim using self-certification once per semester. • For postgraduate taught programmes where there is teaching or dissertation work over the summer period (Semester 3), students will be permitted 1 self-certification within this period, in addition to those permitted in Semesters 1 and 2. • The grounds for the claim must be acceptable under the policy – note some circumstances are not eligible under the policy (see sections 18.5 and 18.6). • IT issues are not grounds for self-certification. • If upheld the extension period would be for 1 week.

Extension (bereavement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where a student has suffered a recent bereavement of a close family member or friend, they may apply for an extension to the deadline for 1 week by using self-certification instead of evidence. • Self-certification for a recent bereavement is not limited to 1 occasion during a semester, and bereavement claims are not included when counting how many self-certification claims have been submitted in a semester. • Additional evidence will be required for longer extensions.
Extension (evidence-based)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may apply for a longer extension to the submission deadline by providing evidence to support their claim. • The extension must be applied for in advance of the assessment submission deadline. • The grounds for the claim must be acceptable under the policy – note some circumstances are not eligible under the policy (see sections 18.5 and 18.6). • If upheld the extension period would be for 3 weeks (either singular or cumulative if self-certification has already been approved for the same assessment).
Deferral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may apply to defer a scheduled assessment if they are/were unfit to take the assessment at the scheduled time (e.g., an exam, placement, viva, presentation etc.). This will also apply if a student requires more than 3 weeks' extension. • Depending on the timing of the deferral of the attempt, this may have implications for the student's ability to progress to the next level, or their graduation timing. For example, this may require the student to suspend their studies for a period of time in order to satisfactorily meet the progression requirements before resuming their studies. When this applies the student will be notified.

18.5 What are considered exceptional circumstances?

18.5.1 The following are examples of exceptional circumstances:

- a) Unforeseen short-term medical circumstances e.g., significant acute illness, accident or injury – sudden and severe in nature that would lead an employer to grant absence on sick leave.
- b) Unforeseen deterioration or significant change in a disability or long-term condition during the assessment period e.g., where a student has an existing LSP in place but there are additional unforeseen side effects due to change in medication.
- c) Unforeseen illness of dependents, partners or immediate family – which in employment would lead an employer to grant compassionate leave. The self-certification process can be used for unforeseen dependent's illness or dependent's carer/child care provider's illness that results in the need to cover care/childcare at short notice. This is subject to the normal self-certification constraints (refer to **section 18.11.11**).
- d) Bereavement due to the death of a close family member or friend.
- e) Disability – this is only applicable where there has been a delay in arranging reasonable adjustments and/or support that is beyond the control of the student.
- f) Victim of serious crime that has had a substantial impact on the student's ability to undertake their academic work.
- g) Pregnancy.
- h) Parental care for an infant under 6 months.
- i) Significant caring responsibilities for a family member or partner with a disability or mental health condition.
- j) Unforeseen acute personal circumstances e.g., a family crisis directly affecting the student.
- k) Participation in exceptional and significant events e.g., national or international sporting events.
- l) Exceptional and unforeseeable transport difficulties e.g., major transport incidents, this does not include everyday issues e.g., traffic congestion, missed buses or trains or transport strikes that were well publicized in advance.

- m) Legal proceedings requiring attendance e.g., attendance either as a witness, jury member, plaintiff or defendant.
- n) Unforeseen changes to the normal working patterns for part time students or Degree Apprenticeship students (evidence would need to be provided of the unusual and unavoidable nature of the change and its impact e.g., significant increased working hours, disruption caused by greater responsibility or a change in location).

This list is not exhaustive and other circumstances will be considered appropriate if they meet the definition above and are not listed in the section below regarding circumstances not considered grounds.

18.6 What are not considered exceptional circumstances?

18.6.1 The following **do not** qualify as exceptional circumstances:

- a) A claimed medical condition supported by retrospective medical evidence.
- b) A minor illness that would not normally lead to an employer to grant absence on sick leave.
- c) A medical condition that relies on evidence that does not relate to the time when the student claims they were affected or does not relate to the same illness the student claims they were affected by.
- d) Any claimed circumstances for which appropriate adjustments have already been made by the University and where there is no evidence of worsening of the condition.
- e) Assessment-related stress which is not diagnosed as an illness by a health professional or documented in a Learning Support Plan.
- f) Circumstances occurring after an assessment deadline or scheduled date.
- g) English not being a student's first language.
- h) Deadlines for work or exams being set closely together.
- i) Poor awareness of the University regulations and policies.
- j) Poor working practices such as:
 - Misreading the examination timetable or submission deadline.
 - Failure to back up electronic documents regularly and securely – students must back up electronic files regularly and securely (see [section 11.7](#)).
 - Accidental submission of an incorrect document (e.g., an earlier incomplete draft), wrong file type or a corrupted file (see [section 11.6.10](#)).
 - Poor time management.
- k) A claim of technical issues on behalf of the University with no independent proof from the Directorate of Innovation and Technology Services (ITS) of system failure on either Moodle or the University network. Issues such as browser compatibility or file size, which could reasonably have been checked in advance, will not be accepted as grounds for exceptional circumstances. It is expected that only VLE downtime or very rare technical issues, such as blocking of the whole internet in a particular geographical region, would be accepted as grounds for exceptional circumstances.
- l) Failure, loss or theft of a computer or printer – students must back up electronic files regularly and securely and must not leave completion so late that they cannot find another computer or printer (see [section 11.7](#)).
- m) Where students studying on a full time basis have issues relating to paid employment except in cases of work placements that contribute to the programme of study. By enrolling on a programme, students are making a commitment to the time needed for full time study.
- n) House moves, renovations or other routine accommodation difficulties.
Refer to the [University Attendance Regulation](#) which states that students must ensure that their living and travelling arrangements allow them to fully engage with all aspects of their programme.
- o) Death or illness of a pet (excluding death or illness of a service animal which would be accepted as grounds).
- p) Holidays.
- q) Normal day-to-day childcare responsibilities for a child over 6 months (including childcare during school holidays)
- r) Circumstances stated to be unforeseen that a reasonable person would view as foreseeable or preventable.

