

# Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances

## An Overview for Students

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### Introduction

Your performance in a module is determined by a module assessment board, which meets at the end of each academic session. Irrespective of circumstances, you must meet the learning outcomes of each module you study. The board must therefore have a clear understanding of your position in order to confirm your marks. This includes determining the appropriate action if elements of your assessment are incomplete.

The exceptional mitigating circumstances (EMC) scheme exists for those occasions where, even with the use of local support and procedures, you still have outstanding requirements when a module is due to finish.

While there are a number of reasons and occasions which may cause you to rely on the EMC scheme, **you must always have strong justification** for doing so. This guide clarifies the reasons and occasions when it may be appropriate to apply to the EMC scheme.

## Context

Assessment is the key element through which your performance and overall grades are determined. Assessments take a variety of forms, including

- coursework
- examinations
- timed assessments
- oral presentations
- performances and practicals
- supervised practice placements

At the beginning of your programme, you are given full details of the assessments you are expected to undertake and submit for each module throughout your programme. You are expected to plan and organise your work appropriately.

It is **your responsibility** to ensure you submit work or present yourself for assessment in line with published deadlines, examination timetables and/or presentation start times.

Failure to submit work on time or present for an examination or timed assessment is only accommodated where there are serious or exceptional mitigating circumstances which you could not have been expected to know about or plan for in advance.

In general, this will relate to illness or sudden changes in your personal circumstances over which you had no control.

If this applies to you, please contact your programme/module tutor in the first instance to discuss the situation. All programmes have their own procedures for considering mitigating circumstances.

Remember: failure to submit for assessment without approval will mean your work is awarded a zero mark.

## The EMC scheme

The EMC scheme exists for those occasions where, even with the use of the local procedures, you have outstanding requirements when a module is due to finish.

You must have a strong justification for being in this position.

You may also use this scheme if there have been exceptional changes to existing serious or prolonged circumstances that have **significantly** affected your overall performance during an academic session.

Where lengthy periods of absence from your studies is unavoidable, you may wish to consider interrupting or suspending your studies for a period of time. Please talk to your personal tutor or staff in Academic Registry for advice.

### **What counts as exceptional mitigating circumstances?**

It is not possible to draw up a definitive list of valid circumstances. As a general guide, exceptional mitigating circumstances will usually relate to

- circumstances arising which are out of your control, such as illness or the death of a close relative
- sudden events which could not be planned for, such as accidents or emergencies, especially in relation to caring responsibilities
- significant changes in your circumstances since you began your course, such as the diagnosis of a chronic medical condition

### **What are not accepted as exceptional mitigating circumstances?**

These are circumstances which generally relate to things you could have planned for or situations which arise due to your own carelessness or negligence. For example

- oversleeping
- missing a bus or train
- computer or equipment faults when preparing your assessment
- taking holidays during published term and assessment periods
- planned house moves
- lack of command of the English language
- uncomplicated pregnancy
- childcare arrangements
- work commitments, if you are a full-time student
- everyday occurrences such as headaches and colds or known conditions such as hay fever. If these conditions are unusually severe, you must have a medical certificate to confirm you were too ill to attend or submit

If technical difficulties outside your control affect you during the online submission process, please consult your department or IT services in the first instance. They may be able to resolve the matter without the EMC scheme. If the matter cannot be resolved locally, you should make an EMC application.

If you have a disability or learning difficulty and require special arrangements around assessments, you should seek advice from Student Services when you register for your programme. Do not use the EMC scheme as more appropriate support is available to you.

### **How do I submit an EMC application?**

Firstly, you should talk to your personal or programme tutor for advice as there may be local procedures which can support you. Other procedures, such as interrupting your studies, may also be discussed as more appropriate for your situation.

If it is agreed that you should submit an EMC application, please follow these steps:

1. Obtain and complete an EMC application form. These are available from
  - your faculty office
  - the Help Desk in Student Services
  - Academic Registry

*Please note there is currently no online form available for EMC applications.*

2. Ensure your personal or programme tutor signs the form to confirm that the coursework deadlines and examination dates are accurate.

Please note: although your personal or programme tutor signs the form, this does not mean they agree with or have approved your application.

3. You must include evidence of your mitigating circumstances with your application form and clearly state the period the circumstances relate to.

For illness, this means you must provide a medical certificate from your doctor. We would normally expect this to have been obtained at the time you were ill.

For other circumstances, you need to have written objective validation of the events that have affected you. Where this relates to the death or illness of a close relative, you still need to provide evidence to support your application.

It is **your responsibility** to provide the evidence to support your application. We will not contact third parties on your behalf.

If your application does not include evidence but the EMC panel believes it could reasonably have been provided, your application may not be accepted.

4. You need to submit the completed application, along with your evidence, to Academic Registry. If you are based at a satellite centre, please submit your application to your local administrative office.

Please ensure you obtain a receipt. This is your proof that you have made a submission.

### **When do I submit an EMC application?**

Absolute deadlines for submitting EMC applications are set by Academic Registry and are found on the EMC webpage. We advise you to submit your application at the earliest opportunity and certainly no later than the deadlines set. Deadlines are found at [www.edgehill.ac.uk/registry/difficulties/exceptional-mitigating-circumstances](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/registry/difficulties/exceptional-mitigating-circumstances)

## **How is my application considered?**

Your application is assessed by a panel from your faculty, operating on behalf of an assessment board. This panel will decide whether your application is valid.

Using the evidence you provided, the panel will recommend an appropriate action to the assessment board.

If your application is accepted, you will not be penalised for the non-submission of work or absence from an examination or timed assessment. However, you may need to wait for the assessment board to determine how you should make up the outstanding requirement.

