

## EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES HANDBOOK

### Chapter 1 - Managing Education Provision in the Event of Exceptional Circumstances

#### 1. Managing Education Provision in the Event of Exceptional Circumstances

##### 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This chapter must be consulted in conjunction with other relevant documentation, including;

- a. The Assessment, Progression and Awarding: Taught Programmes Handbook.
- b. The Credit and Qualifications Framework.
- c. The Quality Review and Enhancement Framework.
- d. The External Examining Handbook (especially Chapter 5, External Examining in Exceptional Years/Circumstances).

1.1.2 The guidance within this Chapter is underpinned by the following generic principles that apply in all instances. These are:

- a. The equitable treatment of students.
- b. Transparency.
- c. Consistency.
- d. Maintenance of the academic standards and integrity of University of Exeter awards.
- e. Maintenance of a high-quality academic experience for students which provides value for money.
- f. The interests of students should be protected (allowing students to succeed and graduate or progress), and for their qualifications to hold their value over time.
- g. The standard of the Exeter award cannot be compromised.

1.1.3 Where roles are named, these may need to be substituted for an equivalent role at a Partner Institution.

1.1.4 Where a "nominee" is listed, a nominator (i.e. the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor for Education (APVCE) has to be confident that the nominee has the appropriate experience, authority, skills and knowledge to effectively discharge their duties. Appropriate nominees would for example include a Deputy APVCE or an Associate Dean for Education (ADE).

##### 1.2 Definitions

1.2.1 Exceptional Circumstances are defined as those which are sudden, unforeseen and/or unavoidable, and which for a defined period of time significantly impact upon the delivery of teaching and other learning opportunities, and/or assessment, to a cohort of students. Depending on their extent and duration, such circumstances may affect one or more cohorts of students. In such circumstances, the usual approaches to mitigation or redress, as set out elsewhere in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual, may not be suitable or sufficient.

Examples of such circumstances include (but are not limited to):

- a. Natural or human-made disaster
- b. War or other Armed Conflict
- c. Disease epidemic or pandemic
- d. Industrial action by one or more recognised Trade Unions or other unofficial, localised protest by staff or students
- e. Prolonged/widespread Internet, University Network, or other IT failure
- f. Prolonged University building or campus closure impacting access to vital resources not accessible elsewhere e.g., due to a health and safety emergency
- g. Prolonged absence of a key and irreplaceable member of the University teaching, learning, assessment or examining staff e.g., due to long term ill health

1.2.2 Where Exceptional Circumstances are deemed to have impacted the entire University and/or a significant part of an academic year, an Exceptional Year will be declared and policy decisions taken will be applied to all taught programmes.

1.2.3 Declarations of Exceptional Years should be signed off by the Dean for Taught Students or an Associate Dean for Taught Students. These declarations must be reported to the Education Board and University Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee (UAPAC).

1.2.4 Where Exceptional Circumstances impact a defined cohort of students only, then the APVCE or ADE for the relevant Faculty or School should make this declaration and notify the Dean for Taught Students or Associate Dean for Taught Students by email to [Education Policy, Quality and Standards](#). Such declarations should be reported to the Faculty Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee (FAPAC).

1.2.5 In the event of the declaration of Exceptional Circumstances or an Exceptional Year, the policies and practices as described in the Chapters 2 and 3 of this Handbook may be utilised as deemed

necessary. This may be in addition to, or in place of, the usual approaches to mitigation or redress, as set out elsewhere in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual. The nature of the Exceptional Circumstances will determine which of the policies and practices might be applied. It is not envisaged that all of the policies and practices will be needed during every Exceptional Circumstances or Exceptional Year.