

Higher Education Academic Regulations and Procedures

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1.0 Scope

These Academic regulations apply for the named academic year and may be subject to change in subsequent years.

The regulations apply to students and course activities for taught qualifications approved and awarded by Higher Education Partner Institutions (HEIs) and other awarding bodies. They cover all Higher Education Awards, including those from HEIs, Pearson Education, and non-prescribed courses. For programmes validated or franchised by a partner HEI, the regulations of the HEI will take precedence.

If any of the academic regulations conflict with legal requirements placed on the College, then the legal requirements will take precedence.

1.1 Supporting Policies

Supporting Policies and procedures are referenced in this document. These can be found at [Policies and Procedures - City of Bristol College](#)

2.0 Taught Programmes

To be eligible for an award, students must complete the requirements of their registered program, as indicated in the Programme Specification found in the Programme Handbook.

Students must enrol at the beginning of their programme and re-enrol each year to confirm their continued participation. This applies even if they do not attend classes, submit work, or pay fees.

Qualifications are only conferred on validly registered and enrolled students. Failure to enrol may result in withdrawal from the programme. Enrolment is dependent on fee payment or satisfactory payment arrangement, see Fees policy at <https://www.cityofbristol.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Fees-Policy-2024-25-1.pdf>

Students must adhere to the Academic Regulations and [College Code of Conduct - City of Bristol College](#) and attend all teaching sessions, including lectures, seminars, tutorials, and workshops. Failure to do so may result in ineligibility for the assessment or discontinuation from the programme.

Unsatisfactory attendance without valid reasons, or falling below the required minimum, may result in exclusion from the programme and withdrawal from enrolment. Attendance issues must be addressed, and students must inform their tutor if they miss any compulsory sessions, providing evidence when necessary.

Students must be available for all assessments. Failure to attend without a valid reason could result in the failure of the module. Each programme follows a set schedule of study weeks, weekends, or workshops, with full dates in the Programme Handbook, course website, and Moodle pages.

If a student withdraws from a programme, they must inform the College in writing. Any refunds will be processed as per the Fees Policy. The withdrawal date will be determined when the official notification is received, with the last date of attendance used to calculate funding.

In cases where poor attendance is due to mitigating/extenuating circumstances (EC/MC), the relevant Head of Department or Programme Manager may request the HE Quality Manager (HEQM) to approve the EC/MC.

The HEQM and deemed it necessary to refer to the College's <https://www.cityofbristol.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Fitness-to-Study-Practice-Policy-Sept-24.pdf>

3.0 Academic Offences

Where 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 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.

3.1 Definitions of Academic offences

Definitions of Academic offences can be found in the College's <https://www.cityofbristol.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Assessment-Policy-2024.pdf>

3.2 Artificial Intelligence (AI) misuse

AI misuse is regarded as a form of plagiarism. JCQ has released a document titled [AI Use in Assessments: Protecting the Integrity of Qualifications \(JCQ\)](#).

The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) defines AI misuse as; *"the inappropriate use of an AI tool by a student, resulting in submitted work that is not their own and/or fails to properly reference the use of AI"*.

This includes:

- Copying or paraphrasing sections of AI-generated content so that the work is no longer the student's own.
- Copying or paraphrasing whole responses of AI-generated content.
- Failing to reference use of AI tools when they have been used as a source of information.
- Submitting work with intentionally incomplete or misleading references or bibliographies.

Students are required to make a declaration upon submission that the work is their own.

Where tutors have doubts about the authenticity of student work submitted (for example, they suspect that parts of it have been generated by AI, but this has not been acknowledged), this will be investigated and take appropriate action under the College's <https://www.cityofbristol.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Assessment-Policy-2024.pdf>.

Where students are suspected of having committed malpractice after completion of a declaration of authentication, this must in the first instance, be reported to the HE Quality Manager.

Potential indicators that centres and Standards Verifiers/External Examiners should be aware of is given below:

Potential indicator	Plagiarism	AI misuse
A default/inconsistent use of American spelling, currency, terms and other localisations*	Y	Y
A default use of language or vocabulary which might not appropriate to the qualification level*	Y	Y
A lack of direct quotations and/or use of references where these are required/expected~	Y	Y
Inclusion of references which cannot be found or verified	Y	Y
A lack of reference to events occurring after a certain date	Y	Y
Instances of incorrect/inconsistent use of first-person and third person perspective	Y	Y
A variation in the style, quality and complexity of language evidenced	Y	Y
A lack of graphs/data tables/visual aids where these would normally be expected	Y	Y
A lack of specific local or topical knowledge	Y	Y
The inadvertent inclusion by students of warnings or provisos produced by AI	N	Y
The unusual use of several concluding statements throughout the text, or several repetitions of an overarching essay structure within a single lengthy essay	Y	Y
The inclusion of strongly stated non-sequiturs or confidently incorrect statements within otherwise cohesive content	N	Y
Overly verbose or hyperbolic language that may not be in keeping with the candidate's style	N	Y
Inconsistencies in the formatting of the text body/headers/etc	Y	Y

Further advice on plagiarism prevention and detection from JCQ can be found here [Malpractice - JCQ Joint Council for Qualifications](#)

3.3 Appeals Procedure

Students who wish to appeal against a decision of an Assessment Board must follow the appeals procedure that can be found here <https://www.cityofbristol.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Assessment-Policy-2024.pdf>

3.4 Submission of coursework

Setting the date and time for assignment submission will be managed by the Programme Lead to minimise assignment bunching. At the beginning of the year, students will receive an assessment timetable in the programme handbook. All assignment briefs will give details of the submission deadline's date and time.

