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Section 16 Exceptional circumstances policy

16.1 Purpose

- 16.1.1 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.

16.2 Principles

- 16.2.1 This policy is designed to:

- 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.

16.2.2 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

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.

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

16.3 Scope

16.3.1 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.

16.3.2 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 student handbook or other programme documentation provided by the validated partner. Students should follow those procedures.

16.4 Introduction

Expectations

- 16.4.1 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.
- 16.4.2 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.
- 16.4.3 The exceptional circumstances process is evidence-based, and satisfactory evidence must be supplied by the student as explained in this policy.
- 16.4.4 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. Information relating to suspension of studies can be found on the University's webpages:
 - <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/students/policies-and-documents/suspend-your-studies/>
- 16.4.5 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 23**).

Definitions

- 16.4.6 **Deadlines** include the date for submitting written assessments and the dates for examinations, practical demonstrations, presentations, performances and other forms of assessment.
- 16.4.7 **Assessments submissions** – include those assessments for which students are required to adhere to a deadline for submission.
- 16.4.8 **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

16.4.9 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

16.4.10 There are three ways in which exceptional circumstances can be applied for:

Method	Description
Extensions	Students may apply in advance of the approved assessment submission deadline for an extension to the deadline (normally for between 1-3 weeks). Claims for less than one week should be specified in 'days' on the claim form. In rare instances when a late claim is accepted a late submission penalty may be waived through approval of a retrospective extension.
Deferral	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.)
Exceptional circumstances affecting performance	Students may apply to sit an assessment 'as if for the first time' (or complete a reassessment 'as if for the first time') where their performance has been severely impacted upon by their circumstances. To be eligible to apply for this, students must have attempted the assessment in full by their approved deadline; students are not eligible if they submit a draft assessment in lieu of a whole assessment, submit late or they do not submit.

16.4.11 Students are not normally permitted to apply for both an extension/deferral and exceptional circumstances affecting performance on the same grounds for the same assessment. Extensions/deferrals would normally be considered as appropriate adjustment for the circumstances, and mitigation is not applied twice.

16.5 What are considered exceptional circumstances?

16.5.1 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 or immediate family – which in employment would lead an employer to grant compassionate leave.
- 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 six 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 or missed buses or trains.
- 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 (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.

16.6 What are not considered exceptional circumstances?

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

- a) A claimed medical condition supported by retrospective medical evidence.
- b) A minor illness such as a cough or cold 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 9.7](#)).
 - Accidental submission of an incorrect document (e.g. an earlier incomplete draft), wrong file type or a corrupted file (see [section 9.6.10](#)).
 - 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 down time 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 9.7](#)).
- 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.
- 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 (<https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/regulations/>).

- o) Death or illness of a pet.
- 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.

16.6.2 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:

- a) Relationship breakdown (evidence of the impact upon the student would need to be provided).
- b) Accommodation issues (unless of an unforeseen serious nature, such as emergency rehousing).
- c) Planned routine health appointments.
- d) Academic misconduct investigations.
- e) Late changes to module choices or late programmes changes (refer to **section 6.4**).

16.7 Where can students access support?

16.7.1 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 webpages: <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/students/> and <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/>
- Students may also wish to seek guidance and support from the York St John Students' Union: <https://ysjsu.com/support>

16.8 Students with disabilities

16.8.1 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 Advice Team at the start of the academic year so that a Learning Support Plan (LSP) can be drawn up.

It is unlikely that an LSP will provide for a blanket extension to all deadlines, but this may include an arrangement that deadlines should not be clustered closely together.

Further details can be found in the 'Individual Examination and Assessment Arrangements Policy' and procedures (refer to **section 13**).

16.8.2 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 webpages:

- <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/disability-support/>

16.8.3 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.

16.8.4 Students may submit a claim relating to their existing longstanding condition/disability:

- a) If there has been a delay, beyond their control, in putting support in place for them.

or

- b) 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 Advice Team as soon as possible to review their LSP before the next assessment period.

16.9 How do students claim?

- 16.9.1 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 School Administration Unit. 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 webpages: <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/students/policies-and-documents/exams-and-assessment/>
 - School Administration Unit contact information can be accessed at: <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/schools/school-admin/contact-us/>
 - 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.
 - Students must state if they are applying for an extension **or** performance-related exceptional circumstances; students cannot apply for both outcomes for the same assessment, although students can ask for extensions for some assessments and performance-related exceptional circumstances on other assessments, but this must be clearly stated on the claim form.
 - Students requesting extensions must state the duration of the extension they are requesting.
 - For late claims students must provide an explanation and evidence to support why they had good reason for not submitting their claim at the correct time (refer to **section 16.10.1**).
- 16.9.2 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.
- 16.9.3 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?

