

Academic Regulations:

Exceptional Arrangements (Force Majeure)

2020-2021

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Section 1

Introduction

1. The University takes all reasonable steps to ensure that admissions, teaching and assessment activity is not significantly disrupted and that the marks for student assessment are available to assessment boards. However, in cases where the academic business of the University is disrupted by force majeure such as natural disaster, disease, acts of terrorism, fire, flood or industrial action, it is necessary to have Exceptional Arrangement regulations which can be invoked by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Academic Board when circumstances require.
2. The University wishes to ensure that decisions about student progression or final awards are as timely as possible. The measures outlined below are intended to best protect the interests of students given any constraints that may be imposed upon the University.
3. Where courses are governed by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements, these PSRB requirements may need to take precedence over the Exceptional Arrangement Regulations.
4. A separate guidance document, summarising these extraordinary measures, has been produced and disseminated to all the University's Collaborative Partners. Academic Liaison Tutors within each University School are working with partners to provide clear guidance and support in implementing these exceptional arrangements.
5. In line with Office for Students Guidance, the University will discuss and agree with individual research students how they will progress their research during this period, or the arrangements that will be made if this is not possible. If the University decides that it is not possible for such students to continue with their programme of research, it will report this to the OfS on the basis of the updated guidance on reporting requirements. As the Office for Students recommends, the University will consider the impact of these exceptional arrangements on practical elements of courses and the subsequent effects on students. The University will clearly communicate with students about how they will be able to complete these components of the course and what arrangements will be made for this.
6. This paper sets out the key principles under which such regulations would be framed, the areas that such Exceptional Arrangement Regulations should cover and how these regulations might be invoked.

Section 2

Key Principles

7. Protection of interests of all of our diverse range of students. To ensure students can enter the University, can continue with their studies and complete their studies, in line with our Office for Students' approved [Student Protection Plan](#).
8. In line with Office for Students guidance, the University should provide regular, clear communication on how teaching will be delivered
9. The University will Present options to students and consider their feedback – with a particular view on how these Exceptional Arrangement Regulations arrangements will impact on vulnerable students, such those with caring responsibilities.
10. Consideration will be given to whether the learning outcomes for the course as a whole, or the specific level of the course, have been met.
11. Maintaining academic standards and professional requirements will remain paramount and will not be compromised. In order to secure standards, awards should be made without reliable evidence of student achievement. That the University will comply with the Office for Students conditions of registration, particularly the B conditions that relate to quality and standards
12. Students will be treated in a fair and equitable manner.

Section 3

Use of Exceptional Arrangements (Force Majeure) Regulations

13. The University Secretary may be notified by Academic Schools or Professional Service Departments that case(s) of missing marks have occurred or are likely to occur or may be made aware of other circumstances that are likely to significantly impact the University's academic business.
14. The University Secretary will request that the Exceptional Arrangements are invoked by the Vice-Chancellor. This will be recorded at the next available meeting of Academic Board for information. Once it is determined that the period of disruption has passed, the University Secretary will request that the Vice-Chancellor revokes these Exceptional Arrangements. This will be recorded at the next available meeting of Academic Board.
15. These regulations may take precedence over other academic regulations relating to student assessment, classification and progression including the Generic principles for Undergraduate and Postgraduate taught courses, the Undergraduate Regulatory Framework, the Postgraduate Regulatory Framework and the Regulations on Assessment and Certification.

16. The University's regular policies and procedures covering all aspects of the student life cycle will normally remain in force during periods of disruption caused by force majeure although published time periods may be impacted, including but not limited to the number of working days by which students can expect to receive outcomes to submitted academic appeals or complaints, the method for undertaking hearings or interviews and the number weeks by which oral examinations should take place following research submissions.

17. The process for submitting, considering and approving extension and mitigation requests will normally continue as described within the relevant University policy and processes, however the University may agree amendments to the list of acceptable and not acceptable reasons for claiming extensions or mitigation depending on the specific circumstances and there may be some amendments to published timescales. Any amendments made will be published on the University's Academic Regulations Website and students will be informed

Section 4

Force Majeure which impacts on Admissions and Entry Criteria

18. The temporary entry criteria approved in response to the cancellation of many public examinations in the summer of 2020 and the awarding of estimated grades, will continue into 2021. It has been agreed that the University can temporarily disband English and Mathematics tests for those applicants who have not met the published GCSE grade or meet the expected 112 UCAS points requirement. This change applies as long as the course in question is not accredited by a professional body which stipulates GCSE requirement.

