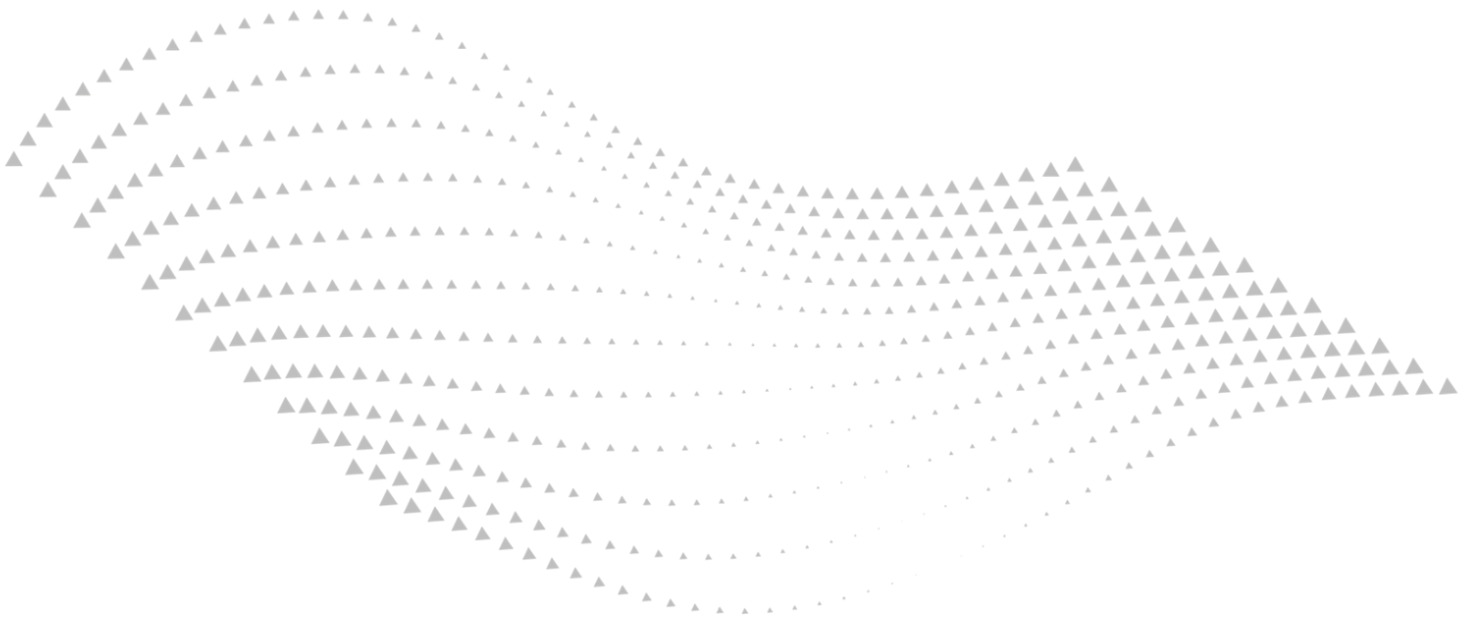


# Exceptional Circumstances Policy



Last approved: January 2023

Approved by: Academic Board (Chair's Action)

Next review due: January 2027

## 1. Reasonable Adjustments

Under the Equality Act, 2010, 'reasonable adjustments' are required where students personally experience substantial disadvantage compared to non-disabled students. Reasonable adjustments may also be made for pregnancy, or related maternity needs and for cases of temporary illness expected to last for more than three weeks, such as anticipated medical treatment, including hospitalisation. Reasonable adjustments may also be made for students with significant caring responsibilities.

The consideration of what is considered a reasonable adjustment will typically be conducted on a case-by-case basis, and adjustments may include adaptations, and changes that ensure your individual needs are met, including:

- Recording of lectures and seminars (see our policy [here](#)).
- Supporting materials for classes are uploaded to Canvas in advance.
- Changing rooms if accessibility is an issue.
- Reasonable changes to the format of an assessment.<sup>1</sup>
- Additional time to complete assessments and exams or an alternative assessment.<sup>2</sup>
- Use of a computer or scribe in exams.
- Use of a separate room for exams.
- Extra time in presentations/live assessments for questions to be repeated.
- Presentations to be one-to-one with the examiner.

Reasonable adjustments will be agreed upon in partnership between you and the College Student Services Team in consultation with the relevant Course Leader. Adjustments will consider your individual needs and specific course requirements. Students with Registered Learning Difficulties, Disabilities or Long-term Illness should provide external evidence from a registered practitioner. Evidence should be submitted to the Student Services Team at the beginning of the academic year, but we will process reasonable adjustments at any point during the year. When you register this information with your College Student Services Team, you must indicate if you are happy to share this information with your Course Leader and teaching staff. It is your right to keep this information confidential, and you may opt out of sharing it, but this will make it more difficult for your Course Leader and the teaching team to support you.