This list is not exhaustive and other circumstances are not considered appropriate if the circumstances do not meet the definition set out in this policy.

- 18.6.2 The following would **not normally** be grounds for exceptional circumstances and would only be regarded as exceptional if there is evidence that they are unforeseeable, unavoidable and severe with a direct impact on the assessment. In some cases, medical evidence of the impact may be required:
- Relationship breakdown (evidence of the impact upon the student would need to be provided).
 - Accommodation issues (unless of an unforeseen serious nature, such as emergency rehousing).
 - Planned routine health appointments.
 - Academic misconduct investigations.
 - Late changes to module choices or late programmes changes (refer to [section 6.4](#)).

18.7 Where can students access support?

- 18.7.1 The University is committed to offering support and guidance for students on the above matters including wellbeing, financial advice, accommodation advice, study skills, disability advice, and international student support.

It is important that students understand that using support is not a sign of weakness. For many students it features in their academic success to access support services in order to identify and develop successful strategies to build resilience that supports them in their future employment. It is an expectation by the University that students will access the relevant services if they require them, and students may be signposted to them as part of the exceptional circumstances process.

- For further information on the specialist services and support available refer to our [Current Students page](#) and [Health and wellbeing page](#).
- Students may also wish to seek guidance and support from the [York St John Students' Union](#).

18.8 Students with disabilities

- 18.8.1 Students who have a long-term health condition, disability, a specific learning difficulty or mental health diagnosis which has a foreseeable impact on their ability to meet deadlines, must meet the Disability Support and Inclusion team at the start of the academic year so that a Learning Support Plan (LSP) can be drawn up.

Further details can be found in the 'Reasonable Adjustment Policy' and procedures (refer to [section 15](#)).

- 18.8.2 The exceptional circumstances procedure is intended for unforeseeable situations, not for situations where the requirement for reasonable adjustments can be anticipated. For more about disability support, see our [Disability and Inclusion page](#).
- 18.8.3 For longstanding conditions students will be expected to have made full use of the appropriate support services provided by the University in order to have relevant adjustments made, and/or to develop coping strategies which will see them not only through their study but into later life.
- 18.8.4 Students may submit a claim relating to their existing longstanding condition/disability:
- If there has been a delay, beyond their control, in putting support in place for them.
- or
- If their disability deteriorates in an unforeseen manner during the assessment period e.g., due to medication changes or similar. If the change will be ongoing and will affect future assessment periods students are advised to contact the Disability Support and Inclusion team as soon as possible to review their LSP before the next assessment period.

18.9 How do students claim?

- 18.9.1 Students apply for exceptional circumstances, including requesting an extension to a deadline, by filling out the 'Exceptional Circumstances Claim' form and submitting it to the Programme Administration and Support Service (PASS). Brief guidance for completing the form includes:
- Where possible, a single form should normally be used to claim for all assessments impacted upon during the same period.
 - The claim form can be downloaded from our [Exceptional circumstances page](#).
 - For Programme Administration and Support Service (PASS) contact information, please visit the PASS [Contact us page](#).
 - [SU Advice](#) are available to support and advise students completing exceptional circumstances forms.

- e) Students must describe the impact their circumstances have had on their studies on the form. Forms will be returned to the student if they are not completed fully or the information provided is insufficient.
- f) Students requesting extensions must state the duration of the extension they are requesting. Extensions will be granted in full weeks as either 1 week (with satisfactory self-certification) or 3 weeks (with satisfactory evidence) in duration. A request for an extension beyond 3 weeks (either singular or cumulatively, including self-certified week) will not be granted, but if there are grounds for approval, the assessment will be deferred to the next assessment period.
- g) For late claims (within 24 hours of the assessment deadline) students must provide an explanation and evidence to support why they had good reason for not submitting their claim at the correct time.

18.9.2 Students who submit exceptional circumstances claims should not assume their claim will be approved and should continue to undertake study and prepare for/do assessments whenever possible until they are formally advised of the outcome of the claim.

18.9.3 A claim for exceptional circumstances, once formally submitted, can only be withdrawn in writing by the student (i.e., by email).

Can someone else complete the claim on the student's behalf?

18.9.4 The form must be completed by the student and cannot be completed by someone else on their behalf. For example, a family member or a tutor cannot complete the form on the student's behalf. If a student is unable to complete the form within the designated timeframes for exceptional reasons, for example being in hospital, they should notify their Academic Tutor and complete the form as soon as possible. The case may need to be referred to Special Cases Panel if they are unable to submit for more than a few days after the designated timeframes.

Can a student re-apply for a further extension for a particular assessment?

18.9.5 A student who has been granted an extension but is unable to meet the requirements to submit due to further exceptional circumstances may submit a further claim form and supply further evidence in support of their additional claim. In most cases this will require additional updated evidence to be provided that relates to the previous extension period.

18.9.6 If an extension has previously been granted for 3 weeks (in a single block or cumulatively) a request for additional extension weeks will not be granted, but if there are grounds for approval, the student's assessment will be deferred to the next period of assessment.

18.9.7 If the student has a Learning Support Plan extension, there may still be some circumstances where the exceptional circumstances procedure may be used, where the difficulty with meeting the deadline could not have been foreseen. For example, if a student's health suddenly deteriorates or they are affected by new medication or they are affected by exceptional circumstances not related to a long-term condition e.g., bereavement. In cases where students have already had an extension of 3 weeks (either singly or cumulatively) through their Learning Support Plan, the assessment will be deferred to the next assessment period.