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 if failure occurs. Students should know there is a limit on the number of credits that can be referred, and that referral is at the discretion of 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 request for mitigating/extenuating circumstances to be considered. Claims for mitigating circumstances must be made within 10 working days of the assessment deadline.

Coursework 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 are deemed valid. If the circumstances are deemed valid, the actual result will be entered onto the record and submitted to the Award and Assessment Board.

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

3.5 Compensation

Pearson (only) approved unit Compensation can only be granted once the grade decisions are processed and approved by the Assessment Board. The student must have been given the opportunity to resubmit in the first instance and then processed accordingly at the next board.

If students do not pass the unit at that stage, they can either repeat the unit or take it as compensation. If a student accepts compensation, this will be evidenced in writing and confirmation maintained in student records and reflected in the Assessment Board minutes.

Compensation is shown as an unclassified unit and the College claims the unit with a grade of Unclassified (U grade). The unit will count towards the minimum number of unit credits required to achieve the qualification (120 credits for an HNC and 240 credits for an HND). The unit will not count towards the number of points required for an overall grade. It will be printed on the certificate and the grade will show as Unclassified.

There is no threshold of achievement set for the awarding of compensation units. However, the student must have completed the unit. This requires reasonable attendance and submission of all the assessment work for the unit in the first opportunity.

[btec-higher-nationals-centre-guide-to-quality-assurance-and-assessment-2023-24.pdf](https://www.btec.gov.uk/media/1000000/1000000/btec-higher-nationals-centre-guide-to-quality-assurance-and-assessment-2023-24.pdf)

Note: Compensation of Units or Modules is not common practice across HE programmes, and reference should be made to HEI and other Awarding Body regulations.

4.0 Mitigating/Extenuating 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 to complete your work. If you need to apply for an extension, you must use the course's mitigating circumstances form. If you cannot 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 course form.

4.1 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.

4.2 Corroborating evidence

All mitigating circumstances claims must be accompanied by independent corroborating evidence. That evidence must be specific about the problem's nature, timing and severity and, if appropriate, provide an independent assessment of its effect 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.
- Academic staff involved in a student's pastoral care may submit written evidence supporting the student's account, but it must be countersigned by the Head of Department to ensure fairness and consistency. The staff member is responsible for obtaining the countersignature.

Full-time students may not make a mitigating circumstance claim relating to work pressures, since they have committed to making 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 supporting 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.

4.3 Chronic ill health

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

4.4 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, see the College's <https://www.cityofbristol.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Data-Protection-Policy-July-2024.pdf>.

4.5 Consideration of Mitigating/Extenuating Circumstances

The HE Quality manager is authorised to approve mitigating circumstances claims. If the HE Quality manager 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/Extenuating Circumstances Panel may not be overturned by the Award and Assessment Board.

5.0 Consideration of Mitigating/Extenuating Circumstances: Award and Assessment Board

Where the circumstances are deemed valid, details will be forwarded to the Award Board for consideration. The Award 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, they have a right to sit/submit the assessment as if for the first time in a form and a date determined by the Award and Assessment Board.

6.0 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.

7.0 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 if they remain within the maximum period of registration established for their programme of study.

A student undertaking a full-time programme may also transfer to part-time study to better balance academic and other commitments, or vice-versa.

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

8.0 Examples of Mitigating/Extenuating 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 travel delays claims 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 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.

8.1 Examples of circumstances which might be considered valid

- *Hospitalisation, including operations, chronic illness, 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.*
- *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 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.*

8.2 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).*

9.0 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.

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

9.1 Operational Instructions for Award and Assessment Boards

Membership

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

- Chair: Head of Department or HE Quality manager
- HEI representatives (as determined by the collaborative arrangements)
- Programme Lead or equivalent
- HE Quality manager
- External Examiner.
- Module/Unit Leaders must attend the panel if they were responsible for delivering and assessing a module/unit. If unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances, they must provide a signed list confirming marks, along with written comments on the marks and assessment standards.
- HE Administrator.

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.

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 considered before a decision is reached
- To consider and discuss any cases of academic dishonesty and actions taken by the Assessment Offences Panel.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Chair and HE Quality manager 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.

Mitigating Circumstances

It is the responsibility of the Award and Assessment Board to consider 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.

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.

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.

At the end of the Board

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 HEQM 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 HEIs must be completed according to the required procedures.

Notification to the students of their results and awards will be undertaken by HE Admin.

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