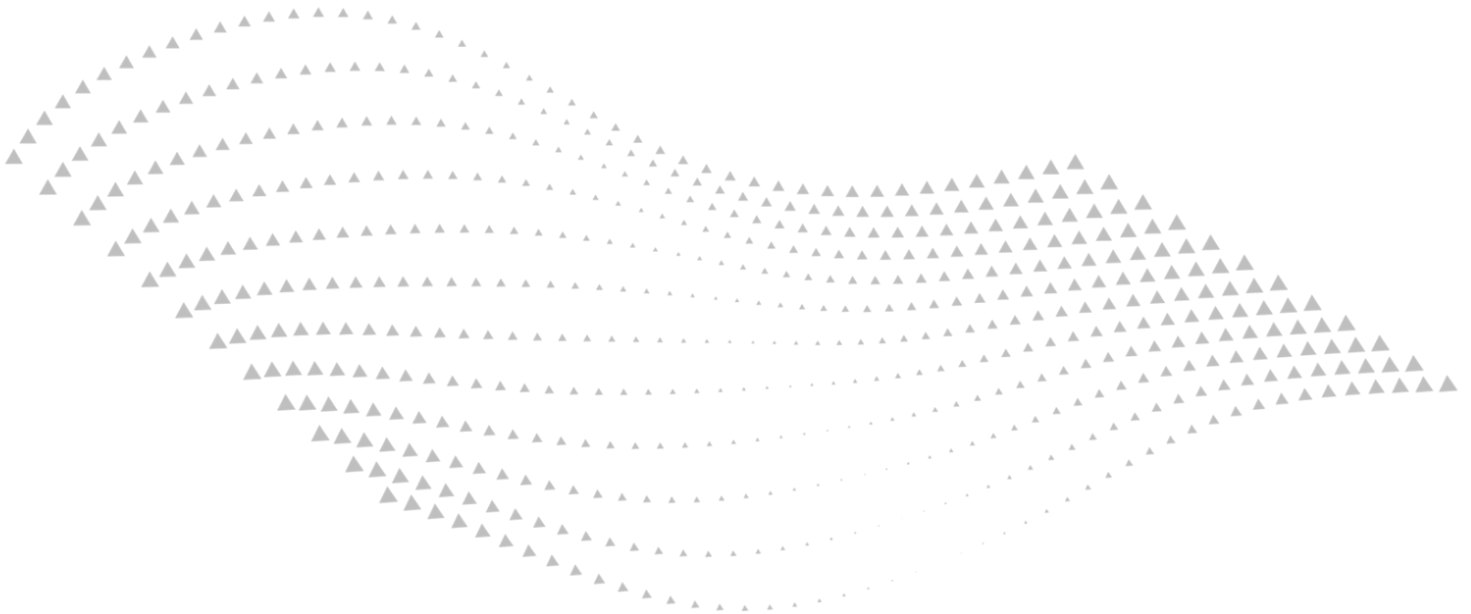


# **Exceptional Circumstances Policy**



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Committee

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## 1. Reasonable Adjustments

Under the Equality Act 2010, 'reasonable adjustments' are required where students 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 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 for in-person assessments if accessibility is an issue.
- Reasonable changes to the format of an assessment.<sup>1</sup>
- Additional time to complete assessments or an alternative assessment.<sup>2</sup>
- 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 Campus Student Wellbeing Team in consultation with the relevant Course Leader, where necessary. Adjustments will consider your individual needs and specific course requirements. Students with Registered Learning Difficulties, Disabilities or Long-term Illnesses should provide external evidence from a registered practitioner. Evidence should be submitted to the Student Wellbeing 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 Campus Student Wellbeing 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. If you cannot provide external evidence from a registered practitioner, the Student Wellbeing Team will consider requests for reasonable adjustments on a case-by-case basis and will use their professional judgment to decide whether these should be implemented.

To begin the process, you should make an appointment with your Campus Student Wellbeing Team. They will judge whether you require reasonable adjustments and can 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 Campus Student Wellbeing Team will communicate the requirements to the Campus Assessment Team. Changes to assessment arrangements will be made automatically for all modules throughout your course. As part of your ISP, agreed at the beginning of the academic year, you can request coursework deadline adjustments.