18.9.8 In all cases the claim must be submitted in accordance with published timescales.

18.9.9 Re-applications for exceptional circumstances for the same assessment on the same grounds may normally only be made on 1 successive occasion (2 in total including the first claim) provided that the **new evidence** continues to support the claim. Claims are considered individually following the standard process, however, not all re-applications are successful, particularly if there is no evidence of further deterioration or additional impact. If at this time a student is still unfit or unable to attempt the assessment, the student's circumstances will be considered on an individual basis. Possible arrangements at this time may include a supportive discussion within a Support to Study meeting or Fitness to Study meeting, or agreement for a period of suspension.

18.10 When to claim by

Deadlines for claiming

Claim type	Deadline
Deadline assessments	Applications to request extensions to submission or resubmission dates should normally be submitted, with satisfactory evidence or with a self-certification statement, before the published or approved deadline . In cases where the evidence is not available, the claim form must normally be received before the assessment deadline, indicating the date the evidence will be submitted. Claims must be submitted within 24 hours of the assessment deadline, or they will be automatically declined.
Scheduled assessments	Applications relating to examinations, vivas, presentations or other assessments held under timed conditions should normally be submitted, with satisfactory evidence or with a self-certification statement, up to within 24 hours after the assessment date.

Late submission of 'Exceptional Circumstances Claim' forms

18.10.1 If the claim form is submitted late (i.e., more than 24 hours after the deadline), the claim cannot be considered by the Exceptional Circumstances Panel. The student will be directed to the 'Appeals Policy' and procedures (refer to [section 58](#)). Students may seek to appeal a confirmed mark once it has been approved at a School Assessment Board but must provide good reason for failing to use the exceptional circumstances procedure at the time of the assessment.

18.10.2 The student must claim as soon as they are able to, and no later than 24 hours after the assessment deadline. Incomplete forms will be returned to the student.

Illness on the day of an examination or other scheduled assessment

18.10.3 Students will need to decide if they are well enough to take the examination or other scheduled assessment.

- A student who is taken ill prior to or during the examination/assessment period must contact their medical practitioner immediately to obtain a medical certificate that relates directly to the examination/assessment period as retrospective evidence is not normally accepted. Students may alternatively use self-certification evidence on 1 occasion during a semester (see [section 18.11.11](#)).
- Where a student is taken ill during an invigilated examination or other scheduled assessment, whether departmentally or centrally administered, the student must contact their medical practitioner immediately to obtain a medical certificate that relates to the examination/assessment date. Students may alternatively use self-certification evidence on 1 occasion during a semester (see [section 18.11.11](#)). Invigilators are not able to provide evidence of illness; this must be provided by a medical practitioner.

18.11 Evidence to support an application for exceptional circumstances

18.11.1 Each application must be accompanied by satisfactory supporting evidence, normally from an independent and relevantly qualified third-party professional. For information regarding self-certification evidence refer to [section 18.11.11](#).

Students must provide **evidence of the impact** that the unforeseen event has had on their ability to study, or submit their assessment, or complete a scheduled assessment.

This must show:	
That the unforeseen event occurred	The evidence must give direct confirmation of the circumstances
Evidence of the impact this has had on the student	The evidence must demonstrate the significant effect on the student's ability to engage with work in general, or the assessment tasks in particular
That the circumstances will affect, or were affecting, the student at the time of the assessment	Evidence must relate to the assessment period – evidence of historic events that occurred before the assessment period is not normally accepted without up-to-date evidence of ongoing impact

18.11.2 Evidence from tutors or academic supervisors is not normally accepted as the sole form of evidence. Tutor/supervisor statements would only be accepted in very exceptional circumstances where it is accepted

that other evidence is extremely difficult to obtain and with the express consent of the Deputy Academic Registrar or Academic Registrar.

- 18.11.3 In matters relating to health, evidence provided by a medical practitioner should be evidence created/gathered at the time of the problem and should be provided by the health professional that diagnosed and/or treated the student.
- a) A doctor, for example, may be willing to report a retrospective account given to them by a student after the event, but in itself this does not carry weight as evidence if the doctor simply notes that a student reports the impact.
 - b) Similarly, the University's Student Access, Wellbeing and Support team is only able to provide evidence of attendance when a student has used, or is currently using, the services provided by the team to address the circumstances.
 - c) It is advisable not to seek retrospective reports.
- 18.11.4 Evidence that simply states that the student has been unwell is not sufficient. The evidence must confirm a diagnosis and say how the illness has affected the student's ability to complete their work, and the time period affected.
- 18.11.5 Screenshots of online medical records can be accepted as evidence if they clearly detail the student's name, a diagnosis or treatment, and the record relates to recent contact with the GP or medical practitioner.
- 18.11.6 Even if a student's circumstances are sensitive, the student must still submit evidence. Disclosure to a member of staff is not normally accepted as an alternative to evidence.
- 18.11.7 Supporting evidence must be provided in English. Where the original document is in another language, the student must provide both the original document and a translation into English. This need not be a professional translation – the student may provide their own translation. Students can expect the University to check the accuracy of their translation.
- 18.11.8 The University will only share the evidence with those people who need to make the decision.
- 18.11.9 Photographic or video evidence of circumstances is not normally accepted without other supporting evidence from an independent third-party professional. For example:
- a) An injury would need to be supported by medical practitioner evidence as a photograph of the injury would not be sufficient on its own.
 - b) Involvement in a car accident would need to be supported by evidence from an insurance company and potentially from a medical practitioner if injuries or trauma were sustained as a photograph of the car would not be sufficient on its own.
 - c) Photographs of documents (letters, reports etc.) are accepted if they are fully visible and can be opened in a readable format i.e., the date of issue and author details must be clear

Self-certification evidence (once per semester)

