

# EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY

Version	5.0
Effective date	August 2025
Date for review	September 2026
Policy owner	Chief Executive
Reference points	BIMM University Exceptional Circumstances Policy QAA Advice and Guidance: Assessment Office for Students Regulatory Framework Equality Act 2010 UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018
Audience/handling notes	Academic, Staff, Students, External
Dissemination and implementation plan	This Extenuating Circumstances policy will be published on the NHAM website, staff and student portals for reference by students and in the student handbook.  Lecturers will receive training in how to apply this policy and its procedures. They will also be directed to where it is published. The Programme Leader will be responsible for the dissemination of the policy and procedures to academic staff; the Academy Manager will be responsible for training support staff on extenuating circumstances for those involved in pastoral or personal tutoring.  Records of Extenuating Circumstances applications will be kept securely by the Academy Manager.
Linked Policies, Procedures and Forms	Assessment (Policy), Deferral of Assessment (Policy), Student Handbook, Disability Disclosure (Policy), Engagement & Attendance (Policy), Equity Diversity & Inclusion (Policy), Extenuating Circumstances Form.
Date approved	September 2024

## 1 Introduction

The Notting Hill Academy of Music (NHAM) recognises that, during their studies, students may experience sudden, unforeseen circumstances that significantly affect their ability to complete an assessment or demonstrate their true level of attainment. Such circumstances are referred to as *Exceptional Circumstances* within this policy, though the term *Extenuating Circumstances* is also used across the higher education sector.

This policy sets out how NHAM supports students in these situations, how claims are considered, and what evidence is required. The aim is to ensure fairness, consistency, and transparency while maintaining academic standards. It also ensures NHAM's approach aligns with BIMM University's expectations and meets the requirements of the UK Quality Code and the Office for Students (OfS).

Exceptional Circumstances should normally be sudden, unexpected, and beyond the student's control. Long-term issues, including disabilities or chronic health conditions, are normally addressed through ongoing support plans such as a Learning Agreement rather than through this process.

## 2 Scope

This policy applies to all NHAM students enrolled on a Certificate of Higher Education (Level 4) course. It covers all summative assessments, whether written, practical, or performance-based.

Exceptional Circumstances are only accepted where they have had a demonstrable, negative impact on a student's ability to attend, prepare for, or complete an assessment on or by the specified deadline.

Circumstances that are not exceptional include:



- Poor time management or failure to plan work adequately
- Minor illness not supported by evidence when self-certification has been exhausted
- Computer failure where backups and contingency planning could have prevented the issue
- Routine work or personal commitments that could have been foreseen

### 3 Examples of exceptional circumstances

Acceptable examples include, but are not limited to:

- Serious illness or injury supported by medical evidence
- Bereavement of an immediate family member or close friend
- Significant personal or family crisis
- Accident or emergency requiring immediate attention
- Jury service or other legal obligations

NHAM reserves the right to determine whether the circumstances described meet the criteria for 'exceptional' on a case-by-case basis.

### 4 Evidence requirements

Evidence must be relevant, independent, and verifiable. Acceptable evidence may include:

- Medical certificate or letter from a registered healthcare professional
- Death certificate or letter from a funeral director
- Police report or court summons
- Letter from a registered counsellor or mental health professional

#### **Self-certification**

NHAM allows students to self-certify for short-term circumstances of up to five consecutive calendar days on one occasion per academic year. This may apply to minor illness or short-term personal matters. For longer absences or repeated short-term absences, formal evidence will be required.

### 5 Submission process and deadlines

Students should submit an Exceptional Circumstances Form, along with supporting evidence, as soon as possible and no later than five working days after the affected assessment or deadline.

In rare cases where a student is unable to submit the form within this timeframe due to the nature of their circumstances, they should contact Student Services at the earliest opportunity to explain the delay. Late submissions will only be considered where there is a valid reason and supporting evidence.

### 6 Outcomes



If a claim is accepted, the following academic remedies may be applied:

- An extension to an assessment deadline
- Deferral of the assessment to the next available period without academic penalty
- In rare cases, a repeat of the assessment opportunity without penalty

The policy does not permit the adjustment of marks for work already submitted and marked. Where the claim is not accepted, the original assessment submission date and regulations will stand.

## 7 Confidentiality and data protection

NHAM will treat all Exceptional Circumstances submissions and supporting evidence in strict confidence. Information will only be shared with those directly involved in considering and processing the claim.

All records will be stored securely and processed in compliance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

## 8 Appeals

Students who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their Exceptional Circumstances claim may appeal under NHAM's Academic Appeals Policy. An appeal must be lodged within 10 working days of notification of the decision and must be based on either:

- A material procedural error; or
- New evidence that could not reasonably have been submitted with the original claim.

## 9 Monitoring and Review

The Academy Manager is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy and reporting on its operation to the Education Committee.

This policy will be formally reviewed every two years to ensure it remains aligned with BIMM University policy, OfS requirements, the UK Quality Code, and sector best practice.