Your Campus Student Wellbeing Team will contact you annually to review your ISP; however, you may also instigate a review at any time should your needs change. In addition, if your condition suddenly worsens and 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 the Student Wellbeing Team 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 the Student Wellbeing Team 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 faculty 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.

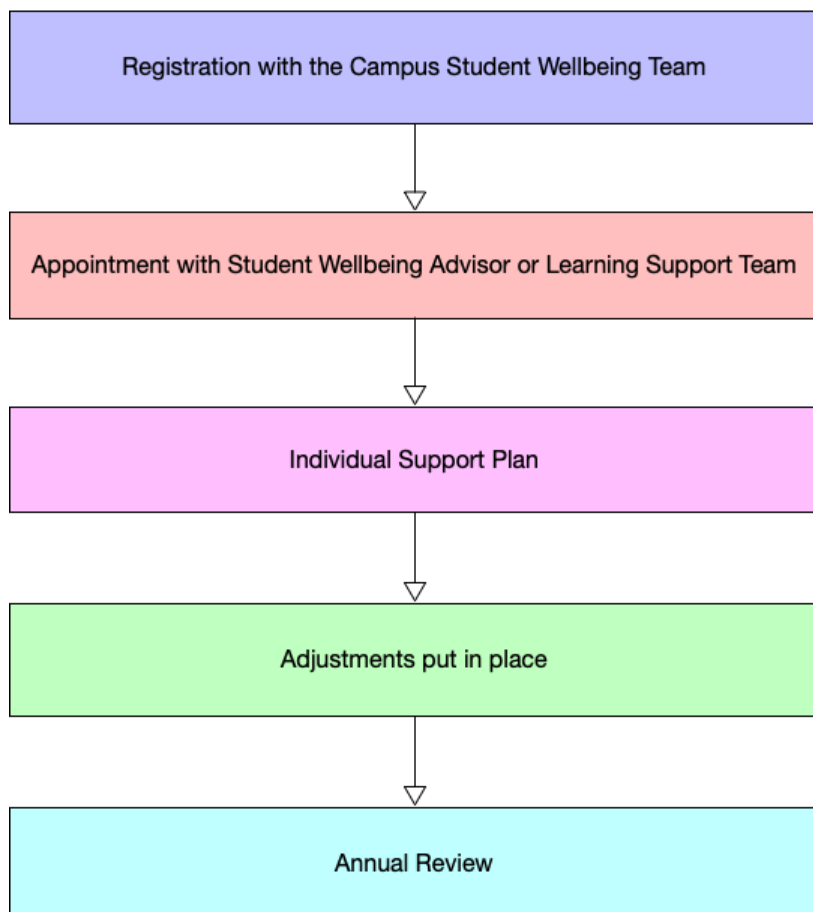


Fig. 1 – ISP Flow chart.

## Assessment Design, Teaching and Marking Practice

Our [Higher Education Strategy](#) states, 'Assessment will be fair, relevant, authentic, collaborative, diverse, inclusive and accessible.' An inclusive assessment design ensures a genuine choice is offered to all students, enabling various ways learning outcomes can be evidenced through assessment. In course development, consideration is given to all students and their potential to engage with learning and teaching. This process ensures sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of a wide range of learners. So, consideration is given to the accessibility of resources, the teaching environment, enabling access

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<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 Specifications and Course Handbooks.

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, and this is tested during the course and module approval or modification process. In addition, our Education Team 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 faculty 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.
- 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 our inclusive approach during the marking of assessments. In addition, providing 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. These provisions 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 will focus on the extent to which learning outcomes are realised rather than on grammar, syntax or spelling errors.

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

## 2. Automatic 24-hour penalty-free submission

Because we understand that sometimes, however hard you try, you may not be able to submit your work on time, we do not apply any penalty on work submitted within 24 hours of the assessment deadline (this does not apply to Retrievals). Beyond 24 hours, there may be a penalty for late submission, but this will depend on the level of study and how late your work is. Please see the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Academic Regulations for details.