- 18.11.10 Self-certification may be used on **1 occasion during a semester** as evidence to request a short extension for **1 week**.
- 18.11.11 Students will still need to submit evidence for any circumstances where they wish to apply for an extension of more than 1 week.
- 18.11.12 The reassessment period in April is counted within the Semester 1 allowance. The reassessment period in August is counted within the Semester 2 allowance. For postgraduate taught programmes where there is teaching or dissertation workover the summer period (Semester 3), students will be permitted 1 self-certification within this period, in addition to those permitted in Semesters 1 and 2.
- 18.11.13 The University recognises that it is not always possible to make a GP appointment for a short-term acute physical illness. Self-certification allows students to request a short extension of 1 week through the exceptional circumstances procedure where they are unable to, or it is not necessary to, seek medical attention for a short-term acute physical illness.
- Self-certification may be used in lieu of evidence for an exceptional circumstances' claim when a student is unexpectedly unwell on the day of a scheduled assessment with a self-limiting acute physical illness.
 - Examples of short-term acute physical illnesses include Noro-virus, gastroenteritis, acute period pain, food poisoning, migraine, or diarrhoea and where the student does not seek medical attention.
 - This list is not an exhaustive list, and the University expects students to self-manage minor ailments (see **section 18.4**).
- 18.11.14 Self-certification may also be used in lieu of evidence to support claims on non-medical grounds listed in **section 18.5**.

18.11.15 Self-certification cannot be used to support claims on grounds that are not accepted under this policy. Refer to **section 18.6**.

18.11.16 Students must complete the self-certification declaration on the exceptional circumstances claim form to confirm when their circumstances began, the period it covered, and the ways in which it has impacted their studies.

18.11.17 Self-certification for a recent bereavement is not limited to 1 occasion during a semester. Additional evidence will be required for longer extensions.

18.11.18 Students must complete the self-certification declaration on the exceptional circumstances claim form to confirm when their circumstances began, the period it covered, and the ways in which it has impacted their studies.

18.11.19 Where self-certification is used as evidence the following applies for claims relating to the same assessment:

- Students who have an approved 1-week self-certification extension may not apply for a further extension on the same assessment using self-certification for a second time. Students can apply for a further extension but would need to provide satisfactory evidence that supports the need for additional time (refer to the table in **section 18.11.21**).
- Students who have an approved 1-week self-certification extension based on bereavement grounds cannot apply for a further extension for the same assessment on bereavement grounds using self-certification for a second time. Students can apply for a further extension but would need to provide satisfactory supporting evidence for a longer extension (refer to the table in **section 18.11.22**).

18.11.20 Important considerations for self-certification:

- Self-certification should only be used where absolutely necessary.
- The University would expect that most students will never need to self-certify during their studies. If a student does need to self-certify, it is on the understanding that it is a one-off situation and the University will record that the student has self-certified. Self-certification evidence may normally **be used 1 occasion in a semester**, although it is accepted that the 1-week period may be associated with more than 1 assessment.
- Students should always consult their GP if their illness is severe, persists or if they are in any doubt about their health.
- Retrospective self-certification will not be accepted.

Summary of evidence

18.11.21 A summary of examples of evidence is provided below:

Grounds	Evidence
Unforeseen medical circumstances e.g., significant acute illness or mental health crisis, or incapacitation through accident or injury.	<p>A signed and dated medical certificate or GP/healthcare professional letter that confirms a diagnosis, the dates when the illness/crisis/accident/injury impacted on the student, and a professional opinion regarding the impact of the circumstances will have on the student's ability to prepare for, submit or attend an assessment.</p> <p>The written evidence must include the professional's position and their contact details.</p> <p>Photos of injuries / prescriptions / medication do not confirm a professional opinion of impact and therefore on their own are unlikely to be accepted.</p> <p>Referral letters for appointments for significant illness/injuries would normally only be accepted for durations of up to 3 weeks unless they confirm a diagnosis and professional opinion regarding impact.</p> <p>Self-certification may be used on one occasion during a semester for extensions up to 1 week of absence from a scheduled assessment, for full details and limitations refer to the section above).</p>

<p>Unforeseen illness of dependents or immediate family</p>	<p>Medical certificate or GP/healthcare professional letter relating to dependent/family member that confirms the recent sudden or severe nature of the illness.</p> <p>And/or GP or other independent professional third-party evidence confirming how these circumstances are impacting upon the student.</p> <p>If a student provides evidence relating to a third-party, they are responsible for ensuring that the person concerned consents to this use of their information. This evidence will be deleted at the end of each semester.</p>
<p>Bereavement due to the death of a close family member or friend</p> <p>A close family member is defined as a partner, child, sibling, parent, grandparent, grandchild.</p>	<p>Self-certification may be used during an academic year for extensions up to 1 week of absence from a scheduled assessment in instances of bereavement and this would not be counted as the 1 use per semester normally permitted for ill-health self-certification.</p> <p>Students who have an approved 1-week self-certification extension based on health-related grounds may apply for a further 1-week extension for the same assessment on bereavement grounds using self-certification.</p> <p>An obituary or order of service would normally be accepted for a three-week extension. For deferrals to the next assessment period a death/coroner's certificate, or a burial permit, or health professional's or minister's evidence confirming the impact upon the student would normally be required.</p> <p>Within the claim the student must state how they are related to the deceased.</p> <p>Other relatives, housemates or very close friends may also be considered as 'close' although evidence of the relationship and/or impact upon the student may be required.</p> <p>For bereavements that occurred more than 4 months before the assessment period students would normally be expected to provide evidence of ongoing impact during the current assessment period e.g., evidence from a grief counsellor or other health professional.</p>
<p>A delay in support for a disability or long-term condition</p> <p>e.g., a new diagnosis or a change to a disability requiring the student's LSP to be updated.</p>	<p>Extensions for disabilities or long-term conditions are normally managed through a Learning Support Plan (LSP) – refer to the Disability Support and Inclusion team. However, claims can be submitted on grounds of disability where there has been a delay in making arrangements that is beyond a student's control.</p> <p>Letter/email from the Disability Support and Inclusion team confirming the delay in support is beyond the control of the student.</p>
<p>Deterioration / change in a disability or long-term condition</p> <p>e.g., A recent change in medication for an existing condition for which an LSP is in place resulting in adverse side effects.</p>	<p>Only applicable for students who have an existing LSP in place for their disability or long-term condition.</p> <p>Recent evidence describing the specific deterioration/change and the period it applies to e.g., medical certificate or GP/health professional letter.</p> <p>Evidence that simply confirms a student's existing disability, long-term condition or mental health issue itself without confirmation of recent deterioration or a sudden change would not normally be sufficient.</p>
<p>Pregnancy</p>	<p>Confirmation from a medical professional of the expected delivery date.</p>
<p>Parental care of an infant under 6 months</p>	<p>A copy of the child's birth certificate.</p>