- 16.9.4 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 their behalf.

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

- 16.9.5 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.
- 16.9.6 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.
- 16.9.7 In all cases the claim must be submitted in accordance with published timescales.
- 16.9.8 Re-applications for exceptional circumstances for the same assessment on the same grounds may normally only be made on one successive occasion (two 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 Standards Review or Fitness to Study meeting, or agreement for a period of suspension.

16.10 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 evidence, 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.
Scheduled assessments	Applications relating to examinations, vivas, presentations or other assessments held under timed conditions should normally be submitted up to five working days after the assessment date.
Exceptional circumstances affecting a student's performance	Applications to request that exceptional circumstances are considered to have affected a student's performance should normally be submitted up to five working days after the assessment date. To be eligible to apply for this, students must have attempted the assessment in full and submitted by their approved deadline; students are not eligible if they submit a draft assessment in lieu of a full assessment, submit late or they do not submit. Note – evidence relating to these types of claims must relate to the period impacted upon immediately prior to the submission point.

Late submission of 'Exceptional Circumstances Claim' forms

16.10.1 Under some circumstances a late application for exceptional circumstances can be submitted. For a late application to be considered the following criteria should be met:

- The student must not have been given a provisional mark for the assessment.
- The student must provide an explicit statement on the claim form explaining the circumstances that prevented them applying before the claim deadline. A student's exceptional circumstances will only be considered if they had good reason for not applying before the claim deadline, for example, the student was unable to claim due to hospital admission. Incomplete forms will be returned to the student.
- The student must claim as soon as they are able to (normally late exceptional circumstances claims are only considered if received **within the three weeks** following the claim deadline) as after this point students would normally have received their provisional mark.
- Where satisfactory grounds for a late claim are not established then the application will be rejected without consideration of the exceptional circumstances.

16.10.2 If the claim form is submitted following the publication of a result, the claim cannot be considered by the Exceptional Circumstances Panel. The student will be directed to the 'Appeals Policy' and procedures (refer to [section 56](#)).

Illness on the day of an examination or other scheduled assessment

16.10.3 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 use self-certification evidence on one occasion during an academic year (see [section 16.11](#)).
- 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 use self-certification evidence on one occasion during an academic year (see [section 16.11](#)). Invigilators are not able to provide evidence of illness; this must be provided by a medical practitioner.
- If a student takes the examination and then subsequently feels they were not well enough and their performance was impacted upon they will have up to **five working days** in which to place a claim for exceptional circumstances. The medical evidence must relate directly to the period just before and/or the examination/assessment date. Evidence that relates to the period after the assessment will not be considered.

Students who do not submit a claim by the deadline and have received a provisional mark

16.10.4 The exceptional circumstances procedure may not be used by students for an assessment which has received a provisional mark. 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 (refer to [section 56](#)).

16.11 Evidence to support an application for exceptional circumstances

- 16.11.1 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 16.11.10**.

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
The duration for which the student was affected	The evidence needs to indicate the period of disruption, including the duration of the impact

- 16.11.2 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.
- 16.11.3 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 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.
 - Similarly, the University's Wellbeing 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.
 - It is advisable not to seek retrospective reports.
- 16.11.4 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.
- 16.11.5 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.
- 16.11.6 The School Administration Unit (SAU) is advised to contact the Assessment Team for guidance where circumstances are particularly sensitive or where robust evidence may be exceptionally difficult to obtain.
- 16.11.7 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.
- 16.11.8 The University will only share the evidence with those people who need to make the decision.
- 16.11.9 Photographic or video evidence of circumstances is not normally accepted without other supporting evidence from an independent third-party professional. For example:
- An injury would need to be supported by medical practitioner evidence as a photograph of the injury would not be sufficient on its own.
 - 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.
 - 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

- 16.11.10 The University recognises that it is not always possible to make a GP appointment for a short-term acute physical illness.
- 16.11.11 Self-certification may be used as evidence to request a short extension (up to seven days) through the exceptional circumstances procedure where a student has had a recent bereavement. Additional evidence will be required for longer extensions.
- 16.11.12 Self-certification allows students to request a short extension (up to seven days) 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.
- 16.11.13 Self-certification may be used as 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.
- 16.11.14 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 16.4](#)).