## 3. Mitigation

We also understand that things may not go quite as planned 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 your performance in an assessment, such as illness or a family crisis.

Each Campus has a Mitigating Evidence Committee (MEC) chaired by the Student Wellbeing Manager and attended by the Heads of School, Academic Administration Team Leader. MEC make decisions on claims, and the terms of reference for MEC can be found [here](#).

When you struggle to meet a deadline for submitting an assessment, you should follow the process outlined below.

### Evidence-Based Mitigation

For assessments where the Automatic 24-hour penalty-free submission outlined above will not be sufficient, and for examinations and other non-Canvas submitted assessments, you must apply for evidence-based Mitigation.

This process is designed to accommodate unforeseen exceptional circumstances that may occur and are therefore unsuitable for long-term or permanent issues such as disability or mental health issues, which are covered by the ISP process outlined in section 1—reasonable Adjustments above.

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

- **A standard extension:** Seven days of extra time may be granted to enable you to complete a coursework assessment. This extension removes any penalty for work submitted over 24 hours and up to 7 days late.
- **An Uncapped Retrieval:** You will be allowed to retake the assessment without penalty and will be given a new deadline to complete the Uncapped Retrieval. New deadlines set due to a successful mitigation claim will typically be two weeks from the point of approval but can be up to six 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 an Uncapped Retrieval. If you accept the offer, the highest mark achieved will stand.

**If you need one of these evidence-based Mitigation options, 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 Wellbeing Team.

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

For information on how delaying assessments due to Mitigation will affect you if you are an international Student Route Visa holder, please contact the [Immigration & Compliance Team](#).

## **B. Apply for Mitigation**

You must complete the Mitigation form, which is available from your Student Wellbeing 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 Wellbeing 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 your ability to progress.

The MEC 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, the MEC may request additional proof, which must be submitted within 14 days of notification. If the claim is rejected, there will be no further opportunity to present evidence.

Once you have applied, you should start preparing your assessment work for the new deadline. However, please be aware that an Uncapped Retrieval 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 the following:

- 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 an Uncapped Retrieval deadline beyond the maximum period of six weeks is required.
- A request for an Uncapped Retrieval deadline beyond week 14 of semester/trimester 2 for a semester/trimester 1 assessment.
- A request for an Uncapped Retrieval deadline beyond the summer Retrieval deadline for a semester/trimester 2 assessment.
- Where there are outstanding extended deadlines for four or more modules.
- Where deadline extensions will result in an unmanageable assessment schedule for you, whether due to short-term assessment bunching or overall workload (your track record may be considered when making this judgement), in such cases, the MEC will recommend you intermit and return 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**

If you wish to observe religious festivals and holy days, engage in a work placement, internship commitment or professional engagement which may clash with a scheduled in-person assessment, you may make a formal request to the Course Leader accompanied by a letter from the religious/sporting/placement/event organiser confirming your intention to observe/attend/take part in the event/placement and the date/duration. Any requests must be made four weeks before the in-person assessment. The Course Leader will consider the request and the evidence and inform the Campus Academic Services Team.

## **4. Special Scheme of Study Policy**

This policy, which you can find [here](#), is designed to meet the needs of students at BIMM University who may be offered professional opportunities in the creative industries during their studies. In such cases, this policy allows Course Leaders to propose adjustments to teaching and assessment that will enable students to continue their studies whilst taking on professional engagements that will benefit their professional development.



**5. Appendix 1: Individual Support Plan**

**Individual Support Plan**

<b>Student Name:</b>		<b>Student ID</b>	
<b>Cohort</b>		<b>Course</b>	
<b>Email:</b>		<b>Repeat?</b>	

**About You**

<b>Diagnosis:</b>	
<b>Evidence received:</b>	
<b>Preferred method of contact:</b>	
<b>How long has your disability been a part of your life?</b>	
For example, have you received a diagnosis, and when did you first encounter barriers?	
<b>Did you have any support in school or college?</b>	
<b>If so, what kind of support? And did you find this helpful?</b>	
This includes extra time in assessments, readers, scribes etc.	