<p>Significant caring responsibilities for a family member or partner with a disability or mental health condition</p>	<p>A supporting letter from the Widening Participation Adviser.</p> <p>And 1 of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A GP's or Social Services letter confirming the caring role, who this is in relation and any perceived impact on the student. • A local authority carer assessment. • DWP correspondence regarding withdrawal of Carer's Allowance due to starting university (full time students). • Receipt of Carer's Allowance (part time students only).
<p>Victim of serious crime</p>	<p>A police crime number, or insurance claim documents (normally only sufficient for 3-week extensions). A crime number on its own does not confirm a professional opinion of impact and therefore is unlikely to be accepted for durations beyond 3 weeks.</p> <p>For deferrals to the next assessment period evidence may include: A sexual assault referral centre confirmation; or GP/healthcare professional letter; or Welfare Adviser letter/email (in certain sexual assault cases); or legal letters.</p> <p>Claims relating to injuries or trauma sustained in a motor vehicle accident would normally be considered under medical grounds, for which medical evidence would be required.</p>
<p>Exceptional and unforeseeable transport difficulties</p> <p>e.g., major transport incidents, this does not include everyday issues or transport strikes that were well publicised in advance.</p>	<p>A letter from the transport company that confirms the date of the delay or a newspaper article that reports the incident.</p>
<p>Legal proceedings requiring attendance</p> <p>e.g., attendance either as a witness, jury member, plaintiff or defendant.</p>	<p>A letter from the court or a legal professional confirming the date(s) of attendance.</p> <p>A juror summons – for more information regarding support with applying to defer juror service, please visit our Jury service page.</p>
<p>Unforeseen acute personal circumstances</p> <p>e.g., family crisis directly significantly impacting the student.</p>	<p>Independent professional third-party evidence detailing the circumstances and period impacted upon.</p>
<p>Participation in exceptional and significant events</p> <p>e.g., international sporting events.</p>	<p>Evidence from the official sporting body confirming the dates when the student is required for training and competitions.</p>
<p>Unforeseen changes to the normal working patterns for part time students</p> <p>e.g., significant increased working hours, disruption caused by greater responsibility or a change in location.</p>	<p>Evidence signed and dated from the student's employer that confirms the time period effected, and the unusual and unavoidable nature of the change to working patterns and its impact.</p> <p>The evidence must state the manager's (or employer's) name and contact details and their relationship to the student.</p>

Delays in obtaining evidence

18.11.22 Students should submit their claim form by the deadline where possible stating the evidence they will provide and when it will be available. The Programme Administration and Support Service (PASS) will email the student to set a deadline for the student to provide the evidence by. If the student cannot meet the deadline for evidence the student is responsible for contacting the PASS to negotiate a longer deadline for providing the evidence. A decision will be made once the evidence is provided. If the student does not provide evidence or contact the PASS regarding their evidence by the deadline given, then the claim would normally be declined.

Delays in supplying evidence will not lead to additional time being added to the extension duration requested. The extension duration will be assessed based on the evidence provided, which in some cases may result in an extension deadline having already passed at the point the student is notified of the extension date(s).

18.12 Processing claims

Initial claim review

18.12.1 On receipt of the claim form and evidence the Programme Administration and Support Service (PASS) reviews the form and checks it is complete and that appropriate evidence has been provided. If the PASS has concerns over the evidence or the evidence has not been provided, or the form is incomplete, they will contact the student asking for deficiencies to be remedied and setting a deadline for submission of further evidence which will normally be **5 working days** from the request for further evidence.

If there is a further delay in obtaining evidence the student is responsible for contacting the PASS to renegotiate the deadline for providing evidence.

The PASS correspondence to the student confirms that if no further communication or evidence is submitted that the claim will be considered as it stands and that claims without supporting evidence are normally declined.

Who makes the decision?

18.12.2 The principal responsibility for decision-making for extensions of 1 to 3 weeks lies with the Programme Administration and Support Service (PASS); the responsibility for decision-making for deferrals lies with the Exceptional Circumstances Panel which is based in Registry. The panel makes decisions on all claims:

- For extensions of longer than 3 weeks in total (classified as a deferral)
- To extend a previous extension beyond 3 weeks (classified as a deferral)
- To defer scheduled assessments
- To waive a late submission penalty (for a submission made up to 24 hours late)

18.12.3 In all cases both Registry and the PASS will follow the requirements as set out by the 'Exceptional Circumstances Policy'.

18.12.4 Academic members of staff are not involved in the decision-making process and do not have the authority to approve any extensions, deferments, waiving of late penalties or the setting aside of marks for assessments.

Process for group assessments

18.12.5 In cases that relate to a 'group assessment' the Module Director/Tutor will be contacted by the PASS or Assessment team. The Module Director/Tutor is asked to confirm if the whole group the student was working with receives an extension, or if only the individual student claiming receives an extension.

Confidentiality

18.12.6 Staff involved in processing claims must at all times ensure that they use the appropriate level of confidentiality.