19. In the event applicants to the University do not hold expected qualifications through no fault of their own, for example through the cancellation of exams (at any level). The University can suspend its admissions policy and work from a revised version determined based on the particular circumstance. For example, the University could take the decision to amend and or suspend specific entry requirements such as the need to interview or the need to meet certain grades. In doing so it will consult with relevant PSRB's if necessary.

20. As a temporary change to the University's regulations, the tariff at level 3 will be reduced and accepted in lieu of GCSE English or Mathematics. This change will apply for February 2021 admissions.

21. Students who apply for specific undergraduate titles who have studied an identical or cognate discipline at either BTEC Level or A Level and are holding 96 UCAS points (actual, not predicted grades) must be exempted from English and Maths GCSE requirements as long as the course is not accredited by a professional body which stipulates GCSE requirement. This is equivalent to CCC from 3 A Levels.

22. Admissions will make a record of any students that have been exempted from GCSEs, in order to assess if there is any impact regarding progression and attainment levels. This temporary change in process must only apply to students who meet the agreed criteria.

23. A list of professionally accredited courses exempt from this policy has been agreed and is as follows

BSc (Hons) Social Work
BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care
BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies
BA (Hons) Architecture
BSc (Hons) Psychology
BSc (Hons) Dietetics and Nutrition
BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science
BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance

Section 5

Force Majeure on the provision of Online English Language Tests for International Students

24. Under the Secure English Language Tests (SELT) arrangements HEIs have always been able to use a wide range of English language tests for all international students at undergraduate and postgraduate level. However, the University must ensure they are proficient at B2 (IELTs equivalent 5.5) in each of the four components (speaking, listening, reading and writing). This gives the University the ability to assess external examinations as means of determining an applicant's English language proficiency, providing those English examinations assess each component of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), The University has to date only used the SELT approved list of tests (predominantly IELTS) to ensure compliance. In order to meet any UKVI inspection/audit regarding English language we must be able to demonstrate a clear process from which we have determined that each test meets the level of B2 in all components.

25. The University's Academic Board has agreed to put in place temporary measures to accept the IELTS Indicator test and TOEFL IBT from international students who need to sit English language proficiency tests before being offered a place to study. Additional tests are under review with recommendations to go to the Academic Board. As many face-to-face testing centres remain closed due to the pandemic, it is believed this is the best solution until testing centres reopen. This change will affect students looking to begin their studies in February 2021. International students who wish to study at London Metropolitan University must not have their educational aspirations delayed as a result of the pandemic.

Section 6

Force Majeure Leading to the Fair and Sympathetic Assessment of Students

26. For academic session 2020-21, these extraordinary regulations have been amended to take into account that the University has been able to adapt its teaching and learning to the current environment most of all through the increased use of technology to facilitate teaching, learning and all forms of assessment; and through making adjustments to assessments to reflect remote learning requirements.

27. As a guiding principle, the University has continued to ensure students can, wherever possible access all materials they require for teaching, learning and the preparation for assessments, online.

28. If there has been significant disruption to students' studies after submission deadlines have been communicated to students a one week extension may be implemented by the Head of School. This option has been approved without any requirement for students to engage in the mitigating circumstances process.

29. Students required to complete placements as part of their studies will be able to continue to do so. Where this isn't possible because of Covid restrictions then the University will take all steps to find alternative ways for students to meet this requirement.

30. The mitigating circumstances policy will apply in cases where students have been personally impacted by circumstances related to Covid19. In this case, if the mitigating circumstances claim is accepted, students can be granted an extension or an uncapped reassessment.

31. Module tutors will be sympathetic in their approach to marking student work where students are unable to present their work in the standard format as a result of Covid restrictions. In the majority of cases, adjustments will already have been made to assessments to enable students to perform at their best in their assessments. This additional flexibility provides module tutors with the ability to accept work in different formats. For example a film student may use a mobile device to submit a piece of work in place of the equipment expected.

Section 7

Administration and Operational Considerations

32. General communications with our students about exceptional arrangements will be the responsibility of the Vice-Chancellor. Every effort should be made to advise students as soon as possible of any alterations to teaching, learning and assessments. Students should assume that assessments are going ahead unless

they receive a formal communication from their School, through their Course or Module Leader to the contrary.

33. The invocation of these Exceptional Arrangements follows detailed consultation with both academic Schools and Professional Service Departments who will need to undertake detailed operational work to implement these regulations based on the particular circumstances.

34. If key staff named within these Exceptional Arrangements are unavailable this should be reported as soon as possible to the University Secretary and/or to the Vice-Chancellor so that suitable substitutes can be identified. Ultimate responsibility for assigning the roles identified in these Exceptional Arrangements lies with the University's Senior Leadership Team.