



CITY OF BRISTOL COLLEGE

ACADEMIC REGULATIONS and PROCEDURES

FOR

Pearson BTEC Higher National and Professional Awards

Bath Spa University Validated Awards

Approved by the HE Board: November 2021
Reviewed by the Head of Quality: 13th July 2021

Regulations applicable to all Awards

If any of these regulations come into conflict with the HEI academic regulations, the HEI academic regulations will take precedence over these regulations.

Academic Offences

Definitions of Academic offences are as in the College's Assessment Policy as well as the Student Disciplinary Policy, available on the college website.

Where the case of academic dishonesty is a student's first offence, the penalty will usually be for the assessment in question to receive a zero mark, but normally for no further penalty to be applied by the Award and Assessment Board.

However, if it is proven that a student has attempted to commit academic dishonesty more than once then the Award and Assessment Board should refer to the Course Handbook and consider whether it is appropriate to 'fail part or all of the stage assessment of which the assessment in question is a part'. The precise academic penalty to be applied will be a matter for the Academic Offences Panel.

Appeals Procedure

Students who wish to appeal against a decision of an Assessment Board must follow the College's appeals procedure; see Assessment Policy, available on the Higher Education Student Hub and College website.

Submission of coursework

Setting the date and time for submission of assignments will be managed by the Programme Lead to minimise the bunching of assignments. An assessment timetable will be issued to students at the beginning of the year in the programme handbook. All assignment briefs will give details of the date and time of the submission deadline.

Coursework must be submitted by the deadline as specified on the assignment brief. Work submitted within 24 hours of the deadline (final deadline) will be marked and marked as late.

Coursework submitted after the final deadline will not be marked and will be recorded on the award and assessment board papers as "DNS" (did not submit), and this will be deemed to be the first assessment attempt.

A decision on the opportunity to re-sit or repeat will be made at the Award and Assessment Board according to the CoBC Academic Regulations, see Procedure in the event of failure. Students should be aware that there is a limit on the number of credits that can be referred and that referral is at the discretion the Award and Assessment Board.

A student, who misses a deadline or believes that they will miss a deadline for reasons beyond their control, should submit a claim for mitigating circumstances to be taken into account. Claims for mitigating circumstances must be made within 10 working days of the assessment deadline.

Coursework which is submitted after the deadline by a student who has applied for mitigating circumstances will be assessed but the results will not be entered onto the official record until the mitigating circumstances have been deemed valid. If the circumstances are deemed valid, the actual result achieved will be entered onto the record and submitted to the Award and Assessment Board.

If the circumstances are not considered to be valid a DNS will be recorded on the Award and Assessment Board papers and this will be deemed to be the first assessment attempt.

Mitigating circumstances affecting submission of work

Mitigating circumstances are circumstances which:

- are exceptional;
- are outside the student's control;
- can be corroborated by independent evidence;
- occurred during or shortly before the assessment in question; or
- caused the student to miss the assessment deadline.

If you **sit** an exam or submit an assignment, you are declaring yourself **fit** to do so. Being '**fit**' generally means that you are feeling well and functioning effectively. Therefore, if you are feeling unwell because of medical or personal difficulties, you should not **sit** an exam or submit an assignment.

It is difficult to lay down hard and fast rules about mitigating circumstances which may be deemed valid or not, but examples of specific circumstances are given in on page 6, and can be used for guidance by students and staff.

Application for mitigating circumstances may result in you being granted an extension of 5 or 10 working days in order to complete your work. If you need to apply for an extension then you must use the mitigating circumstances form for your course. If you are unable to complete a referred piece of work over the summer by the deadline, you may apply for an extension of up to 10 days, using the form for your course.

Submission of information

Students who wish their mitigating circumstance/s to be considered should provide a written statement along with independent evidence via the process of submitting a claim for mitigating circumstances.

The student should keep a copy of their submission and supporting evidence.

Claims for mitigating circumstances should be submitted as soon as possible and no later than 5 working days after the submission deadlines unless the circumstance prevents this.