18.12.7 Evidence relating to third parties, for example evidence of the illness of a relative, will be deleted at the end of each semester,

18.13 Possible outcomes

18.13.1 The possible outcomes for an exceptional circumstance claim include:

- a) Provide an appropriate extended submission deadline (normally 1 or 3 weeks). **Extensions will be granted in whole weeks (e.g., 1 week or 3 weeks).** Where the student presents a compelling case that is upheld, which required a longer extension than 3 weeks, the assessment will be deferred to the next assessment period. Where an extension would take a student beyond 3 weeks of their current expected completion date the 'Programme Extension Process' should be followed (refer to [section 19](#)).
- b) To waive a late submission penalty (for a submission made up to 24 hours late)
- c) Rearrangement of in-class tests – this may require a different test in order to ensure the integrity of the assessment.
- d) Rearrangement of scheduled assessments such as practical assessments, practical demonstrations, presentations, performances etc.
- e) Deferral of an examination to the next opportunity (normally the reassessment period). This may prevent a student from being able to progress to the next level of study of their programme and/or complete their programme within the set time limits.
- f) Put an 'Exceptional Circumstances Plan' (ECP) in place for a defined period of time (refer to **section 18.16**).
- g) Decline the claim in full.

18.13.2 The Exceptional Circumstances Panel or Programme Administration and Support Service (PASS) do not have the authority to reconsider a provisional mark given for an assessment.

18.13.3 Within this policy there is no provision to adjust a student's mark or degree class or to exempt a student from an assessment.

18.13.4 The panel or PASS cannot approve the variation of the assessment method for a student, but this may be a consequence of an approved deferment if for logistical reasons the original assessment cannot be completed. Examples include: the deferment of an individual student's participation in a group performance, or a presentation involving peer review, or participation in fieldwork. Refer to [section 16](#) for 'Alternative Assessments Policy' and procedures for full information on the approval process varying an assessment.

Why might a claim be declined?

18.13.5 A claim is likely to be declined on the grounds that:

- a) Insufficient or no evidence has been provided.
- b) The information required to assess the claim is incomplete.
- c) The student has not submitted the claim by the deadline as stated in this policy.
- d) The claim is made due to an insubstantial event and is not defined as 'unforeseen' or 'exceptional' as required by this policy.
- e) The circumstances and/or evidence do not demonstrate the assessment period was adversely impacted upon.
- f) The nature of the circumstances cited is not over and above the normal difficulties experienced in life.
- g) 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.
- h) 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 sufficient extent.
- i) The claim is submitted after the assessment mark(s) have been released by the School.

18.13.6 If a student's request is declined, it is important to be aware that, if submitted late, a late penalty will be applied. This applies to first attempts only, late submissions for reassessments are not accepted. For full details of the 'Late submission penalty policy' refer to [section 32.3](#).

18.14 Communicating the decision

18.14.1 Once a decision is made an email response will be sent to the student through their University email address **normally within 3 working days** of the date the student submitted their claim and satisfactory self-certification or evidence.

- a) Claims are not considered without evidence or self-certification and a delay in providing evidence will delay the decision.
- b) Students will receive an email outcome that will confirm if their extension request has been approved or declined.
- c) If an extension has been granted, the email will include the new assessment deadline or details that the School will confirm the exact date, time and location of a scheduled assessment e.g., a presentation.
- d) If the request is declined the email will confirm the reason.

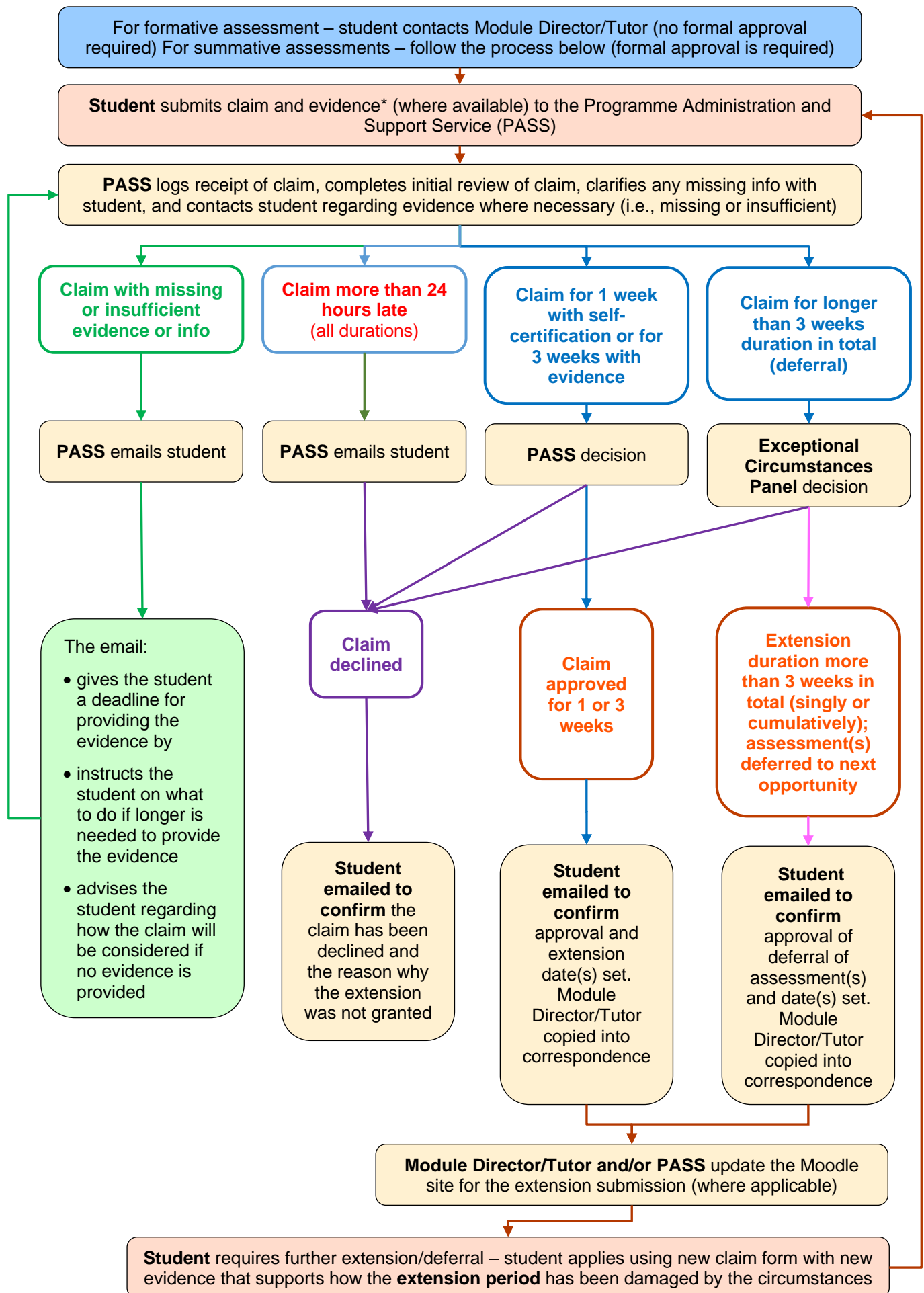
18.14.2 When considering the claim, where appropriate, the student may be directed to support that can be accessed through the University. Students are encouraged to consult the relevant student support services, including wellbeing, financial advice, accommodation advice, study skills, disability advice, and international student support.