To begin the process, you should make an appointment with your College Student Services Team. They will judge whether you require reasonable adjustments and will be able to work with you to create an Individual Support Plan (ISP – see Appendix 1). The ISP will outline the adjustments suitable to your individual needs and include advice for academic and support staff on practical ways to support you. Once the ISP is agreed upon, your College Student Services Team will communicate the requirements to the College Exams Team. Changes to assessment arrangements will be made automatically for all modules throughout your course during your studies. As part of your ISP, agreed at the beginning of the academic year, you can request coursework deadline adjustments. Adjustments will usually be for a period of 7 days, but up to 10 days can be considered if deemed necessary. However, if these are not included in your ISP, you may still use your personal allocation of student-initiated extensions or apply for Mitigation as outlined below.

Your College Student Services Team will contact you annually to review your ISP; however, you may also instigate a review at any time should your needs change. If you have a condition that suddenly becomes worse and therefore affects your ability to complete assessments, you may also apply for mitigation as detailed in the mitigation process below.

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<sup>1</sup> Changes to the format of an assessment will be devised by the Course Leaders in consultation with Student Services Staff and the relevant External Examiner.

<sup>2</sup> Alternative assessments will be offered where a student's disability makes the original assessment impractical – alternative assessments will be designed by the Course Leaders in consultation with Student Services Staff and the relevant External Examiner.

## Assessed Outcomes

Assessed learning outcomes<sup>3</sup> apply equally to all students and cannot be modified. However, the way that markers use learning outcomes to measure achievement can take account of individual student needs; for example, some neuro-diverse students may respond to particular situations (for instance, live performance and group tasks) differently from their fellows and markers should take this into account when setting and marking assessments. Depending on an individual student's needs, how that student is enabled to demonstrate a learning outcome can be adjusted or adapted.

The process for making reasonable adjustments is outlined in figure 1 below.

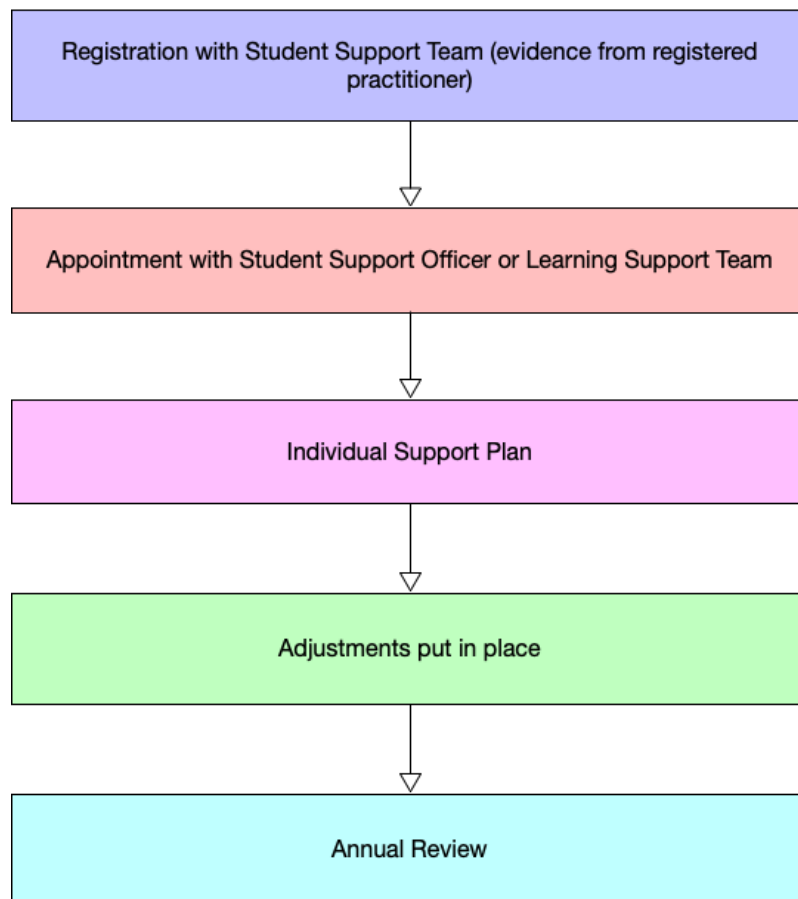


Fig. 1 – ISP Flow chart.