Corroborating evidence

All claims of mitigating circumstances must be accompanied by independent corroborating evidence. That evidence must be specific about the nature, timing and severity of the problem and if appropriate provide an independent assessment of the effect the problem may have had on the student's performance.

Corroborating evidence may include:

- A medical note confirming a medical or psychological condition (provided at the time when the student was suffering from that condition)
- A letter from a counsellor, e.g. a qualified counsellor working outside the College confirming a personal, psychological or emotional problem for which the student has been receiving counselling
- A note from their landlord or accommodation officer confirming a particularly severe accommodation problem
- An official document such as a police report including a police reference number, court summons or other legal document

- A letter from a solicitor, social worker or other official agency
- An insurance claim document supported by a letter from the insurance company
- Corroboration from support staff with whom the student has previously been in contact about ongoing difficulties, or from an examination invigilator about illness during an examination
- Academic staff who have been closely involved in the pastoral care of a student may submit written evidence which corroborates the student's account, but in order to avoid allegations of unfair treatment and to ensure consistency of practice, such evidence must be countersigned by the Head of Department. It is the responsibility of the staff member concerned to obtain a valid countersignature.

Full-time students may not make an mitigating circumstances claim relating to pressures of work, since such students have by implication made a commitment to make available the time necessary for study. Part-time students in full-time employment, who wish to make claims based on exceptional pressures in their employment, must submit corroborating documentary evidence (e.g. a letter from their employer) which confirms the particular circumstances, explains why they are exceptional and outside the student's control and formally supports the student's claim. Where a student is self-employed, she or he must provide independent evidence to support the claim that the pressures are exceptional and outside the student's control.

Students should not seek to obtain corroborating evidence retrospectively. Any certificate or other medical note where the date of the certificate is after the date(s) of the illness may not be accepted.

Chronic ill health

Students with chronic ill health should complete a Chronic Ill health notification form and provide supporting evidence. The form will be considered by the Senior HE Registrar and when validated will stand as the evidence for subsequent claims for mitigating circumstances made by the student in the current academic year.

Confidentiality

The College understands that students may be reluctant to disclose confidential personal information. However, students can be assured that all claims of mitigating circumstances are deemed to be confidential and will not be disclosed other than if they need to be considered as part of a student appeal.

Consideration of mitigating circumstances

The Senior HE Registrar is authorised to approve mitigating circumstances claims. If the Senior HE Registrar does not consider that the claim is valid then the members of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel will be consulted. The Panel can also request further evidence to support a claim if required.

The HE administrator will notify the student of the outcome of their claim and where a claim is deemed invalid explain why this decision has been reached.

The HE administrator will maintain a record of applications for mitigating circumstances and the outcome for the Award and Assessment Board.

Decisions of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel may not be overturned by the Award and Assessment Board.

Consideration of Mitigating Circumstances: Award and Assessment Board

Where the circumstances are deemed valid, details will be forwarded to the Award and Assessment Board for consideration. The Award and Assessment Board may consider mitigating circumstances in mitigation of:

- A typical or uncharacteristic performance
- Failure to attend (an) examination(s), end-of-unit test(s) or in-class test(s)
- Failure to submit work by the appointed time

If a student has failed all or part of an assessment due to valid mitigating circumstances, the student has a right to sit/ submit the assessment as if for the first time in a form and a date to be determined by the Award and Assessment Board.

Appeals

A student who has not submitted a claim of mitigating circumstances under this Regulation will not normally be able to use mitigating circumstances as the basis for a subsequent appeal.

Long term issues

Where a student is aware that particular circumstances, be they work-related, family or financial problems, or any other issues, are likely to interfere with their ability successfully to complete their academic work in any term, semester or academic session, it is open to the student to suspend studies for a period and to return to complete the programme of study when the problems are not so great. There is no limit to a student's ability to do this provided that they remain within the maximum period of registration established for their programme of study.

It may also be possible for a student undertaking a full-time programme to transfer to part-time study so as better to balance academic and other commitments, or vice-versa.

