

The British University in Egypt

Exceptional Circumstances Procedure

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Exceptional Circumstances Procedure

The Exceptional Circumstances Procedure (formerly known as Impaired Performance Procedure) applies to every student enrolled and registered with the University.

1. Declaration of Fitness to Study

- 1.1 The University assumes that all students who start their programme are fit to study and fit to sit for its assessments (cf. the University's *Fitness to Study* policy).
- 1.2 The Fitness to Study procedure may result in a student being required to take a period of suspension / Break in Studies if so directed by a Fitness to Study Case Conference or Fitness to Study Panel.
- 1.3 Students with a disability, specific learning difficulties, long-term illness or mental health conditions should declare these to either Student Admissions or directly to Student Support and Wellbeing prior to commencing their programme of study.
- 1.4 Students who face long-term circumstances that may result in difficulties during their programme of study, should report these immediately to their Faculty's Student Support Officer and to Student Support and Wellbeing.
- 1.5 The role of Student Support and Wellbeing is to ensure the University provides appropriate and reasonable support and appropriate adjustments for students with disabilities, specific learning difficulties, long-term illness and mental health challenges.

2. Exceptional Circumstances

- 2.1 The Exceptional Circumstances (EC) procedure is designed to support students who experience unexpected and significantly disruptive short-term circumstances, arising from matters beyond their control, and that may have negatively affected their ability to study and take/perform in assessments.
- 2.2 The procedure ensures students who experience Exceptional Circumstances are neither unfairly disadvantaged nor unreasonably advantaged over other students.
- 2.3 The procedure is not intended to provide mitigation for long-standing medical (chronic) conditions or challenges, which should be supported through Reasonable Adjustments agreed by Student Support and Wellbeing prior to the assessment and communicated in confidence to relevant staff only.

3. Grounds for Exceptional Circumstances

- 3.1 Eligible reasons for an Exceptional Circumstances claim include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - 3.1.1 Serious, short-term personal physical illness or mental health illness, or a significant change in an existing long-term (chronic) health condition, an exacerbation (commonly referred to as a 'flare-up'), that is considered to have occurred at a time that may impact on the student's performance in an assessment;
 - 3.1.2 Death or serious illness of a close relative. A close relative would normally be defined as parents or legal guardian, siblings, grandparents, spouse or children although exceptions may be applied on a case-by-case basis;
 - 3.1.3 Travel for visa and/residency renewal/or religious observance purposes, provided that it was not possible to schedule this for another date;
 - 3.1.4 Changes to assessment regulations or dates without advance notification;
 - 3.1.5 Public transportation (including University provided transport) problems announced by the University, government or media;
 - 3.1.6 Students who are representing Egypt in international sporting events that conflict with a University examination may request an approval letter from their Dean of Faculty, or from the Provost in the

Dean's absence. Where approval is granted by the Dean or Provost, the student may subsequently submit a claim for Exceptional Circumstances.

3.2 The following ***cannot*** be accepted as grounds for Exceptional Circumstances:

- 3.2.1 Claims against the mark awarded for any assessment and/or not being aware of the published assessment regulations;
- 3.2.2 Not following University communications or checking emails regularly and/or misreading or missing the examination timetable;
- 3.2.3 Loss of work or missing deadlines due to technical problems not of the University's making, e.g. personal computer failure, not backing up, or connectivity issues;
- 3.2.4 Private transportation problems and/or travelling for tourism or participating in events that are not directly related to study;
- 3.2.5 Late payment of tuition fees without permission from the University.
- 3.2.6 Disagreements or dysfunction of a group or team within the context of a group or team assessment or assignment. Group or team assignment issues must be directed to the Module Leader and/or Personal Academic Tutor.
- 3.2.7 Day-to-day life events which an individual student would be expected to manage during their study and assessment schedule.
- 3.2.8 Where circumstances appear to be appropriate, the student may submit a request for Break in Studies and return when he or she is in a position to resume their studies and the return to study is approved by the Fitness to Study panel.

4. Timescales and deadlines

- 4.1 Exceptional Circumstances claims must be submitted ***within 10 days from the date of the assessment or the date of the medical certificate, whichever is the earlier.***
- 4.2 Exceptional Circumstances claims relevant to end-of-semester examinations must be submitted by the deadline noted on the Academic Calendar, which can be found on the Academic Services web page <<https://www.bue.edu.eg/academic-services/academic-calendar-bue> >.
- 4.3 A student who is unable to adhere to the timescale/deadlines for any reason should contact Academic Services (AS.Claims@bue.edu.eg) with a clear and appropriate explanation. It is at the sole discretion of the University Provost or designated senior University Officer whether or not to approve an extension of timescale/deadlines.
- 4.4 Students should be aware that there may be a shorter timeframe for EC submission in the Summer Assessment Period, please refer to the Academic Calendar (<https://www.bue.edu.eg/academic-services/academic-calendar-bue>).