18.14.3 Where a student presents exceptional circumstances based on chronic medical circumstances not previously known to the University or circumstances which have become more severe the Exceptional Circumstances Panel will advise the student to consult with the [Student Access, Wellbeing and Support team](#), [Disability Support and Inclusion team](#) and/or [Study Skills Support team](#) regarding future support. If appropriate, the possibility of discussing suspension from the University with the student's Associate Head should be suggested to the student (refer to [section 7](#)). If the circumstances are such that the student may not be fit to study, the University may follow its 'Fitness to Study' procedure (refer to [section 28](#)).

18.14.4 The Module Director/Tutor and/or the Programme Administration and Support Service (PASS) are responsible for updating Moodle to accommodate the student's new submission deadline. The PASS will contact students to confirm submission arrangements if the submission is not to be made through Moodle.

Students may be allocated a specific extension submission Moodle link to use. Students are advised to check that they have access to the relevant submission area and are able to upload files in advance of the extended deadline. Students who are unable to locate the relevant submission link, or have any questions, or decide to submit their work by the original deadline must contact the PASS.

18.15 Exceptional circumstances process flowchart



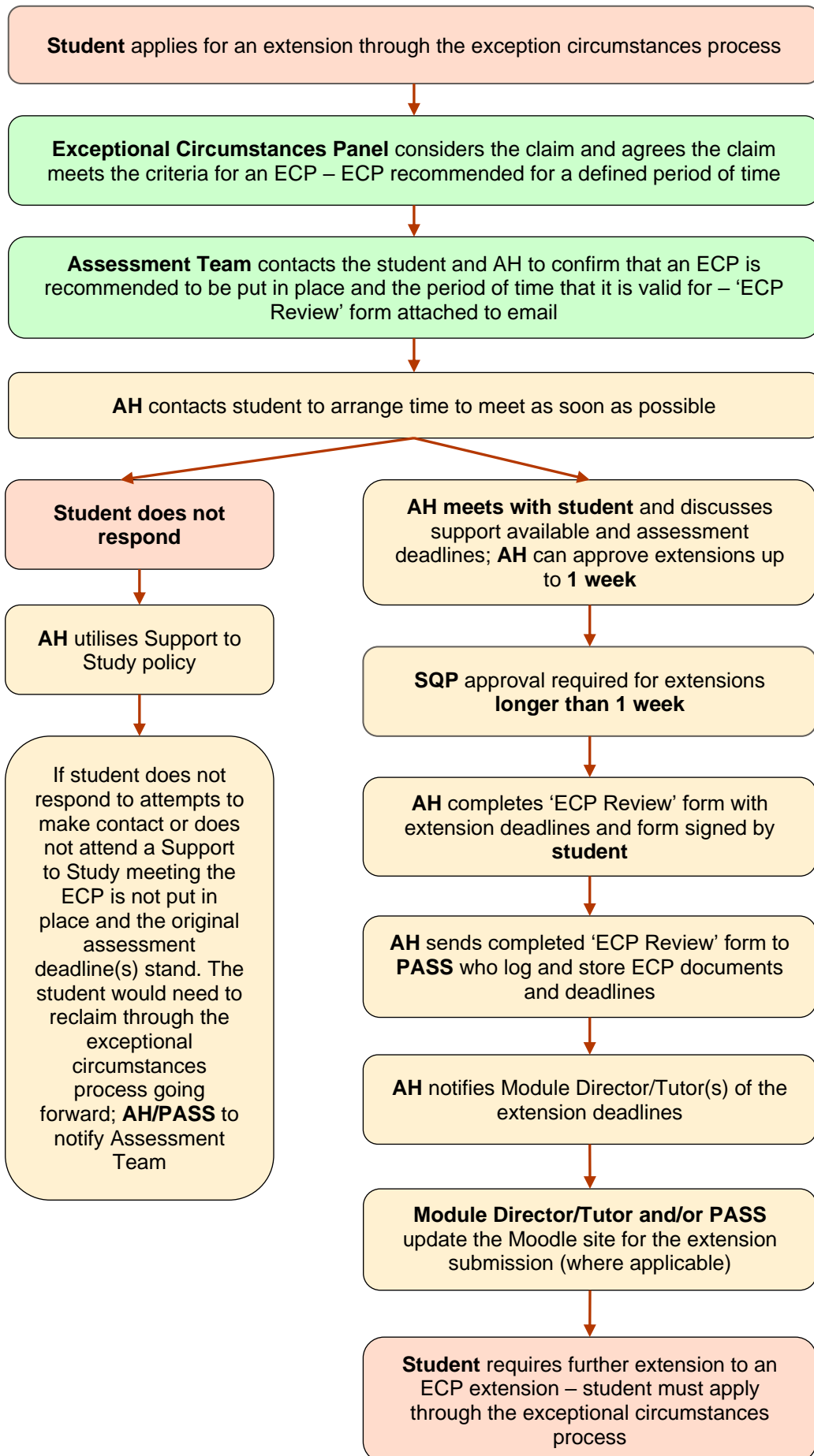
18.16 Exceptional Circumstances Plan (ECP) process