## Assessment Design, Teaching and Marking Practice

Our [Higher Education Strategy](#) states, 'Assessment will be fair, relevant, authentic, collaborative, diverse, inclusive and accessible.' Inclusive assessment design ensures a genuine choice is offered to all students to enable various ways learning outcomes can be evidenced through assessment. In course development, consideration is given to all students and their potential to engage with the learning and teaching. This ensures anticipation of the most facilitative conditions that would provide for sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of a wide range of learners. So, consideration is given to accessibility of resources, the teaching environment, enabling access to the curriculum and interrogating the nature of formative and summative assessments. Lecturers are encouraged to build flexibility and choice into their assessment design and implementation, tested during the course and module approval or

<sup>3</sup> Learning Outcomes are any measurable skills, abilities, knowledge or values that a student demonstrates as a result of completing a given module, course or class. Learning Outcomes are specified in Module Guides and Course Handbooks.

modification process. In addition, our Equality Diversity and Inclusion Curriculum Working Group has set up a SharePoint site where resources to support Lecturers and Students are provided [here](#).

### **Making Adjustments to Teaching**

There are many things that Lecturers can do to support students with particular needs. Examples include:

- Support from a Disabled Student Allowance<sup>4</sup> (DSA) Funded Support Worker (various roles including practical support and note-taking).
- Recording taught sessions.
- Use of DSA-funded laptop/assistive technology in class.
- Teaching materials are provided in advance and in different formats, e.g., slides, lecture outlines etc.
- Alternative formats for materials – different options, including enlarged print, the colour of materials, and electronic formats.

Approaches to delivery:

- Ensuring understanding and clarifying instructions, including the provision of simplified assessment guidance
- Provision of longer or additional one-to-one tutorials.
- Permission to record and/or capture teaching sessions in line with BIMM policy [here](#).
- Explicit notification of any changes to instructions or guidance.
- Presentations – different options, e.g., delivery to a small group, or just to the examiner or allowing students with an anxiety disorder to record a presentation rather than presenting in front of others.
- Group work – different options, e.g., students may choose which group they work with or work on their own
- Rest breaks/ students may leave a class without notice for an agreed amount of time.
- Use of specialist equipment, e.g., chairs.
- Teaching spaces – accessibility.

### **Marking Your Work**

Understanding the nature of students' disabilities and how they impact how students may respond to assessments informs an inclusive approach during the marking of assessments. In addition, the provision of an ISP and its use to tell your Course Leader and teaching team of your needs allows them to ensure that you are fully supported in your learning. This will include the marking of your work where specific adjustments are noted. For example, in marking written work presented by students with dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties (SpLDs), unless otherwise stipulated in module/course learning outcomes, markers should focus on the extent to which learning outcomes are realised rather than focusing on errors in grammatical, syntactical or spelling expression.

## **2. Automatic 24-hour Lateness Penalty Removal (Pilot for 2022/23)**

In cases where they would normally apply, 24-hour lateness penalties will be automatically removed from four coursework-based submissions in an academic year. This pilot scheme will run in academic year 2022/23, will apply to coursework submitted up to 24-hours late only (not examinations or practical performance-based assessments), and will be applied to the first four instances of late submission to occur in the academic year.

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<sup>4</sup> Where a student has a DSA in place (UK students only).

The objective of this pilot scheme is to help with unexpected, short-term issues that you might not be able to easily access evidence for and, therefore, cannot make a claim to the Mitigating Evidence Committee.

If you're a part-time student, you will be allowed a maximum of two Automatic Lateness Penalty Removals per academic year; if you are on a Repeat Year, you will have a pro-rata allocation, e.g., if you're repeating 90-credits worth of modules, you'll be allowed three.

Automatic Lateness Penalty Removals will not apply where you have extended deadlines resulting from evidence-based mitigation.

### 3. Mitigation

We understand that there may be times that things don't go quite to plan during your studies with us, so our Mitigation Process is here should you need it. The process can support you through sudden and unforeseen conditions that temporarily prevent you from completing an assessment, or significantly impact on your performance in an assessment, such as illness or a family crisis.

Each College has a Mitigating Evidence Committee (MEC) chaired by the Head of Student Services and attended by the Head of Education or Higher Education, Head of Exams or equivalent, along with Course Leaders. MEC make decisions on claims, and the terms of reference for MEC can be found [here](#).

When you are struggling to meet a deadline for submission of an assessment, you should follow the process outlined below.

#### Evidence-Based Mitigation

For assessments where the Automatic Lateness Penalty Removal pilot outlined above will not be sufficient, and for examinations and other non-Canvas submitted assessments, you will need to apply for evidence-based Mitigation.

