EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES POLICY

Version	5.1
Effective date	On approval
Date for review	November 2027
Policy owner	Chief Executive
Reference points	BIMM Exceptional Circumstances Policy approved August 2026; applicable BIMM Undergraduate Academic Regulations; approved NHAM partner delegation; Equality Act 2010; UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018.
Audience/handling notes	
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	Pending approval

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 are usually unexpected and outside your control. Use a Learning Agreement for ongoing adjustments. An unexpected flare-up or worsening of a disability or health condition can support a mitigation claim.

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 unless its impact on the assessment warrants mitigation.
- 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

Evidence and advice
Contact Student Services for help identifying evidence or explaining why you cannot obtain it.

5 Submission process and deadlines

Submit one form per assessment to Student Services up to seven days before or after the deadline. Send relevant evidence with the form or within 14 days of applying. Explain any late application promptly. A trained NHAM decision-maker handles routine claims under the approved partner arrangements.

6 Outcomes

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

- A standard seven-day extension where the assessment permits it.
- An uncapped retrieval with a deadline confirmed in writing.
- For accepted impairment, retain the mark or take an uncapped retrieval. The higher mark stands.

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

Appeal within 15 working days of the decision using the route in your outcome letter.
Grounds include a material procedural irregularity, relevant new evidence or circumstances that could not reasonably have been raised earlier, or evidence of prejudice or bias. An independent reviewer will consider the appeal.

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.

Review this policy annually and after changes to BIMM assessment rules.

10 NHAM administration and student access

NHAM owns and versions this policy. Student Services receives applications and checks completeness. Routine claims are decided by a trained, authorised NHAM member of staff who is free from conflicts, applying BIMM criteria under the approved partner arrangements. The Head of Quality refers complex, disputed or non-standard cases for independent consideration or BIMM confirmation as required. Record the delegation in the Operations Handbook before release.

Use one application per affected assessment. Student Services can help complete the form or accept an accessible alternative. Describe the event, when it happened, its effect on the assessment, and the remedy requested. Apply from seven calendar days before to seven calendar days after the deadline. Provide relevant evidence with the claim or within 14 calendar days after applying. Explain promptly if circumstances prevented timely application or evidence.

Evidence must address impact and timing. Seek relevant professional or other independent confirmation, proportionate to the circumstances. Do not insist on a death certificate when other reliable evidence establishes bereavement. Staff must not require excessive clinical detail. Give reasons for any further information request and a clear deadline, normally 14 calendar days.

A Learning Agreement addresses ongoing needs. Acute worsening of a condition, a new significant event, unexpected caring responsibilities or a serious infrastructure failure may justify a separate claim. Consider the effect on this student rather than rejecting by diagnosis or category alone. Ordinary workload, planned holidays and avoidable time-management problems will not normally qualify.

11 Outcomes and academic safeguards

Aim to issue a reasoned decision within ten working days after all required evidence arrives. Explain any delay and provide a new date. Possible outcomes are acceptance, rejection or a request for further evidence. Keep working towards the next assessment opportunity where able. A pending claim does not itself create an approved deadline.

When approved, specify the assessment, remedy, revised date, whether the attempt is uncapped, and any alternative approved format. An uncapped retrieval deadline will normally fall two weeks after approval, with up to six weeks where appropriate, within the applicable assessment calendar. The Course Leader checks an alternative individual brief covers the same learning outcomes.

For accepted impairment, explain the option to retain the existing mark or take an uncapped retrieval, with the higher mark standing. Mitigation does not raise the existing mark by discretion. Any repeat, intermission, award or exceptional assessment arrangement requiring Board or BIMM authority must be referred for that decision.

Appeal a mitigation decision within 15 working days using the route in the outcome letter. Grounds include relevant new circumstances or evidence unavailable earlier for good reason, a material procedural error, or prejudice or bias. The reviewer must be independent. Explain the final BIMM and OIA stages in accordance with the Operations Handbook.

Day means calendar day unless working day is specified. A working day excludes weekends, bank holidays and published closure days. Publish the submission route, current form, accessible alternatives and a monitored contact before implementation.