This regulation applies to students who have registered for one or more units, started their studies, and then found themselves in circumstances outside their control which impacted on their performance in one or more elements of assessment.

Examples of Mitigating Circumstances

The following are only examples of claims which may or may not normally be considered valid. The key issues in all cases will be whether the claim meets the requirements in the Regulations that the circumstances are exceptional, outside the student's control and corroborated by independent evidence.

It is not possible in many cases to lay down absolute rules. For instance, the College would not normally accept claims relating to travel delays which a student might be expected to have planned for, but if the delay were exceptional, a claim could be considered. Similarly, a cough, cold or throat infection would not normally be a valid mitigating circumstance, since students would be expected to plan their work considering the likelihood of minor disruptions.

In times of national emergency such as epidemic, pandemic or other such event, mitigating circumstances may be granted to allow keyworkers to support the national effort or to take account of government guidance to individuals and households that may be in place at a specific time. In this eventuality, you will be informed of any additional mitigating circumstances that may apply.

The College will not accept claims relating to computer failure, corruption of data by virus or software application, inability to print work or network failure, since students are expected to keep back-up copies and to plan their work so that they have time to manage computer/printer failure.

Full-time students may not claim pressure of work as a mitigating circumstance, since the commitment to full-time study implies a commitment to make available the time necessary. Part-time students in full-time employment may claim pressure of work, corroborated by independent documentary evidence that the pressures are exceptional, unpredictable and outside the student's control.

Examples of circumstances which might be considered valid

- Hospitalisation, including operations
- Long-standing health problems
- Personal or psychological problems for which the student is undergoing counselling or has been referred to a counsellor or other qualified practitioner
- Chronic illness
- Childbirth (including a partner in labour)
- Bereavement involving a partner, parent, grandparent, child or sibling
- Major accident or injury, acute ailments or conditions which coincide with an assessment deadline or an examination or test, or are sufficiently long-lasting to impact on a significant part of a semester
- Clinical depression or other mental health problem
- Recent burglary / theft / serious car accident
- Jury Service which cannot be deferred
- Representing the College at national level or his/her country at international level in a sporting event
- For part-time students in full-time employment, exceptional pressure of work or permanent change of employment circumstances
- Delay in identification of support needs from the date of application for DSA.
- Delay in implementation of the DSA support recommendations following receipt of the assessment report or disruption of DSA support.

Examples of circumstances which would not normally be considered valid

- Alarm clock did not go off
- Car broke down, train/bus delayed or cancelled, other public transport problems (unless the student can demonstrate that he or she had allowed adequate time to compensate for such problems as might reasonably have been anticipated)
- Child care problems which could have been anticipated
- Accidents or illness affecting relatives or friends (unless serious, or the student is a sole carer)
- Unspecified anxiety, mild depression or examination stress
- Financial problems (other than cases of exceptional hardship)
- Holidays, house moves, family celebrations or other events where the student either has control over the date or may choose not to participate
- Computer problems, corrupt data, disk or printer failure or similar
- Problems with postal delivery of work (unless recorded delivery or registered mail)
- Pregnancy (unless specific complications)

- Time management problems (e.g. competing deadlines)
- Appointments (legal, medical etc.) which could be rearranged
- Territorial Army commitments or similar (unless avoidable)
- Sporting or recreational commitments (unless the student is representing the College in national competition or representing his/her country in international competition)

Award and Assessment Boards

The constitution of the Award and Assessment Boards is laid down in the Operational Instructions for Award and Assessment Boards.

An Award and Assessment Board will normally meet at the end of the summer term and in September to consider referral work.

Operational Instructions for Award and Assessment Boards

1. Membership

The membership of the Award and Assessment Board will be as follows:

- Chair: Head of Department
- HEI representatives (as determined by the collaborative arrangements)
- Programme Lead or equivalent
- Senior HE Registrar
- External Examiner.
- Head of Quality
- Module/ Unit Leaders (It is essential that staff who have had responsibility for delivering and assessing a module/unit are present. If, due to unforeseen circumstances a member of staff is prevented from attending the panel then the panel must be provided with a signed list to confirm marks, written comments on the marks and the standard of assessment in the module/unit)
- HE Administrator

2. Responsibilities of the Board

The Award and Assessment Boards will meet at the end of the academic session and at a time appropriate to consider referral work.