- 16.11.15 Self-certification cannot be used for:
- Temporary self-induced conditions such as a hangover.
 - Minor ailments, for example, coughs, colds, minor sprains, or hay fever.
 - Assessment-related anxiety or stress.
 - To certify a dependent's illness.
- 16.11.16 Self-certification is limited for use as evidence for extension requests of **up to seven days**. Students will still need to submit evidence for any circumstances which affect them for more than seven days.
- 16.11.17 Self-certification is normally limited to demonstrating impact on the period immediately before an assessment deadline or when a student is unexpectedly unwell on the day of a scheduled assessment.
- 16.11.18 Self-certification may not be used to request exceptional circumstances for performance.
- 16.11.19 Students must complete the self-certification form available on our webpages to confirm when their illness began, the period it covered, and the ways in which it has impacted their studies. This should then be submitted with their exceptional circumstances claim form.
- 16.11.20 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 due to acute physical illness 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 one occasion in an academic year**, although it is accepted that the one-week period may be associated with more than one assessment. Where a student attempts to self-certify for a second instance, they may be asked to attend a subsequent Case Consultation to discuss their absence.
 - 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

16.11.21 A summary of examples of evidence is provided below:

Grounds	Evidence
<p>Unforeseen medical circumstances</p> <p>e.g. significant acute illness or mental health crisis, or incapacitation through accident or injury.</p>	<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 one week unless they confirm a diagnosis and professional opinion regarding impact.</p> <p>Self-certification may be used on one occasion during an academic year for extensions up to one 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 as soon as the claim has been considered and a decision made.</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 one week of absence from a scheduled assessment in instances of bereavement and this would not be counted as the one use normally permitted for ill-health self-certification.</p> <p>An obituary or order of service would normally be accepted for a two-week extension. For extensions beyond two weeks a death/coroner's certificate, 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 four 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 Advice 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 Advice Team confirming the delay in support is beyond the control of the student.</p>

Grounds	Evidence
<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><u>And one of the following:</u></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 one-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 one week.</p> <p>For extensions beyond one-week 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.</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 – information regarding support with applying to defer juror service can be found on our webpages: https://www.yorks.ac.uk/ssr/your-student-record/-support-with-jury-service/</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>

Grounds	Evidence
<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

16.11.22 Students should submit their claim form by the deadline wherever possible stating the evidence they will provide and when it will be available. The School Administration Unit (SAU) 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 SAU 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 SAU 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).

16.12 Processing claims

Initial claim review

16.12.1 On receipt of the claim form and evidence the School Administration Unit (SAU) reviews the form and checks it is complete and that appropriate evidence has been provided. If the SAU 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 **five working days** from the request for further evidence.

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

The SAU 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?

16.12.2 The principal responsibility for decision-making lies with the Exceptional Circumstances Panel which is based in Registry. The panel makes decisions on all claims:

- For extensions of longer than one week
- To extend a previous one-week extension
- To defer scheduled assessments
- To waive late submission penalties
- For exceptional circumstances affecting performance
- Late claims regardless of the length of extension requested

16.12.3 The SAU has delegated authority to only make decisions for claims requesting extensions for submission deadlines for up to one week where no previous extension has been approved.

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

16.12.5 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.

Confidentiality

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

16.12.7 Evidence relating to third parties, for example evidence of the illness of a relative, will be deleted once the decision has been made in line with current data protection guidance.

Consideration of late claims

16.12.8 The panel first determines if the student has provided a valid reason for why the claim is submitted late. Poor awareness of the University Regulations, or a student choosing to not submit a claim for exceptional circumstances by the deadline in order to wait until they received a provisional result, are not acceptable or valid reasons for the submission of a late claim. This list is not exhaustive list and other reasons not listed may also not be considered grounds.

16.12.9 If the panel believes that no valid reason, and/or evidence, has been provided to explain the late submission of the claim, it is declined.

16.12.10 If the panel is satisfied that a valid reason for the late submission of the claim has been provided, and this is supported by the accompanying evidence, then the Panel considers the detail of the claim itself, applying the standard approval criteria.