You will be notified of the board's decision in writing.

## ***Confidentiality***

Your application is assessed by a panel from your faculty; it is not discussed in detail by the assessment board.

All faculty panels work within the General Data Protection Rules. Your circumstances will not be discussed outside of the panel unless you have given your consent.

Your evidence does not need to include lengthy details of your situation, but there must be enough information to allow the panel to make a judgement of its impact on your studies.

Some circumstances may be of such a personal nature that you wish to restrict access to the details. If you wish to restrict access to the Chair of the panel, please mark your submission envelope 'Confidential - for Chair of panel only'.

## **My application has been successful - what happens next?**

The assessment board decides the most appropriate way for you to recoup your position, so that you meet the learning outcomes of the module(s) affected by your circumstances. We will contact you in writing with the board's decision.

Possible outcomes include:

- allowing an additional examination sitting without penalty
- allowing a further extension for the submission or resubmission of coursework
- proposing an alternative form of assessment
- allowing a module to be repeated in full
- condoning a failed module mark (where professional/academic regulations permit)
- recommending other support mechanisms

Please note: assessment boards are not authorised to and will not change marks on the basis of exceptional mitigating circumstances.

### ***Other points to note***

A successful EMC application only covers the submission dates included on the application form. If your application is accepted, you are expected to submit the assessment or sit the examination at the next scheduled point.

If your successful application relates to an element of work which has been referred by an earlier assessment board, any marks achieved will be capped at the pass mark, irrespective of the EMC outcome. A successful EMC application means you will still receive the full number of assessment attempts permitted.

If you are offered a condonement in relation to a failed module mark, you can choose to accept this or to redo the work/examination to try and improve your mark.

Similarly, if you pass a module but have made a successful EMC application in relation to your overall performance, you can choose to accept any deferral in order to improve your mark(s). In both cases, if your mark is lower than the original mark achieved, the higher mark will stand.

### **The board rejected my application – what happens next?**

We will contact you in writing with the board's decision.

If you do not submit for assessment and your application for mitigation is turned down, you will be awarded a zero mark for the work affected.

The assessment board will decide on the most appropriate action for your situation, but it is likely that you will be referred.

This means your final mark will be capped at the pass mark however well you do.

### **Late submissions**

Absolute deadlines for submitting EMC applications are clearly identified on the EMC webpage

[www.edgehill.ac.uk/registry/difficulties/exceptional-mitigating-circumstances](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/registry/difficulties/exceptional-mitigating-circumstances)

The deadlines are set so that faculty panels can consider applications before assessment boards meet to determine final grades, progression and awards. This enables an assessment board to consider a panel's recommendations in the context of your overall performance.

Very occasionally, there may be good reason why you cannot meet the deadlines. In such cases, you need to submit your application using the appeals process.

The appeals application is straightforward and you can complete it online or in hard copy. However you must provide additional evidence to justify why you were unable to meet the standard deadline.

Applications submitted late without good reason will not be considered.

You can find more information about making an appeal at [www.edgehill.ac.uk/registry/academic-appeals](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/registry/academic-appeals)

### **Part-time and postgraduate students**

These EMC procedures apply to all students. We know that part-time students may sometimes experience conflicts with study and work commitments and we will consider these sympathetically.

### **Appeals**

You cannot directly appeal against the outcome of an EMC faculty panel as they are acting on behalf of an assessment board.

If your EMC application is rejected by the panel, you can appeal following the publication of your results. Information about submitting an appeal is included with your results.

The standard appeals procedure applies - full details of this process are found in the [Academic Regulations Appendix 22 – Academic Appeals](http://ehu.ac.uk/academicappeals), (<http://ehu.ac.uk/academicappeals>)

### **Frequently asked questions**

#### ***Can I apply to defer my assessment in advance?***

Yes – in certain circumstances.

If there is an event you know about in advance, you are expected to plan for it in your schedule. However, if there is an event you cannot move, such as a specialist hospital appointment, you should make an advance application to defer your assessment.

Your faculty panel will consider the application at their next scheduled meeting and will inform you of their decision in writing.

Most students find that they can complete assessments, even when they are facing difficult circumstances, by using local procedures for extensions where necessary. Putting off a piece of work until after a module is finished can create problems further down the line as you will lose touch with the learning process for that module.

#### ***How do I decide whether my circumstances are sufficient to allow me to miss an examination or submission deadline?***

If you are able to submit work or sit an examination, it may be to your advantage to do so. You can still submit an EMC application and will not be disadvantaged by sitting an examination or meeting a deadline *and* submitting an EMC application.

Remember - not all applications for EMC are accepted. If you decide to make an EMC application instead of submitting an assessment or sitting an examination, you take the risk that the panel will not accept your application.

The panel reviews your case and makes a judgement on the basis of what you could reasonably have been expected to do. Was there an alternative? Have you provided sufficient evidence? Were the circumstances of your own making?

If you submit an EMC application and it is turned down, you will be awarded a zero mark for the piece of work affected.

***I have completed all my assessments but felt I wasn't performing at my best. Can I apply for consideration under the EMC scheme?***

Yes you can. However, please remember that you are expected to cope with the majority of circumstances that arise.

Whether or not we manage ongoing mental health issues, long term illnesses or disabilities, we all have days when we feel we have not performed at our best. We all have to deal with the pressures of modern life and examinations are especially pressurised times. These are all part of student life that you are expected to be prepared for and have support in place for when you need it.

You should only apply for consideration under this scheme if you feel that certain circumstances have been so exceptional that they have affected your performance to a significant extent.