It is the responsibility of the Board to:

- Confirm module/unit grades.
- Review the standard of assessment in each module/unit and ensure the maintenance of appropriate academic standards.
- Discuss assessment arrangements or reasonable adjustments made to assessments for disabled students.
- Make decisions on progression and awards for all students registered for the named award(s) for which the Board is responsible
- Make decisions on referral or repeating of modules/units and the nature of the referral assessment.
- Ensure that decisions are arrived at fairly and democratically and in accordance with the appropriate assessment regulations and that justice is done to the individual student and the standard of the award is maintained.
- To ensure that in making decisions all corroborated mitigating circumstances relating to individual students have been fully taken into account before a decision is reached
- To consider and discuss any cases of academic dishonesty and actions taken by the Assessment Offences Panel.

3 . Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Chair and Senior HE Registrar are:

- a) To ensure the business of the Award and Assessment Board is conducted according to the Academic Regulations.
- b) To ensure decisions are arrived at fairly and justice is done to the individual student.
- c) To ensure external examiner is present or a written report is available.
- d) To ensure all submissions for mitigating circumstances are correctly notified to the Board.
- e) To sign the appropriate declaration form at the end of the meeting of the Board confirming that the award and progression decisions have been properly reached.

4. Mitigating Circumstances

It is the responsibility of the Award and Assessment Board to take into account any documented mitigating circumstances evidence relating to the student.

All mitigating circumstances will have been considered by the Mitigating Circumstances Panel or its nominee prior to the Award and Assessment Board.

Decisions will be entered onto the Board papers by the HE Administrator.

Where mitigating circumstances have been deemed valid for the submission of late coursework, the actual mark achieved will have been entered on the official record.

Where a Board has agreed that a student is to be offered the option of taking assessments as a first attempt, the Board must formally decide on which module/unit must be retaken and the form of assessment. This must be clearly recorded on the Results List.

5. Academic Offences

Where a suspected case of academic dishonesty has been identified it is important that the procedures outlined in the Assessment Policy have been followed.

6. Before the Board

Spreadsheets of marks should be available for the Chair of the Award and Assessment Board and the Programme Lead to peruse before the Board meeting in order that:

- The completeness and validity of the marks can be confirmed and where marks are missing for a student that this is the correct position.

- Overall student performance can be reviewed in the light of the mitigating circumstances which have been identified as 'valid' see above.

7. The Meeting

At the beginning of the meeting

The Chair should check the membership of the Board and ensure that the meeting is quorate (a quorum is two thirds of the specified membership) and should subsequently ensure that the meeting remains quorate.

If the meeting is not quorate then it must be postponed.

The Chair should also check that documents or information indicated on the standard agenda, together with relevant minutes of previous Board meetings, are available to the Board.

Standard of Assessment in the Modules/ Units

The panel should ensure that all assessments have been conducted in accordance with the requirements of Pearson or the HEI.

The External Examiner will be asked to report on the standard of assessment in all module/unit or the written report must be made available to all panel members.

The Board must consider and comment on the range of achievement and pass rate for all module/units, these discussions must be carefully noted and used for Programme Review.

Problems Affecting the Assessment of all Students in a module.

Any such problems should be reported to the Board and adjustment can be made prior to the confirmation of marks.

Examination and Assessment Offences

Any offences should be noted and dealt with in accordance with the regulations.

Form of Referral

The Board is required to make recommendations on the form of referral for individual modules/units.

Decisions

The rules for progression, referral, repeat or Award are as stated in the academic regulations.

Where students are permitted to 'trail', the Board should make clear decisions on the form what reassessment will take, e.g. repeating examination or coursework elements only (with or without attendance), or repeating the module/unit with attendance.