16.13 Possible outcomes

16.13.1 The possible outcomes for an exceptional circumstance claim include:

- a) Provide an appropriate extended submission deadline (normally between 1-3 weeks). Claims for extensions of less than one week should be specified in 'days' on the claim form. In very compelling cases, this time limit may be extended, but 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. Where an extension would take a student beyond six weeks of their current expected completion date the 'Programme Extension Process' should be followed (refer to [section 17](#)).
- b) Removal of a penalty for late submission.
- 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) Deferment 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) Agree that the student's circumstances qualify as exceptional circumstances and deem that the relevant assessment has been impacted upon by the exceptional circumstances. The provisional assessment mark would be disregarded and a further 'sit as if for the first time' or 'resit as if for the first time' at the same attempt be permitted (refer to [section 16.16](#) for full details).
- g) Put an 'Exceptional Circumstances Plan' (ECP) in place for a defined period of time (refer to [section 16.17](#)).
- h) Decline the extension duration requested and provide a shorter extension than requested. This may occur if a claim is not supported by satisfactory evidence for the duration requested.
- i) Decline the claim in full.

16.13.2 The Exceptional Circumstances Panel does not have the authority to reconsider a provisional mark given for an assessment.

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

16.13.4 The panel 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 14](#) for 'Alternative Assessments Policy' and procedures for full information on the approval process varying an assessment.

Why might a claim be declined?

16.13.5 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 and has not provided or evidenced good reason for a late claim.
- 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.

16.13.6 If a student's request is declined, it is important to be aware that, if submitted late, the maximum module mark a student can be awarded for a first attempt is the pass mark, provided the student submits their assessment work within **five working days** of the original deadline. This applies to first attempts only, late submissions for reassessments are not accepted (see **section 30.3**).

16.14 Communicating the decision

16.14.1 Once a decision is made an email response will be sent to the student through their university email address **normally within three working days** of the date the student submitted their claim and satisfactory evidence.

- a) Claims are not considered without evidence 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, declined, or approved with a shorter duration.
- 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 or approved with a shorter duration the email will confirm the reason.

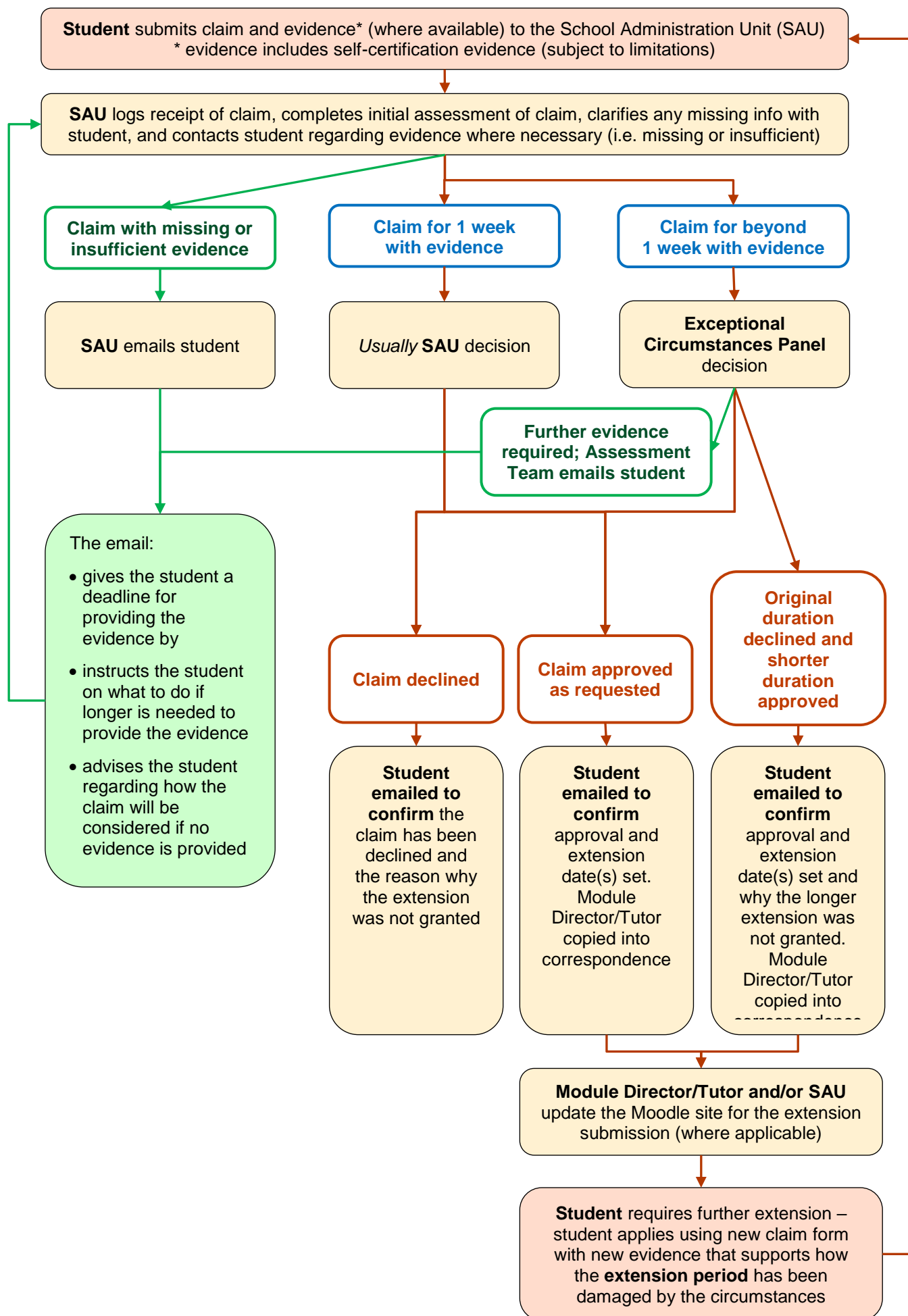
16.14.2 When considering the claim, where appropriate, the student may be directed to support that can be accessed through the University. Students are encouraged to consult the relevant student support services, including wellbeing, financial advice, accommodation advice, study skills, disability advice,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