**Assessment and Exams**

<b>Written assessments - I experience the following challenges</b>
<b>Timed written exams - I experience the following challenges</b>
<b>Presentations - I experience the following challenges</b>
<b>Performance exams - I experience the following challenges</b>
<b>Timed practical assessments - I experience the following challenges</b>
<b>Your reasonable adjustments to assessments</b>

<b>Teaching Adjustments</b>
<b>Academic Resources</b>

<b>Challenges and Recommendations</b>	
<b>In the classroom</b>	
Challenges	Recommendations
<b>University life</b>	
Challenges	Recommendations
<b>Other</b>	
Challenges	Recommendations
<b>In the event of a fire drill or evacuation, would you require assistance leaving the building?</b>	

<b>Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan</b>
<b>I require the following support in the event of a fire/evacuation</b>
<b>Do you require different support during a fire drill?</b>

<b>In Case of Emergency</b>	
<b>Is there a possibility that your disability may require emergency intervention?</b>	
<b>Please describe a typical reaction/ attack:</b>	
<b>Please provide details about any triggers that we should be aware of:</b>	
<b>When did you last have a reaction/attack and how often can they occur?</b>	
<b>In the event of a reaction/attack, what steps should BIMM staff take to ensure your safety?</b>	
<b>Is there someone you would like us to contact to inform them if a reaction/attack occurs?</b>	

<b>Student Responsibilities</b>	
I know where the Wellbeing team are based, and I have their contact details.	
I will inform my Learning Support Advisor as soon as possible if my circumstances change and my Individual Support Plan needs to be updated.	
I need to let IT Support know if I have any problems with the Virtual Learning Environment/Student Email	
I agree to regularly check my Student email for correspondence and reply within a reasonable time (typically 48 hours).	

<b>Consent to share information</b>	
<b>Do you consent to the information provided in this form being shared with BIMM staff who may need to know about your support needs?</b>	
<b>BIMM Staff includes Student Wellbeing, Academic Admin, Tutors and Campus and Technical teams.</b>	
<b>Do you consent to us sharing information about you with a parent/ guardian/ next of kin if they request it?</b>	
<b>Next of kin contact details</b>	
<b>Please let us know if there is any information you DO NOT want to be shared with next of kin</b>	
<b>If you consent to us doing so, we will share information in this form with your tutors to ensure they can provide a supportive learning environment.</b>	
<b>If you would like to write any information about yourself and your disability/ disabilities for your tutors in your own words, please do this in the space below.</b>	
<b>Completed by:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	

## 6. Supporting Documents and Useful Links

- Disabled Students Allowance (UK only): <https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa>
- BIMM University Disability Policy: <https://www.bimm.ac.uk/essential-documents/student-disability-guides/>
- BIMM Students Website: <https://bimmstudents.com/>
- BIMM IT Digital Platform Guides: <https://bimmnet.sharepoint.com/sites/DigitalStudentGuides>
- BIMM University Wellbeing SharePoint:
- BIMM University Library: <https://bimmlibrary.com/>

- Diversity and ability accessible resources: <https://www.diversityandability.com/resources/>

## **7. 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 to the Student Wellbeing Team.

### **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 includes hospital admission records and notes from other practising medical professionals, including dates of consultation and diagnosis.
- Mental health professional evidence: we do not accept evidence from university Student Wellbeing Advisers but will accept evidence from a counsellor/psychotherapist, including a university-employed Student Counsellor.
- A letter from Student Wellbeing 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 Wellbeing Adviser.

### **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).

### **Work commitments**

- We usually expect you to plan your time so that work commitments do not impact your ability to submit assessments on time. However, there may be occasions when significant working deadlines clash with university deadlines. These cases will be reviewed on merit, and you will need to clarify why the clash of deadlines occurred because of factors outside your control and could not have been foreseen for your claim to be accepted. You will also need to provide appropriate evidence, such as a letter from your employer.

**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 the Course Leader or Head of School if the university is responsible for an issue that has led to a student being unable to submit their work.

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