This process is designed to accommodate unforeseen exceptional circumstances that may occur and are therefore not suitable for long-term or permanent issues such as disability or mental health issues, which are covered by the ISP process outlined above.

The three main types of evidence-based Mitigation available are:

- A standard extension for a period of seven days extra time that may be granted to enable you to complete a coursework assessment (this is effectively the removal of the normal penalty for work submitted up to 7 days late).
- A sit opportunity (you will be allowed to take the assessment without penalty and will be given a new deadline to complete the sit. New deadlines set as a result of a successful mitigation claim will normally be 2 weeks from the point of approval but can be up to 6 weeks, depending on the circumstances).
- Impairment: your performance in an assessment has been impaired due to exceptional circumstances. Following a successful mitigating evidence claim for impairment, you will be given the option to either retain your current mark for the assessment or accept the offer of a Sit (a repeat of the assessment without penalty). If you accept the offer of a sit, the original mark will be removed, and the new Sit mark will replace it.

If you think you need one of these evidence-based Mitigation options, you will need to follow the three steps outlined below.

### **A. Advice**

Before you make any final decision about evidence-based Mitigation, we recommend talking about it with someone such as:

- Your Course Leader.
- Your Student/Learning Support Officer.

Our Mitigation process is designed to support you, though you need to consider some of the impacts, such as added pressure if you have too many assessments to complete simultaneously.

For information on how delaying assessments as a result of mitigation will affect international Student Route Visa holders, please contact the [Immigration & Compliance Team](#).

### **B. Apply for Mitigation**

You need to complete the Mitigation form, which is available from your Student Services Team.

You have up to 7 days after your assessment deadline to apply for evidence-based Mitigation, and you may also apply up to 7 days before the deadline.

You should use one form for each assessment. If you have difficulty filling out the form, please ask for help from the Student Services Team.

When you submit your application form, you will need to provide verifiable and/or independent evidence of the circumstances which have affected your ability to undertake the assessment either with the form or within 14 days of submitting the form. Evidence must be related to the current assessment period.

Applications cannot be processed until the relevant evidence is provided. You can find a list of appropriate evidence examples in Appendix 2.

### **C. Outcome**

When evaluating your mitigation claim, the Mitigating Evidence Committee (MEC) will consider the timing and severity of your mitigating circumstances, the validity of the evidence you have provided and the impact on the assessment and on your ability to progress.

The Mitigating Evidence Committee will process your application, and you will typically receive an outcome within ten working days of submitting your evidence (or more during busy periods).

Your Mitigation claim will be judged to be either accepted, rejected or lacking sufficient evidence. If the evidence is insufficient, additional evidence may be requested, which must be submitted within 14 days of notification. If the claim is rejected, there will be no further opportunity to submit evidence.

Once you have applied, you should start preparing your work for the next deadline. However, please be aware that a sit assessment might not take the same format as the original one (your Course Leader will be able to advise you on this). For example, it may not be possible for you to participate in a group-based assessment, and in such cases, an individual version of the assessment brief will be provided.

If Mitigation is not approved and you disagree with the decision, you can appeal by following the process outlined [here](#).

## **Reasons Why Your Mitigation Application May Not Be Approved**

Examples of why an application may not be approved include:

- A statement that indicates the existence of an acute medical condition, but no medical evidence is submitted or the medical certificate lacks detail to support the claim, such as a 'retrospective' medical note, where consultation dates do not support the claim.
- Where a sit deadline beyond the maximum period of 6 weeks is required.
- A request for a sit deadline beyond week 14 of semester 2 for a semester 1 assessment.
- A request for a sit deadline beyond the summer re-sit deadline for a semester 2 assessment.
- Where there are outstanding extended deadlines for 4 or more modules.
- Where deadline extensions will result in an unmanageable assessment schedule for the student, whether due to short-term assessment bunching or overall workload (a student's track record may be taken into consideration when making this judgement). In such cases, the MEC will instead recommend the student intermits and returns in the following academic year to complete any outstanding assessments.
- Computer equipment failure will not generally be an acceptable reason for mitigation, as we expect you to take responsibility for backing up your data. However, the failure of BIMM University systems will be considered.

## **Occasional Authorised Absences from Practical Assessments and Exams**

Students wishing to observe religious festivals and holy days, a work placement, internship commitment or professional engagement which may clash with a scheduled examination or practical assessment may make a formal request to the Course Leader accompanied by a letter from the religious/sporting/placement event leader confirming the student's intention to observe/attend the event and the date/duration of the event. Any requests must be made four weeks before the examination or practical assessment. The Course Leader will consider the request and the evidence and inform the Exams Team.