16.14.3 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 Wellbeing Team, Disability Advice 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 27**).

- <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/wellbeing-support/>
- <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/health-and-wellbeing/disability-support/>
- <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/students/study-skills/>

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

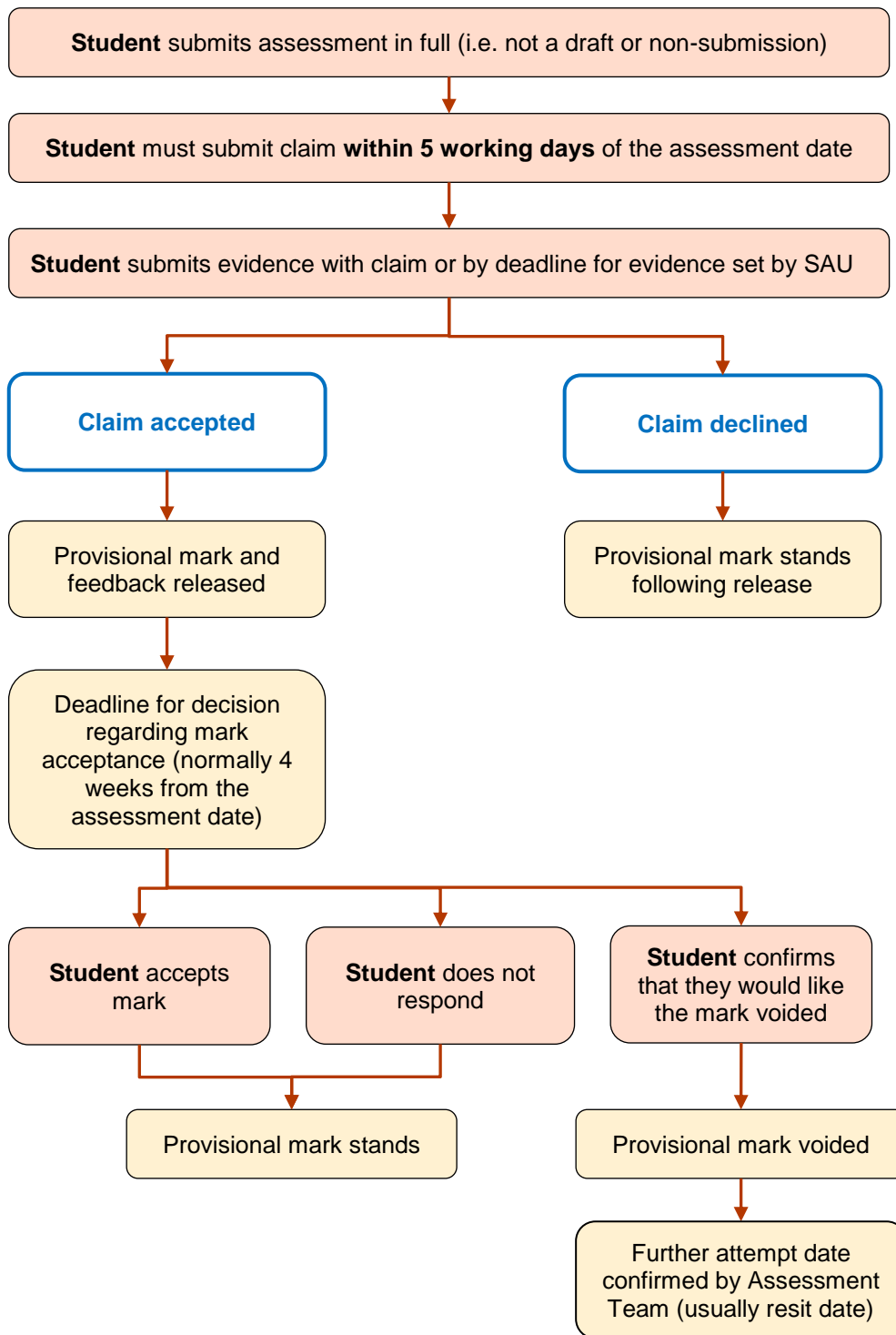
16.15 Exceptional circumstances process flowchart



