Cardiff Academy

POLICY /// ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS

# Extenuating Circumstances, Extensions and Reasonable Adjustments in Assessment Policy

How students who are affected by illness, bereavement or other serious circumstances can request an extension or have their circumstances taken into account, and how disabled students and those with specific needs obtain reasonable adjustments and access arrangements in assessment.

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| REFERENCE | **CA-ACA-06** | VERSION | **1.0 (Approved)** |
| POLICY OWNER | **Director of Studies** | APPROVED BY | **Academic Board** |
| ISSUE DATE | **October 2026** | APPROVAL DATE | **October 2026** |
| REVIEW CYCLE | **Annual** | NEXT REVIEW DUE | **October 2027** |
| APPLIES TO | **All students; teaching and examinations staff; Student Welfare Officer** | PUBLISHED | **Website; Student Handbook; programme handbooks** |

**RELATED POLICIES** CA-ACA-04 Assessment; CA-ACA-01 Academic Regulations; CA-ACA-07 Academic Appeals; CA-WEL-03 Student Welfare and Wellbeing; CA-WEL-06 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; CA-ADM-04 Attendance

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## 1 Purpose

Sometimes events beyond a student's control affect their ability to study or to perform in an assessment. This policy makes sure such students are treated fairly and consistently, without lowering academic standards. It also sets out how disabled students and students with specific needs receive adjustments so that assessments test their ability, not their disability.

## 2 Definitions

- **Extenuating circumstances:** serious, unforeseen or unpreventable circumstances that significantly affected the student's ability to attend, complete or perform in an assessment, at or near the time of the assessment.
- **Extension:** extra time to submit coursework.
- **Reasonable adjustment / access arrangement:** a change to how an assessment is taken (for example extra time, rest breaks, a separate room, assistive technology, a reader or scribe, an alternative format) agreed in advance for a disabled student or a student with a specific need.

## 3 What counts as extenuating circumstances

| Usually accepted (with evidence) | Usually not accepted |
|---|---|
| Serious illness or injury, including mental health conditions | Minor illness (for example a cold) that would not significantly affect performance |
| Bereavement of a close family member or friend | Pressure of other assessments or poor time management |
| Serious illness of a close family member | Computer or printer failure, or loss of work not backed up |
| Being a victim of crime, harassment or assault | Holidays, travel arrangements or social events |
| Significant unexpected caring responsibilities | Misreading the timetable or deadline |
| Serious personal or family crisis, including major events in the home country | Circumstances known in advance that could have been managed |
| Unexpected and serious immigration or accommodation emergency | Disability or condition for which adjustments were already agreed (unless there was an acute episode) |

## 4 Extensions (coursework)

- Students request an extension **before the deadline** using the Extension Request Form, with evidence where available.
- Module leaders may grant extensions of up to **5 working days**. Longer extensions (up to 15 working days) require the Director of Studies' approval.
- Where an extension would go beyond the Assessment Board date, the student submits an extenuating circumstances claim instead.

## 5 Extenuating circumstances claims

### 5.1 How to claim

- Students submit the Extenuating Circumstances Form, with independent evidence (for example a medical certificate, death certificate, police report, or letter from a counsellor or the Student Welfare Officer), **no later than 5 working days after the assessment or deadline**, and in any case before the Assessment Board.
- Late claims are accepted only if there was a good reason why the student could not submit on time.

- Evidence in languages other than English should be translated. The Student Welfare Officer can help students obtain evidence and complete the form. Information is treated confidentially.

### 5.2 "Fit to sit"

By sitting an examination or submitting work, a student declares themselves fit to do so. Claims about circumstances known before the assessment will not normally be accepted unless the student could not reasonably have reported them in advance (for example because of the nature of the circumstances).

### 5.3 Extenuating Circumstances Panel

The Panel (Director of Studies as Chair, a senior teacher and the Student Welfare Officer) meets before each Assessment Board. It decides whether circumstances are accepted and, if so, recommends one of the following outcomes to the Assessment Board. **Marks are never raised because of extenuating circumstances.**

| Outcome | Effect |
|---|---|
| **Extension** | Further time to submit without penalty |
| **Late penalty removed** | Late work marked without the cap |
| **Deferral** | The student takes the assessment at the next opportunity as a **first attempt** (uncapped) |
| **Exceptional consideration** | Where a student has a strong record, the Assessment Board may consider their overall performance at the borderline in line with the regulations |
| **Not accepted** | The original result stands; reasons given |

Outcomes are communicated to students in writing within **5 working days** of the Assessment Board.

## 6 Impact on university offers

Where extenuating circumstances may affect whether a student meets a university offer condition, the Academy will, with the student's consent, inform the university, confirm the circumstances accepted and the revised assessment timetable, and ask the university to consider the case. The decision remains with the university.

## 7 Reasonable adjustments and access arrangements

1. Students are encouraged to tell us about any disability, health condition or learning difference on the application form, at induction or at any time.
2. The Student Welfare Officer meets the student, considers evidence (for example a diagnostic report, medical letter or previous school's arrangements), and agrees a **Learning Support Plan** with the student.
3. The Plan sets out classroom adjustments and assessment arrangements and is shared, with the student's consent, with teachers and the examinations officer.
4. Arrangements must be agreed at least **four weeks** before examinations where possible. Short-notice arrangements are made for temporary conditions (for example a broken arm).

5. Arrangements reflect the student's normal way of working and do not give an unfair advantage. They do not change what is being assessed (the competence standard).
6. Where the Academy delivers external qualifications, the awarding body's access arrangements rules apply.

## 8 Religious observance

Students may request reasonable alternative arrangements where an assessment clashes with religious observance. Requests should be made as soon as the assessment timetable is published.

## 9 Under-18s and sponsored students

For students under 18, parents are informed of accepted claims affecting progress, unless this would put the student at risk. For Student visa holders, any deferral that changes the course end date is considered by the Admissions and Compliance Manager (CA-ADM-03).

## 10 Appeals

Students may appeal against decisions under this policy through CA-ACA-07.

## 11 Monitoring

The Director of Studies reports annually to the Academic Board on numbers and types of extension and extenuating circumstances requests, decisions and adjustments, analysed by programme and by protected characteristic where possible.

## Compliance mapping

This policy has been written to meet, and to evidence, the following external requirements. Inspectors and university partners can use this table to locate the relevant provisions.

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| **ISI Educational Oversight (PFE) standards** | Standard 6 (curriculum meets needs of students with identified needs); Standard 11 (fair assessment); Standard 13 (non-discrimination) |
| **British Council Accreditation UK criteria** | T17 (students helped to identify needs and supported); W2 (pastoral care) |
| **University partner due diligence** | Partner due diligence – local mitigating circumstances process; equivalence with partner university practice; communication of outcomes affecting offer conditions |
| **Legislation and statutory guidance** | Equality Act 2010 (duty to make reasonable adjustments, s.20; discrimination arising from disability, s.15); UK GDPR (special category health data) |

## Document control

| Version | Date | Author / reviewer | Summary of changes |
|---|---|---|---|

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|---|---|---|---|
| 0.9 | Pre-2026 | Various | NCUK Access Arrangements and Special Consideration Policy (reference); no Cardiff Academy equivalent |
| 1.0 | October 2026 | Director of Studies | New policy written for university partnerships, ISI Educational Oversight and British Council Accreditation UK. Supersedes all previous versions. |

| APPROVED ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD | SIGNATURE | DATE |
|---|---|---|
| Chair of the Board of Governors | | |