5. Exceptional Circumstances process

- 5.1 A student with circumstances that may be grounds for Exceptional Circumstances (EC) should submit the claim online at (<https://claims.bue.edu.eg/student>), explaining clearly the grounds for the claim and how their circumstances were exceptional. Clear and relevant evidence must be attached to the claim. Medical claims will be verified by the BUE Clinic following submission of supporting evidence. The BUE Clinic may request additional documentation where necessary.
- 5.2 Where an Exceptional Circumstances claim is made for *late submission of an assessment*, the late submission is marked, but the mark is withheld until the Exceptional Circumstances Panel makes its decision about whether the EC claim is accepted or not.
- 5.3 The Academic Quality Manager (AQM) or staff member assigned by the Provost examines Exceptional Circumstances claims from a Faculty for eligibility against the grounds, and may request more information

from the student and/or the academic staff member(s) responsible for the module(s) mentioned in the student's claim. The AQM rejects claims that are ineligible, i.e. that fail to meet clearly the grounds for Exceptional Circumstances above. The AQM confirms all eligible claims from a Faculty with the Dean.

- 5.4 The AQM may request that the Director of Academic Services convene an Exceptional Circumstances Panel *during the semester* if the number of claims will prove challenging to discuss at the end of the semester. In this case all Exceptional Circumstances claims received to date in the Faculty will be reviewed by the properly constituted panel.

6. Exceptional Circumstances Panel Membership

- 6.1 The Exceptional Circumstances Panel membership is normally:
- 6.1.1 One senior member of staff from the Office of the Provost (Chair);¹
 - 6.1.2 The Vice Dean (Teaching and Learning) of the Faculty submitting the claim(s);²
 - 6.1.3 The AQM of the Faculty submitting the claim(s);
 - 6.1.4 An Academic Services representative, acting as Secretary to the Panel and advisor.
 - 6.1.5 The Director of Student Life may be invited to attend the Panel if there are claims related to students with existing reasonable adjustments in place.

¹ The responsibility of the Office of the Provost Chair is to ensure consistency in the decision-making across the University.

² The Dean is not a member of the Exceptional Circumstances Panel, as s/he is Chair of the Faculty's Disciplinary Committee

7. Exceptional Circumstances Panel Outcomes

- 7.1 The Exceptional Circumstances Panel considers all claims and supporting evidence recommended as eligible and makes one of the following decisions:
- 7.1.1 **No appropriate grounds and/or evidence** – claim is rejected;
 - 7.1.2 **No indication of disadvantage although there are appropriate grounds supported by clear evidence** – claim is upheld, with no change to the mark;
 - 7.1.3 **Clear evidence of disadvantage based on valid grounds supported by appropriate evidence** – claim upheld, and the Panel makes one of the following decisions:³
 - set aside the student's assessment attempt and allow another attempt for the assessments covered by the claim; set aside means that when a claim is upheld for an assessment element that is completed, or partially completed, any grade achieved for that assessment element will be set aside. For example, if a student becomes unwell during an unseen examination and submits a claim requesting another attempt, and the claim is upheld, the student will normally be offered a resit at the next available opportunity. In this case, any grade achieved in the original examination will be permanently disregarded and cannot be reinstated. The final grade for that assessment element will be the grade achieved in the resit attempt.
 - accept the late submission for the assessment, and ask the Module Leader to insert the mark with no penalty applied;
 - ask the Faculty to set an alternative assessment before the Summer Assessment Period, covering the same Learning Outcomes as the original assessment.
- 7.2 The Secretary to the Panel informs students of the Panel outcomes within 5 working days of the Panel.
- 7.3 **Exceptional Circumstances claims must be made in good faith.** If a student is discovered to have provided false or misleading information or evidence, the Panel may refer the student to the University's Legal Department, which will investigate and refer findings back to the Faculty's Disciplinary Committee. Claims based on false or misleading information may also lead to a Fitness to Practice Panel being instigated by the Provost if the false or misleading information may call into question's the student's suitability to practice in a regulated profession e.g. Dentistry, Pharmacy, Nursing, Physiotherapy, or Law.

- 7.4 Exceptional Circumstances Panel decisions are reviewed by the relevant Programme Examination Board (PEB) at the end of the academic year. The role of the PEB is to make sure that the decisions are implemented properly before approving marks.

8. Appeals against EC decisions

- 8.1 A student whose ongoing circumstance results in his or her missing an Extenuating Circumstances deadline may follow the Academic Appeals procedure at <https://www.bue.edu.eg/academic-services/academic-regulations-bue>.
- 8.2 A student may submit an appeal against the Panel's decision within 5 (five) working days of receiving the decision, through the online claims platform <https://claims.bue.edu.eg/student>
- 8.3 The student must indicate clearly the grounds of the appeal and must provide relevant evidence to support his or her appeal. Details of grounds for appeal and other requirements are described in the Academic Appeals procedure, available at: <https://www.bue.edu.eg/academic-services/academic-regulations-bue>.

³ The upheld Exceptional Circumstances decisions listed here have been verified as compliant with both NAQAAE and Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education regulations.