16.16 Process for sits or resits as 'if for the first time'

- 16.16.1 If the panel agrees that the student is eligible for a further 'sit as if for the first time' (for uncapped marks) or 'resit as if for the first time' (for a maximum mark capped at the pass) the following process applies:
- a) The panel's decision is communicated to the student by email.
 - b) The date is confirmed by which the student must contact the Exceptional Circumstances Panel in Registry to state if they do or do not wish to accept their provisional mark – the decision deadline is **normally four weeks** from the assessment date i.e. one week after receiving the provisional mark. The email will confirm how the mark will be dealt with if the student does not respond.
 - c) Once the student receives their provisional mark the student:
 - i) **Confirms they do not wish to accept their provisional mark** by the response deadline, for example, as they have failed or have performed below their normal performance, then the provisional assessment mark would be recorded as a void on their record and a further attempt at the same attempt (i.e. first-attempt 'sit', or reassessment 'resit' attempt) would be permitted. A new deadline would be set.
 - ii) Under these circumstances the mark from the new assessment (once available) will replace the mark already obtained from the original impaired assessment, irrespective of which is higher, **and the original mark cannot be restored.**
 - iii) Note that depending on the timing of the further attempt this may have implications for the student's ability to progression to the next level.
 - iv) **Confirms they wish to accept the provisional mark** by the response deadline then the mark stands. Note the student cannot at a later date reverse this decision.
 - v) **Does not respond** by the deadline to confirm if they wish to accept the provisional mark then the assumption will be that the student is accepting the mark, and the mark given will stand. Note the student cannot at a later date reverse this decision.
- 16.16.2 If the panel agrees for the assessment to be set aside then a further sit or resit 'as if for the first time' will be organised and the date for the assessment or scheduled assessment will be confirmed by email to the student. Students should be aware that the delay in assessment may impact upon their progression to the next level of their programme or (for finalists) their graduation timing. For non-finalists this may require the student to suspend their studies for a period of time in order to satisfactorily meet the level progression requirements before resuming their study. Where this applies students will be notified.