- 18.16.1 There may be rare occasions relating to **non-medical circumstances or a protected characteristic** where the student's situation is unlikely to change throughout a defined period of their programme of their studies. For example, students with caring responsibilities for an infant under 6 months, pregnancy, caring responsibilities for a family member or partner with a disability or mental health condition, or during gender reassignment.
- 18.16.2 Approval may be agreed for a more cohesive amendment to assessment submission dates, including the staggering of deadlines, for a defined period of time through an 'Exceptional Circumstances Plan' (ECP).
- 18.16.3 An ECP may not be used to amend the type of assessment, in such cases students will need to seek support from the Disability Support and Inclusion team (see [section 15](#)).
- 18.16.4 In order for an ECP to be put in place, the student must initially submit an exceptional circumstances' claim with satisfactory supporting evidence.
- a) This claim will be reviewed, and a decision made by the Exceptional Circumstances Panel in the Registry.
 - b) The Panel will assess the non-medical circumstances or protected characteristic to determine if the situation is likely to be ongoing and if it is unlikely that any future evidence would provide additional details beyond what the initial evidence confirms.
 - c) **If an ECP is approved by the Exceptional Circumstances Panel**, the Panel will contact the student and the student's Associate Head or nominated representative with a recommendation for an ECP to be put in place for defined period of time. The introduction of an ECP cannot be approved by the School without Exceptional Circumstances Panel approval.
 - d) An 'ECP Referral' form will be provided to the Associate Head or nominated representative, by the Assessment team. The duration for which the ECP is in place for will be clearly indicated on the 'ECP Referral' form.
 - e) Once the 'ECP Referral' form has been received from the Assessment team the Associate Head or nominated representative must arrange a meeting with the student as a matter of urgency to discuss the student's assessment timings and support that is available to the student through the University e.g., study support, time management.
 - f) If a student does not respond to communications to arrange a meeting, then the Support to Study policy should be used and it is suggested a Phase 1 meeting is called.
 - g) Associate Heads or nominated representatives, can authorise extensions of **up to 1 week** only for ECPs. Section 6 of the 'ECP Referral' form must be completed and forward to the PASS for recording of the extension.
 - h) Should there be a number of deadlines in close proximity to one another then staggering the deadlines is likely to be more helpful to the student. Decisions should be informed by academic judgement, and also take account of the Academic Registrar's deadlines, professional body stipulations, simultaneous deadlines, the severity of circumstances, and deadlines associated with the Progress and Award Examination Panel.
 - i) For extensions **longer than 1 week** (and no more than 3 weeks) the Associate Head or nominated representative specifies the duration and submits the ECP with the recommendation to the School Quality Panel (SQP) for approval. If an extension of longer than 3 weeks is considered advice should be sought from the Assessment team in Registry prior to final approval. This may involve assessments being deferred to the next assessment period.
 - j) Any further request to extend an ECP deadline must be made through the exceptional circumstances process and this request should only be considered for additional circumstances or further changes to circumstances that can be evidenced. For clarity, once an ECP extension deadline has been agreed it **cannot be extended or adjusted again through the ECP process**. For example, an Associate Head or nominated representative cannot approve a 1-week ECP extension for an assessment and then extend the deadline again for the same assessment by a further 2 weeks using the same ECP.
 - k) If the Associate Head or nominated representative, is unable to reach an agreement with the student, they should contact the Assessment team in Registry to help resolve any issues. The final decision should be made by the Associate Head in these cases and the student should be advised about their right to appeal as outlined in [section 58](#).
 - l) The 'ECP Referral' form should normally be completed in consultation with the student and approval given by the Head of School, or by the School Quality Panel.

- m) Any approved ECP must be reported to School Quality Panel for Schools to monitor and to review the consistency of duration of ECP extensions across the School.
- n) Once the 'ECP Referral' form has been approved, the PASS will confirm the approved deadlines with the student via the student's university email account.
- o) The PASS is responsible for storing the ECP related documents and correspondence on the student's file, and for updating any changes relating to deadline dates i.e., extension tracking database, Moodle, etc.

18.16.5 Once the agreed deadlines have been confirmed on the ECP form, the student is expected to meet those deadlines. If a student asks for additional extensions, they must do so through the exceptional circumstances process and must evidence a change to their circumstances or additional circumstances (e.g., illness or bereavement).

18.16.6 ECP process flowchart (AH denotes Associate Head or nominated representative)



18.17 Appeals relating to exceptional circumstances claims

- 18.17.1 If an exceptional circumstances claim is declined the student has the opportunity to appeal after the publication of the final module mark by the School Assessment Board. An appeal will only be accepted if the student can show that they had a good reason for not raising their exceptional circumstances at the time of the assessment, or else that they did raise their exceptional circumstances earlier, but the University did not follow the procedure for exceptional circumstances correctly. Details regarding grounds for appeal and the procedures to follow can be found in the 'Appeals Policy' (refer to [section 58](#)).

18.18 Records relating to exceptional circumstances

- 18.18.1 The University will keep and dispose of all correspondence relating to exceptional circumstances in accordance with the appropriate principles on data protection. For more information refer to our [Data Protection page](#).