When it is decided to withdraw a student from a programme it should be an exceptional decision, only taken when it is clearly in the student's best interests and after careful consideration has been given to the other options, in particular the repeating of failed module/ units with attendance. The reasons for such exceptional decisions should be carefully minuted.

The decisions reached for individual students must be very clearly recorded. All decisions relating to students with mitigating circumstances and discussion of cases of academic dishonesty, together with other instances where a Board has used its discretion, should be very carefully minuted.

At the end of the Meeting

The nature of referral assessment, the date for the submission of referred assignments should be agreed, together with the date and composition of the Referred Assessment Board.

The Chair and the HOQ should sign the appropriate declaration form at the end of the meeting confirming that the award and progression decisions have been properly reached.

Minutes of the proceedings, to include module/unit marks and a results list must be produced and signed by the Chair.

Returns to Pearson and HEI must be completed according to the required procedures.

Notification of the students of their results and awards will be undertaken by the COBC HE Administrative team.

Award and Assessment Board

The following documents must be available at the meeting for reference purposes:

- The College assessment regulations for the programme(s) of study, contained in the Academic Regulations
- Operational instructions for Award and Assessment Boards, contained in the Academic Regulations
- Unit/module specifications and Approved Programme Structure/Definitive Programme .Document
- External Examiner's report/s
- Details of decisions of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel to be noted by the Board. Mitigating. Minutes from Boards held in the previous academic year

Standard Agenda

1. Membership

- a. Note the membership of the Board and to welcome members
- b. Apologies
- c. Declarations of interest

2. Confidentiality

Note the confidentiality of all the proceedings of the Board

3. Minutes of the Board meetings held in the previous academic year

- a. Receive the minutes of the Summer Award and Assessment Board
- b. Receive the minutes of the resit and/or mid-year Award and Assessment Board(s)
- c. Consider any matters arising from the minutes and note students with decisions outstanding

4. Award and Assessment Board Regulations

- a. Receive a statement of the purpose of the Board which is to:
 - Confirm or modify module/unit grades.
 - Review the standard of assessment in each unit and ensure the maintenance of appropriate academic standards.
 - Discuss assessment arrangements or reasonable adjustments made to assessments for disabled students.
 - Make decisions on progression and awards for all students registered for the named award(s) for which the Board is responsible
 - Make decisions on referral or repeating of units and the nature of the referral assessment.
 - Ensure that decisions are arrived at fairly and democratically and in accordance with the appropriate assessment regulations and that justice is done to the individual student and the standard of the award is maintained.
 - To ensure that in making decisions all corroborated mitigating circumstances relating to individual students have been fully taken into account before a decision is reached
 - To consider and discuss any cases of academic dishonesty and the appropriate action

- b. Receive an outline of the Assessment Regulations for Awards considered noting any units which are essential for an award or progression.

5. Standard of Assessment in the Units

- a. Receive module/unit marks and review the standard of assessment in each unit with reference to the External Examiner's report.
- b. Report and discuss any problems relating to all students in a unit
- c. Report and discuss any adjustments made for disabled students and confirm assessment criteria were met.
- d. Receive reports on any examination or assessment offences
- e. Confirm the module/unit marks.

6. Results

- a. Receive the assessment broadsheet and consider individual student's performance
- b. Report and discuss any cases Mitigating circumstances
- c. Report and discuss any cases of proven academic dishonesty
- d. Agree decisions on individual student's progression and award ensuring those identified from the previous academic year (see item 3) are included.

(Decisions relating to students with corroborated mitigating circumstances and discussion of cases of proven academic dishonesty must be carefully minuted).

7. Referral

To agree:

- a. The form of referral
- b. The dates for submission of referred work
- c. The date of the Resit Award and Assessment Board and its composition

8. Prizes and Awards

9. Confirmation of Procedures.

Receive the verbal agreement of Board that the correct procedures have been followed.

10. Confidentiality

The Board is reminded of the confidentiality of the proceedings and the procedures governing publication of results.

11. Date of next meeting of the Referral Board and of the full Award and Assessment Board

12. Any Other Business