16.16.3 Process for sits or resits as 'if for the first time' flowchart:

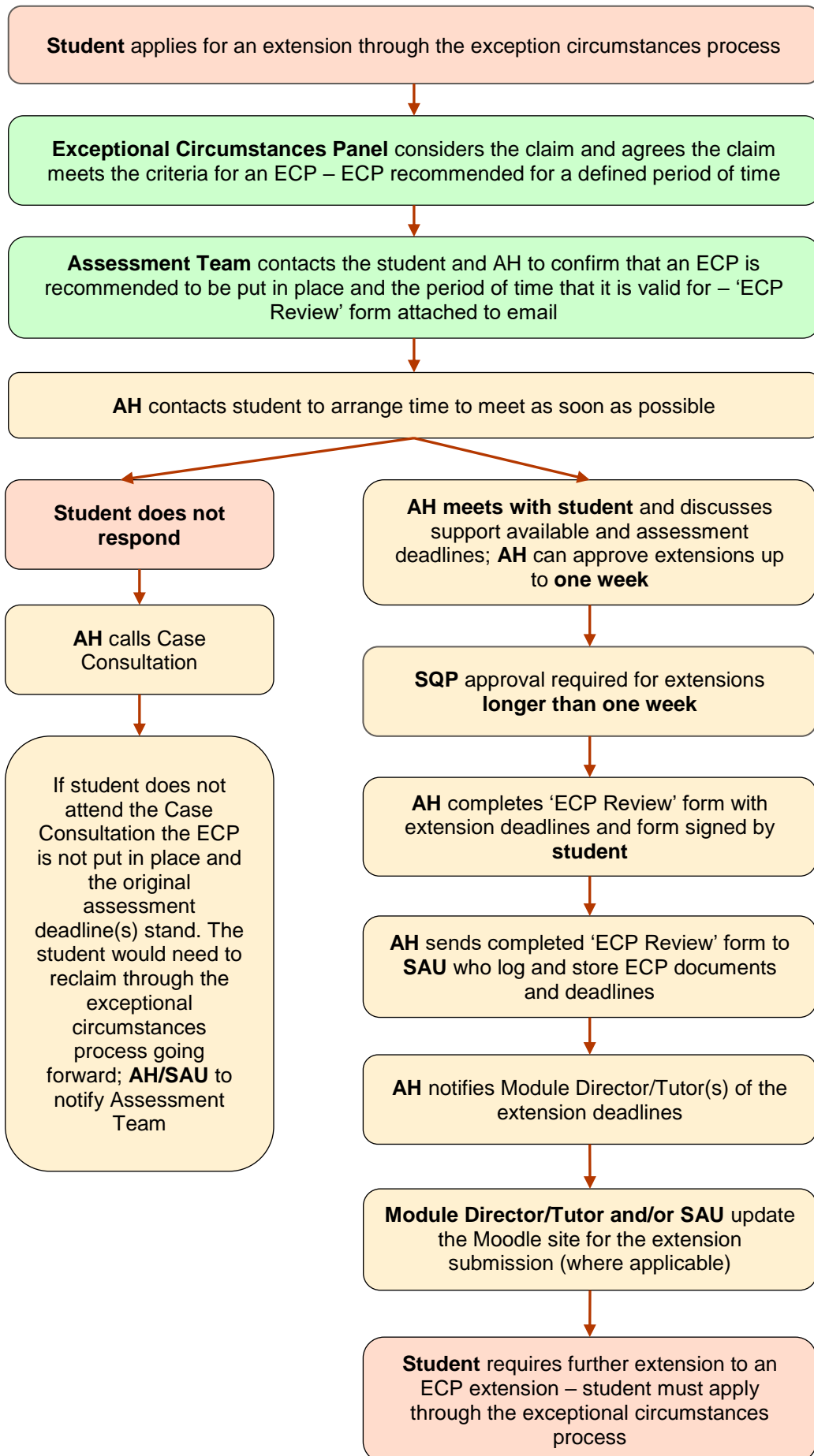


16.17 Exceptional Circumstances Plan (ECP) process

- 16.17.1 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 six months, pregnancy, caring responsibilities for a family member or partner with a disability or mental health condition, or during gender reassignment.
- 16.17.2 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).
- 16.17.3 An ECP may not be used to amend the type of assessment, in such cases students will need to seek support from the Disability Advice Team (see **section 13**).

- 16.17.4 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.
 - 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 the Exceptional Circumstances 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.
 - 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 a Case Consultation must be called.
 - g) Associate Heads or nominated representatives, can authorise extensions of **up to one week** only for ECPs. Section 6 of the 'ECP Referral' form must be completed and forward to the SAU 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 one week** (usually no more than three 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 three weeks is considered advice should be sought from the Assessment Team in Registry prior to final approval.
 - 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 one-week ECP extension for an assessment and then extend the deadline again for the same assessment by a further two 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 Subject Director in these cases and the student should be advised about their right to appeal as outlined in **section 56**.
 - 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 SAU will confirm the approved deadlines with the student via the student's university email account.
 - o) The SAU 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.
- 16.17.5 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).

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



16.18 Appeals relating to exceptional circumstances claims

- 16.18.1 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 56**).

16.19 Records relating to exceptional circumstances

- 16.19.1 The University will keep and dispose of all correspondence relating to exceptional circumstances in accordance with the appropriate principles on data protection available on our webpages at: <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/data-protection/>.