**Appendix 1: Student Individual Support Plan Template**

Students across the University qualify for special examination and assessment arrangements, due to disability, specific learning difficulty, mental health or medical condition. Reasonable adjustments are when the University makes an alteration to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places the person at a substantial disadvantage to other students in relation to their course.

Name	
Student Number	
Date of Plan	
Course and Year	
Discipline	

**Diagnosis <sup>1</sup>**

**Barriers and Challenges**

**Adjustments to be made by the University<sup>2</sup>**

- Can submit up to a week after initial deadline without lateness penalties
- 25% Extra time in written exams
- Use of computer in written exams
- Use of separate room for written exams
- Extra time in presentations/live assessments for questions to be repeated
- Reader / Prompt
- Presentations to be one-to-one

Please state any additional adjustments below:

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<sup>1</sup> You should note that to ensure fairness to all candidates, any request for Reasonable Adjustments must be supported by clear evidence or diagnosis – for example, an educational psychologist’s report (post 16); study needs assessment or a letter from a GP or psychiatrist.

<sup>2</sup> Please note that although BIMM aim to meet the above requested adjustments there is no guarantee that all of these can be met. The Adjustments will have to be discussed and approved by your Course Leader and be assessed on an individual basis, ensuring no compromise in meeting learning outcomes or academic standards.



**Additional Support Available (DSA, Academic Support Tutor, etc.)**

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**Student Responsibilities**

The University expects that all eligible students will apply for a Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA); this is the government package that funds most support requirements at university.	
I know who the Head of Student Services and my Student Support Officer are, and I have their contact details.	
I will inform a member of Student Services immediately if my circumstances change and my plan needs to be updated as a result of this.	
I need to let IT Support know if I have any problems with the VLE/Student Email	
I agree to check my Student email regularly for correspondence and to reply within a reasonable time (normally 48 hours).	

I understand the information set out in this Student Support Plan and I am happy for the following University staff to be aware of this information:

Student Services		<input type="checkbox"/>
Course Leaders and Tutors		<input type="checkbox"/>
Other Staff (Reception, Estates, Events)		<input type="checkbox"/>

Student Support Officer Signature .....

Course Leader Signature .....

The University will always try to contact you before we can share any information about you to people outside the College unless you are at risk of harm, or we are legally obliged to. If there is anyone who you're happy for us to speak to without contacting you first, please state the person below:

Name	
Relationship to Student	
Contact Number	

I have read and understood the information on this ISP. I understand that this information will be treated sensitively and can be adjusted at any time during my studies upon agreement with Student Services. I also agree that this information can be seen by the relevant staff to which I have consented at any time during my time of study at the University.

Student Signature .....

Print Name .....

Date.....

## **Appendix 2: Acceptable Mitigating Circumstances Evidence**

All documents submitted should be written in English; a translated version must accompany any evidence in another language. All evidence from third parties (anyone other than the student) must be emailed directly to Student Support.

### **Ill health or a decline in mental health**

- Doctor's note: either a sick note signing the student off or a handwritten note from the GP explaining the student's current circumstances. Notes must include dates of consultation and diagnosis.
- Other medical evidence: hospital admission record, notes from another practising medical professional, including dates of consultation and diagnosis.
- Mental health professional evidence: we do not accept evidence from University Student Support Officers but will accept evidence from a counsellor/psychotherapist, including a University-employed Student Counsellor.
- A letter from Student Support confirming that 'reasonable adjustments' are required but not yet in place.
- A lateral Flow test result if a student has contracted COVID-19.

### **Bereavement**

- Death certificate.
- Funeral order of service.
- An emailed statement from a family member.

### **Recent traumatic event**

- A doctor's letter, if possible, to evidence a decline in mental health due to a traumatic event.
- Evidence from a specialist support service that works with individuals who have been through trauma/assault.
- A written statement from a Student Support Officer.

### **Mitigating evidence for caregivers**

- If you are a caregiver and your responsibility to provide that care – for example, to a sick child impacts your ability to complete an assessment, then we will accept evidence from a third party (GP, school or another verifiable source).

### **Other acceptable evidence (this is not an exhaustive list, and other circumstances may be considered as a basis for mitigation)**

- Housing: a letter/statement from the landlord or agency where an eviction or other significant housing-related event has impacted students' studies.
- Vehicle breakdown en route to an assessment: break down provider receipt/garage receipt etc.
- Statement from Course Leader or Head of Education/Higher Education if the University is responsible for an issue that has led to a student being unable to submit their work.

Please note that the falsification of mitigation evidence may lead to an investigation under the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#).